Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

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Vegetable Feature: Tomatillos

By Chef Andrea

Tomatillos…what are they?! Tomatillos are one of those confusing vegetables that are actually a fruit although most often used in more vegetable fashion. Tomatillos are classified as a nightshade, which means they are a relative to tomatoes. However, they are not just a green tomato. They are a completely different fruit. They are actually in the same family with ground cherries, both of which are characterized by their papery lantern-like husks that surround the fruit. Tomatillos grow on plants that are similar to tomato plants, but they are usually larger and have more of a wild, jungle-like appearance. Their main stem is thick and sometimes resembles a small tree! The plants can grow to over seven feet tall, so we put stakes in between the plants and tie them up progressively with string to keep the plants upright and the fruit off the ground. You know a tomatillo is ready to pick when it fills its husk completely and may even start to split the bottom of the husk. While most tomatillos are green, we also grow two varieties that turn purple when fully ripe! These typically take longer to mature, so we won't be harvesting these for awhile. Hopefully we'll be able to send these your way later in summer or early fall.

So what do you do with them? Lets talk storage first. In the home setting, I recommend you just store your tomatillos at room temperature, either in a paper bag or just on the counter. They'll store like this for a week or more! Before you use them, you do need to peel away the papery husk and you'll find the fruit inside may be a little sticky. Once you remove the husk and stem, the remainder of the tomatillo is completely edible, no need for further peeling and don't even try to remove the seeds.

Tomatillos have a tangy, fruity flavor and you'll find purple tomatillos to be more sweet than green ones typically. Tomatillos may be eaten either raw or cooked. One of the most familiar ways to use tomatillos is in making salsa, salsa verde that is! Tomatillo salsa may be prepared with all raw vegetables which will give you a fresh, chunky salsa. The alternative is to cook the tomatillos on the stovetop with a little water before blending the softened, cooked tomatillos with the other salsa ingredients. If you cook the tomatillos, you'll get a more smooth, thick salsa due to the natural pectin in tomatillos. Salsa verde is a good place to start if you've never worked with tomatillos before. You can eat it with chips, use it to jazz up scrambled eggs, put it on tacos, or use it as a base ingredient in other preparations. The natural pectin in tomatillos does lend itself favorably to being used as a thickener for enchilada sauce, soups, stews, chili etc.

Tomatillos are very easy to preserve for use in the off-season. One option is to make salsa now and either can or freeze it. If you don't have time to make salsa or just want to have tomatillos available in the off-season for other uses, you can freeze tomatillos whole and raw. Simply remove the outer husk, wash and dry the fruit. Put them in a freezer bag and pop them into the freezer. They don't retain their firm texture after freezing, so don't be surprised if they are soft when you thaw them. If you are using them to make a cooked salsa, soup, etc, the texture issue isn't an issue.

What's In The Box?

DESERT SUNRISE PURPLE CIPOLLINI ONIONS: Cipollini onions are characterized by their flat, disc-like shape but also by their natural sweetness that is most developed when cooked. Cut these into slices and cook them on the grill or roast them in the oven.

FRESH PORCELAIN GARLIC: Notice how juicy and plump the cloves are when you cut into them! This variety is characterized by fewer large cloves per bulb. If the clove is larger than you need, use the desired portion and store the remainder in the refrigerator.

GREEN AND/OR ITALIAN ZUCCHINI: We just started picking from our second crop and the first is still producing! This means this week's box has a hearty portion! Check out this week's **Cooking With the Box** article where you'll find a recipe for Zucchini-Corn Fritters!

GREEN AND/OR SILVER SLICER CUCUMBERS: Our first crop is starting to taper off, but we may still be 1-2 weeks out from harvesting from our second crop. Did you know you can roast, bake and stir-fry cucumbers? Give it a try!

GREEN AND/OR YELLOW BEANS: This week's boxes contain slightly more than one pound of beans! We encourage you to eat these within a few days as they may not have as long of a shelf life as usual due to recent heat and humidity.

RAINBOW CHARD OR AMARANTH: We are in our final planting of amaranth. Try preparing it simply by just sautéeing it alongside onions, garlic, zucchini, sweet corn and tomatoes. You can do the same with rainbow chard!

NEW POTATOES: Enjoy the creamy texture and fresh taste of these freshly dug new potatoes! The skins are very tender since they were dug while the vines were still green. Wash them gently, but do not peel!

SWEET CORN: This week we're harvesting Sweetness, an early bi-color variety. There are many more ways to use fresh corn aside from Corn on the Cob. Cut fresh corn off the cob and add it to a fresh vegetable salad, mix it into cornbread batter, add it to a summer soup, or pair it with zucchini to make fritters!

TOMATILLOS: Learn more about this vegetable, rather fruit, in this week's **Vegetable Feature** article. We've packed 0.75-1 pound of tomatillos in each box this week, which may only be 3-4 pieces of this larger variety of tomatillos we're picking now!

FENNEL: Make a white pizza with fennel and zucchini. You'll find a link to a tasty recipe in this week's **Cooking With the Box** article!

JALAPEÑO PEPPER: You will find ONE little jalapeño pepper in this week's box and if yours is similar to the one we picked it is likely one HOT little pepper! Taste a little bit before you add it to any recipes so you can gauge how much you should add. Not all jalapeños are created equally and the heat can vary significantly depending upon the variety and growing conditions.

BROCCOLI OR CAULIFLOWER: Roasted broccoli or cauliflower is a quick and easy side dish to serve with grilled or roasted meat. Season it with your favorite spice blend.

