



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

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Fall Herb Preservation

By Jean Schneider, Herbalist at Nativa Medica & HVF CSA Member

How did your spring herb packs do in your garden or pots this year? If yours are like mine, the sage did pretty well if you could keep it dry enough this year! Who knows when the frost will come, so its time to preserve your herbs before it's too late. All of the herbs in our packs are Mediterranean herbs. As a group, these herbs are pungent, aromatic, warming and many are anti-bacterial, anti-fungal and anti-viral. Sounds like the perfect thing for fall and winter right?

As an herbalist I like to recommend herbs that are inexpensive and easy to find. I am not very prone to colds, viruses and flu but those around me are! My husband gets a few colds and viruses every winter, partly from all the time he spends in our public schools getting exposed. Over the years, adding more consistent use of culinary herbs seems to have helped reduce the number and severity of illnesses he suffers each winter. Every soup I make in the winter has a good amount of thyme in it and we regularly use sage honey in our cooking and make lavender honey tea.

There are two uses we will preserve herbs for from our herb packs; culinary and medicinal. All of the herbs in the packs are culinary herbs and several of them are powerful medicinal herbs too. Let's start with preserving some of the herbs specifically for medicinal uses for colds, flu and viruses. My two favorite herbs from the pack for this are thyme and sage.

Medicinal Herbs: Thyme Preservation

I prefer to gently dry thyme. Cut the thyme off about an inch above the ground. Make sure the herb is dry already (not after a rain or with dew on it). Either tie the stems into small bundles with string, or separate the stems and lay them out on your dehydrator racks.

(See our **blog** for the rest of Jean's article)

What's In The Box?

RED ONIONS: The red onions are finally ready for use! Slice them thinly and use for salads and sandwiches.

PORCELAIN GARLIC: This variety of garlic differs from the Italian garlic we have been packing. The cloves are usually larger than the Italian and often there are fewer cloves per head.

EDAMAME: Read this week's "Cooking With the Box" feature on our blog where you'll also find a tasty recipe for **Edamame Hummus**.

JALAPEÑO PEPPERS: Check out this week's fruit newsletter recipes for **Fig & Avocado Salsa** and **Prosciutto & Fig Quesadillas** which both use jalapeños.

SMALL TOMATOES: Use these tomatoes to make the **Oven-Roasted Cherry/ Grape Tomato** recipe in this week's newsletter.

RED-ORANGE UKRAINE PEPPERS: These are the small, orange-red peppers that resemble a small bell pepper with a pointy end and blocky shoulders. This is a sweet pepper that may be eaten raw, roasted or otherwise cooked.

ORANGE ITALIAN FRYING PEPPERS: These are the long, slender, bright orange peppers in this week's box. This is a sweet pepper that may be eaten raw, roasted or otherwise cooked. It is one of our best tasting sweet peppers!

RED SEEDLESS OR YELLOW SEEDED WATERMELON: We're nearly finished with watermelons. If you get one that has a thick rind, save the rind and turn them into watermelon rind pickles!

SWEET CORN: If you cut the corn off the cob in order to use the kernels in a recipe, save the cob and add it to your next batch of homemade broth or soup. The cob will add nice flavor.

VARIETY OF TOMATOES: See this week's vegetable feature for more information about tomatoes and how to use them.

BONUS ITEM--EACH BOX WILL CONTAIN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS: French Orange Melon, Broccoli, Cauliflower, Broccoli Romanesco, or Red Cabbage or Red Savoy Cabbage.

Cooking with This Week's Box!

We know summer is coming to a close soon and fall is right on its heels. Next week's box will likely have a different look than the last several boxes. This is the last week for melons, cucumbers and zucchini. Watermelons are close to the end as well. Hopefully we'll be able to enjoy tomatoes and peppers for several more weeks, but there will be some new crops landing on next week's harvest list. Right now we have tentative harvest plans for leeks and celeriac!

But back to this week's box. Lets talk tomatoes. There is a hearty bag of tomatoes in this week's box and you'll find several delicious tomato recipes to consider using for the large tomatoes as well as the little grape or chocolate sprinkles tomatoes in this week's box. I'd recommend giving the **Tomato Jam** recipe a try. When you're making this recipe, take a little time to separate the juicy seed portion from the flesh of the tomatoes. Use the flesh to make the tomato jam and save the juicy seed portion to make the **Tomato Seed Vinaigrette**. These two recipes are very complementary and will leave you with very little waste left over.

(See our **blog** for the rest of this article & Chef Andrea's suggestions for utilizing every item in your box including recipe links!)

