



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

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Vegetable Feature: Tomatoes By Chef Andrea

While technically a fruit, tomatoes are likely one of the most well-known “vegetables.” They find their way into so many different uses ranging from condiments such as ketchup, salsa and chili sauce to salads, soups, sauces and as a base flavor in meat dishes, stocks and more. One sentence is not enough room to describe the vast array of ways tomatoes can be used, so even if you aren’t a tomato lover, I’m sure there are a few ways you can put these to use in your kitchen!

There are literally hundreds of varieties of tomatoes, so deciding which ones to plant can be pretty overwhelming! Over the years we’ve trialed many different varieties of tomatoes, which are not exactly the easiest crop to grow in our valley. One of the most important characteristics we look for is disease resistance. If we have a wet year, leaf disease can be a very big problem and if the plant dies due to disease, it doesn’t matter how good the tomato may have been—we’ll never be able to harvest them! We use a stake-and-tie method for our tomatoes where we weave twine around the main stem and vines as the plants grow in order to keep the tomato plant upright and the fruit off the ground. It’s a pretty labor intensive system, but it helps the foliage dry out faster to help with disease prevention.

The next important characteristic we look for is flavor. We look for varieties that have a good balance of acidity and sweetness as well as good tomato flavor. If you’re wondering what “good tomato flavor” is, consider those tomatoes you get on sandwiches and salads in the middle of winter that are shipped in from the other side of the country. Those tomatoes are bred to withstand shipping, but if you really evaluate their flavor you’ll find they really don’t have any flavor! So yes, we look for tomatoes that actually taste like tomatoes! Many people are drawn to heirloom tomato varieties, however many of the heirlooms we’ve trialed just don’t have the disease resistance we need. We do appreciate the flavor of many heirlooms, so we’ve sought out improved heirloom varieties as well as more disease resistant hybrids that feature the heirloom flavor with more modern hybrid characteristics which make them more appropriate for our growing situation.

It’s important to store tomatoes properly and keep a watchful eye on them. If they are a little on the green side and need time to fully ripen, it’s best to store them at room temperature. Check them daily and, if you see any spots or other signs of deterioration, eat them sooner than later taking care to remove the affected area of the tomato. Once fully ripe, it’s best to eat them or store them in the refrigerator until you’re ready to use them. The flavor of a tomato will be at its best eaten at room

What’s In The Box?

MONASTRELL RED ONIONS: This red onion was named after a red wine grape, which is fitting given the deep red color of the skin which continues all the way to the center outlining each layer. This is a good onion to enjoy both raw and cooked.

ITALIAN GARLIC: Use this week’s garlic to make the featured recipe for **Garlic Scented Tomato Salad**.

GREEN AND/OR ITALIAN ZUCCHINI: Looking for something different to do with zucchini this week? Why not pie? Check out this week’s **Cooking with the Box** article and find links to a sweet Zucchini Cream Pie or Savory Italian Zucchini Pie.

GREEN AND SILVER SLICER CUCUMBERS: Cucumber Raita is a simple condiment often served with Indian food. It’s a mixture of yogurt and cucumbers as well as fresh herbs that is a nice, cooling complement to spicy, full flavored dishes.

RED THUMB FINGERLING POTATOES: This is a new potato variety we trialed this year. Fingerling potatoes are usually smaller potatoes with a long, skinny shape. This variety has red skin and white flesh streaked with pink. This is a good choice for roasting, or cut them in half lengthwise and pan-fry them.

CHOCOLATE SPRINKLES OR SUNORANGE TOMATOES: Check out this week’s **Cooking With the Box** article for a link to a simple, yet tasty, recipe for a tomato & cucumber salad that is perfect for this week’s box contents!

MIXED VARIETY OF TOMATOES: Read more about tomatoes and the different varieties we’re picking in this week’s **Vegetable Feature** article. For best results, eat ripe tomatoes shortly after receiving and ripen tomatoes on the counter at room temperature.

MELON: This week you will receive one of three varieties of melons including the following: Sweet Sarah cantaloupe, French Orange Melon or Sun Jewel Melon. Sweet Sarah is a larger cantaloupe with a more smooth rind and no ridges. French orange melons are a smaller melon, often characterized by slight ridges and some netting on the rind. Sun Jewel melons are oblong in shape with a bright yellow rind with white stripes.

JALAPEÑO PEPPER: There are TWO jalapeños in this week’s box. We’re picking a variety this week that yields very large jalapeños, perfect for cutting in half and stuffing with cream cheese or other tasty fillings. Remember, jalapeños can be frozen raw for later use.

EDAMAME: Edamame are fresh soybeans. Please refer to **last week’s Vegetable Feature** article for more information about preparing these sweet, tasty beans. Please note, the pods are not edible and it’s best to cook them in the pod and shell them after they are cooked.