Ok, so lets talk recipes! My top two favorite things to make with tomatillos are **Spicy Pork and Tomatillo Stew** and **Vegetable Enchiladas with Tomatillo-Cream Sauce**. I've been making the Spicy Pork and Tomatillo Stew since 2007 and I know I must've mentioned it in past blog articles but it looks like I've never shared the recipe in a newsletter! I first made this stew for our farm crew back in 2007. In fact, it was on the cover of *Food & Wine* magazine in October 2007 and I still have that issue of the magazine hanging out in the magazine rack near the kitchen in the office! The cover is faded and tattered, but it was a good issue and I still reference it periodically. My notes for this recipe are in the margin indicating I multiplied the recipe times five to feed the crew! This is a good stew to make in early fall when the weather starts to change and the chill sets in. I also like to freeze tomatillos and pull them out in the middle of winter to make a pot of this stew. My second favorite recipe for **Vegetable Enchiladas with Tomatillo-Cream Sauce** was featured back in 2018. This is a great recipe to make all summer and you can vary the vegetable ingredients depending on what you have available. Ok, I lied. I have a third favorite recipe. Back in 2017 I uncovered this recipe for **Roasted Tomatillo and Chickpea Curry**. This is a bit of a non-traditional way to use tomatillos, which is exactly why I tried the recipe and it was delicious!

So, if you're not sure where to start, I'd encourage you to consider a simple batch of salsa verde or reference the recipes in this week's newsletter as well as the other two I mentioned that are on our website in our recipe archives. Beyond these suggestions, I've compiled a list of 12 more recipes that are in my queue to make, hopefully this year! If you try them first, be sure to post the results and your commentary on the recipe in our Facebook group…especially the Tomatillo Strawberry Pie! Have fun and enjoy this unique vegetable/fruit selection! See our **blog** for a complete list, including links to each of the 12 recipes!

Mexican Eggs in Purgatory

Yield: 4 portions (2 eggs each)

- 1 pound tomatillos, husked
- 1 poblano or jalapeño pepper, stemmed and seeded (if you wish)
- 1 ½ cups chopped cilantro leaves and stems, plus ¼-½ cup for serving
- 1 medium onion or 3 scallions, coarsely chopped, plus ½ cup for serving
- ¾ cup chicken broth
- 3 ounces thickly sliced bacon, cut into ½-inch pieces
- 2 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil (or as needed)
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 8 large eggs
- 2 Tbsp grated Cojita or crumbled feta cheese, plus more for serving
- 2-3 ounces shredded Monterey Jack or Mozzarella cheese
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- Lime wedges, for serving
- Corn Tortillas, for serving

1. Preheat the broiler and position a rack about 8 inches from the heat source.
2. In a blender, add the husked tomatillos, poblano or jalapeño pepper, chopped cilantro, onion, ½ tsp salt, freshly ground black pepper and chicken broth. Puree until smooth.
3. In a large, shallow ovenproof skillet, cook the bacon over high heat until brown and slightly crispy. If the bacon is lean, you may want to add the olive oil. Once the bacon is cooked, add the minced garlic and cook for 30 seconds more, until fragrant. Carefully add the tomatillo puree and cook over moderate heat until the sauce is thickened and dull green, about 10-12 minutes.
4. Using the back of a spoon, make 8 depressions in the tomatillo sauce. Remove the pan from the heat and carefully crack the eggs into the depressions. Sprinkle the eggs and tomatillo sauce with the 2 tablespoons of Cotija cheese and the shredded Monterey Jack or Mozzarella cheese. Broil the dish until the egg whites are set but the egg yolks are still runny, about 3-4 minutes.
5. Remove from the oven and garnish with more Cotija cheese, chopped onion and cilantro. Serve right away with warm corn tortillas and lime wedges.

Chef Notes:

- The tomatillo sauce can be made in advance and refrigerated for up to 2 days. Bring the sauce to room temperature before adding the eggs.
- If you are serving less than four people, you can use a smaller ovenproof skillet and only half the sauce to cook four eggs instead of eight. Reserve the second half of the sauce for a second meal.
- Variation: If you want to add more vegetables to this dish, consider adding small diced potatoes and fresh corn kernels cut from 1-2 ears of corn. Cook the potatoes and corn in the saute pan in a bit of oil before you cook the bacon. Remove the potatoes and corn, cook the bacon and then add the vegetables back to the pan along with the tomatillo sauce.

This recipe was adapted slightly from Grace Parisi's recipe featured at *foodandwine.com*

Spicy Pork and Tomatillo Stew

Yield: 4 servings

- 2 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 ½ pounds boneless pork loin, cut into 1-inch chunks
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 large celery ribs, finely diced
- 1 small onion, finely diced
- 1 Anaheim or poblano chile, seeded and finely diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tsp mild chile powder
- 1 Tbsp ground cumin
- Pinch of dried oregano
- 2 cups chicken stock
- 1 cup ½ –inch diced carrots
- Two 6-ounce potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch dice
- One 28-ounce can diced tomatoes
- 1 pound tomatillos, husked, rinsed and cut into 1-inch dice
- Hot Sauce, for serving
- Chopped Cilantro, for garnish
- Corn Tortilla Chips, for serving

1. In a medium casserole or Dutch oven, heat the oil. Season the pork with salt and pepper and cook over high heat until browned on 2 sides, about 2 minutes per side.
2. Add the celery and onion and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 7 minutes. Add the diced chile, garlic, chile powder, cumin and oregano and cook, stirring frequently, until fragrant, about 3 minutes. Add the chicken stock and bring to a boil. Add the carrots, potatoes, tomatoes and tomatillos, cover and simmer over low heat until the pork is cooked through and tender, about 30-40 minutes.
3. Season to taste with salt, pepper and hot sauce. Ladle the stew into bowls, garnish with chopped cilantro and serve with a few tortilla chips.

Recipe adapted slightly from *Food & Wine* magazine, October 2007