Featured Vegetable: Tomatoes

Summer isn't summer without fresh tomatoes! Tomatoes are actually a fruit, referred to by some as a vegetable-fruit. Technicalities aside, tomatoes are a very diverse crop and are represented by a wide range of sizes from less than 1 ounce to as much as several pounds per tomato! They are also diverse in colors ranging from white to red to green and may be either a modern hybrid or a traditional heirloom. I'm not sure anyone really knows how many varieties of tomatoes there are across the world, but I do know that one seed company, Tomato Growers, offers over 500 varieties in their catalog!

We have a carefully selected lineup of tomatoes we've found do best in our valley. Especially in a wet year, we can see disease set in early which causes the vines to die before the fruit is fully ripe. Thus, we mostly plant more disease resistant hybrids and 'heritage' tomatoes which have some heirloom genetics in them, but also carry some modern hybrid characteristics which make them more attractive to our growing situation. 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 and makes it easier to pick the tomatoes and keep them clean. We also consider flavor, texture and color when selecting our varieties.

(See our [blog](#) for the rest of this vegetable feature article to learn more about Tomatoes!)

Sweet & Hot Tomato Jam

Yield 1 quart
2 pounds ripe tomatoes
1 Tbsp honey
Zest and juice of ½ of a lemon
1 jalapeño pepper, sliced paper thin
1 ½ tsp salt
1 Tbsp sugar
½ tsp red pepper flakes

1. Bring 4 quarts water to a boil. Set up an ice bath near the stovetop. Using a paring knife, score the tomatoes with an X on the bottom and carefully drop the tomatoes into the boiling water for 30 seconds, then transfer to the ice bath.
2. Peel the skin off the tomatoes then chop them and place in a medium saucepan with the honey, lemon zest, lemon juice, jalapeño, salt, sugar, and red pepper flakes. Stir and bring to a simmer.
3. Clip a candy thermometer to the pan and cook, stirring occasionally, until the mixture registers 220°F (it should have a thick, syrupy consistency). This may take 1 ½ to 2 hours.
4. Put the jam in a jar or use immediately. It will keep covered tightly in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Recipe borrowed from *America—Farm To Table*, by Mario Batalia and Jim Webster.

The author offers this commentary: "It takes a little time to make, but this is a condiment I will put on anything from Parmigiano-Reggiano, to an omelet, to fried chicken. I must warn you about its addictive properties...So beware, and stock up."

Use this jam as a spread on a grilled chicken sandwich or grilled ham and cheese. Spread cream cheese on a cracker or toast and top with a spoonful of the jam. Use this jam as a dipping sauce for egg rolls, sweet potato fries, or any other fried goodie such as onion rings or fried zucchini. Serve it alongside corn fritters or pancakes.

Tomato Seed Vinaigrette

Yield: approximately 1 cup

3 Tbsp sherry vinegar
1 Tbsp fresh thyme leaves or 1 ½ tsp dried
1 Tbsp mustard seeds
1 tsp red pepper flakes
2 very ripe large tomatoes
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1. In a small bowl, whisk together the vinegar, thyme, mustard seeds, and red pepper flakes.
2. Halve the tomatoes crosswise and gently but firmly squeeze out the seeds and juices into the bowl with the vinegar mixture—be sure to get most if not all of them. (Reserve the tomato flesh for another use).
3. Whisk together, then continue whisking while you drizzle in the oil to form a viscous emulsion. Season to your liking with salt, pepper and/or a bit more vinegar as needed.

Recipe borrowed from *America--- Farm To Table* by Mario Batali and Jim Webster.

Oven Roasted Cherry/Grape Tomatoes

Yield: About 1 cup

1 pint cherry, grape or other small tomatoes
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 Tbsp natural cane sugar or maple syrup
Fine-grain sea salt

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F with an oven rack positioned in the top third of the oven.
2. Slice each tomato in half and place in a large baking dish or on a rimmed baking sheet.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, sugar, and a scant ½ tsp salt. Pour the mixture over the tomatoes and gently toss until everything is well coated. Arrange the tomatoes cut-side up and roast for 45 to 60 minutes, until the tomatoes shrink a bit and start to caramelize around the edges.
4. If you aren't using them immediately, let the tomatoes cool, then scrape them into a clean glass jar along with any olive oil that was left in the dish. Sometimes I top off the jar with an added splash of olive oil. The tomatoes will keep for about 1 week in the refrigerator.

This recipe was borrowed from Heidi Swanson's book, *Super Natural Every Day*. These oven roasted tomatoes can be used in a wide variety of ways. Serve them as a topping for pan-seared fish or chicken along with a handful of chopped fresh herbs. Spread fresh goat cheese on a piece of toasted French bread and then top it off with these oven-roasted tomatoes and freshly ground black peppers. Mix these tomatoes into a bowl of cooked pasta and garnish it with freshly grated cheese. Use these to garnish soup, such as a creamy sweet corn chowder.