GREEN BELL PEPPERS: Remove the stem and seeds and dice these bell peppers for use now, or put them in a freezer bag and preserve them for use later. Pull them out in the winter and use them in egg dishes or add them to a pot of chili!

SWEET CORN: This week we’re picking one of our favorite corn varieties, Awesome! Have you ever added fresh corn kernels to scrambled eggs? Try it—it’s delicious! You could also sauté some garlic, onion and peppers along with the corn and stir in a few dollops of cream cheese just as the eggs start to set up.

ORANGE CARROTS: Enjoy the fresh flavor of these carrots that were dug last Saturday. Eat them raw as a snack or roast them along with the Red Thumb Fingerling potatoes.

BONUS--BROCCOLI OR EGGPLANT OR CILANTRO OR DILL: The boxes are pretty full this week, however when space was available we added a bonus item!

temperature. While a day or two in a cold environment will likely not impact the tomato, longer storage in the refrigerator at temperatures less than 45-50°F may negatively impact both flavor and texture.

Aside from eating them fresh, there are many ways to preserve tomatoes for later use. One of the easiest things you can do is freeze them in their raw state. Just wash them, remove the stem, then either freeze them whole, diced, or pureed. If you freeze them with the skin on, the skin will separate from the flesh of the tomato once thawed. You can either remove the skin at that time, or puree the skin and the flesh in a blender so you capture all the nutritive value of the tomato. You can also turn tomatoes into tomato sauce or salsa and can them. These are just a few of the many suggestions for preserving tomatoes.

This year we have two very nice crops of tomatoes, perhaps the best we've seen in recent years. This week on our blog we've included some pictures and descriptions of the tomatoes we're currently picking from our first planting. We hope you'll use this as a resource to help you identify which tomatoes you receive in your share and to understand their different attributes. Keep your fingers crossed that we have a plentiful tomato harvest this year, and if we do, get ready as we'll fit as many in your box as we can! If you're interested in tackling a larger tomato preservation project, watch for our Produce Plus offer for 25# boxes of Roma tomatoes which will be coming very soon! Do the work now to preserve the summer's bounty and you'll reap the benefits this winter!

Spiced Braised Lentils & Tomatoes with Toasted Coconut

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

3 Tbsp unsalted butter	1 Tbsp good-quality Madras curry powder	1 ¼ tsp salt, plus additional to taste	Plain whole milk yogurt, for serving (optional)
1 bunch scallions, white and light green parts, thinly sliced OR 1 medium onion, small dice	1 Tbsp tomato paste	1 cup dried, unsweetened coconut flakes	Chopped fresh cilantro, for serving
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped	2 cups green or brown lentils	1 ½ Tbsp black or brown mustard seeds	
	12 oz ripe, juicy tomatoes, chopped (2 medium) OR 2 cups canned plum tomatoes, drained	Salty butter, for serving	

1. Melt the unsalted butter in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the scallions or onions, garlic and curry powder. Cook until the mixture is golden and soft, about 4 minutes. Stir in the tomato paste and lentils and cook until slightly caramelized, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes and 1 ¼ tsp salt. Add enough water to cover the mixture by ½ inch. Bring the liquid to a boil over high heat; reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer until the lentils are tender, 25 to 40 minutes. If the lentils begin to look dry while cooking, add more water as needed.
2. In a small, dry skillet over medium heat, toast the coconut flakes, mustard seeds, and a large pinch of salt until the coconut is golden, about 3 minutes.
3. To serve, spoon the lentils into individual bowls. Drop about 2 tsp salted butter into each dish. Top with yogurt, cilantro, and the coconut mixture. Serve immediately.

This recipe was created by Melissa Clark and was featured in FOOD52's book *Genius Recipes* by Kristen Miglore.

Garlic-Scented Tomato Salad

"Steeping alliums in vinegar is a good trick for improving any salad dressing, but here is one variation you shouldn't miss when tomatoes are in season. Of this stripped down salad, Marcella Hazan wrote on her Facebook page in 2012, 'It has the potential to eclipse every other experience of tomatoes you may have had.'"

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

4 to 5 garlic cloves	2 Tbsp red wine vinegar	12 basil leaves
1 to 2 tsp salt	2 pounds round or plum tomatoes	Olive oil, for serving

1. Peel and smash garlic cloves. Steep them with 1 to 2 teaspoons salt and 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar in a bowl for at least 20 minutes.
2. Slice tomatoes with a serrated knife, skinning them beforehand if you wish. Spread them in a deep serving platter.
3. Just before serving, tear the basil leaves and scatter them on the tomatoes. Holding back the garlic, pour the vinegar over the tomatoes and dress with good, fruity olive oil. Taste and correct, if needed, with additional salt and vinegar.

This recipe is Kristen Miglore's adaptation of Marcella Hazan's original recipe, as featured in FOOD52's book *Genius Recipes*.