



Notes From the Pea Patch

Foxtail Community Farm

~

Vol. 10, No. 16

~

Aug 3 2015

Farmer's Notebook

Tomatoes may well be the foundation of the local food movement. There simply is no comparison between a fresh field-grown, vine-ripened tomato and a supermarket variety. Although wet soil earlier in the season has slowed our tomato plants and had some impact on their quality, this year's harvest is now well underway and should continue through the summer with more hot, dry days.

Although commonly associated with Italian cooking, tomatoes are native to the Americas, cultivated by the Aztecs and Incas as far back as 700 A.D. These ancestors were wild cherry-sized husk tomatoes (similar to tomatillos). From these humble beginnings, tomatoes have exploded into a rainbow of purples, oranges, reds, yellows and greens, ranging in size from tiny cherries to 2+ pound beefsteaks.

We grow more varieties of tomatoes than any other crop, including many heirloom varieties. The term "heirloom" refers to varieties chosen for their unique qualities and preserved from generation to generation through open pollination and seed saving. In contrast, "hybrid" varieties are produced by crossing two strains selected through inbreeding for specific traits (for example, color and size): while the offspring of this cross has the desired blend of traits, its seeds will not produce the same traits. Recent research demonstrates that genes for flavor have actually been bred out of commercial hybrid tomatoes a side effect of selecting for red color and long shelf life!

We start tomatoes in the greenhouse and transplant to the fields (or high tunnel) in May. We stake and trellis to help prevent blight, the most damaging threat to tomatoes. Other common cultivation problems include blossom end rot, caused by calcium deficiency, and tomato hornworm, a scary-looking giant caterpillar with a large spike on its end, that metamorphoses into the famed atlas moth.

Some cracking and scabbing is typical on heirloom tomatoes, and does not generally affect taste. Simply trim away any imperfections. Most importantly: tomatoes should be stored at room temperature - refrigeration ruins their taste and texture. ~ *Eric*

This Week's Harvest

Our best guess for what will be in this week's share boxes - subject to change at harvest & packing time.

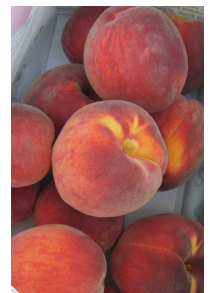
new potatoes - our first harvest for the season will be small white (Kennebec variety) potatoes. These have not been cured for storage and thus should be refrigerated. Delicious when roasted with olive oil, sea salt and fresh herbs.

sweet corn (rotating shares) - our sweet corn harvest will be light but should continue through the summer months, so we will deliver in rotating shares to provide everyone a taste before the season is through. Organically grown sweet corn tends to be later (because we don't use fungicide-treated seed, requiring us to wait until the soil is warmer and drier to plant), smaller (because we don't use chemical fertilizers) and may contain the occasional caterpillar (because we don't use chemical pesticides). The sugars in corn convert to starch very quickly, so eat it as soon as possible after picking. Refrigerate in plastic bag for up to 2 days.

tomatoes - we're continuing to harvest tomatoes from both the high tunnel and field. Most of these early pickings are traditional red slicers in several sizes. We are starting to pick a few heirlooms and hope to see more of them in the coming weeks.

Also... cucumbers ~ eggplant (Italian or Oriental) ~ green peppers ~ herb (TBD) ~ lettuce ~ summer squash ~ tomatillos/ cherry tomatoes/hot peppers (rotating)

Fruit Shares: peaches from Fix Bros Fruit Farm in Hudson. Picked tree ripe; to complete ripening, place stem-side down in a cool area, then store in fridge. Handle gently to avoid bruising. Wash before eating. *Conventionally grown.*





Recipe of the Week: Eric's Essential Tabouli

Summer evenings are made for Middle Eastern food. This one has been in Eric's repertoire since college days, which at that time relied heavily on the Moosewood Cookbook. We've made a few small adaptations since, but it remains a summer standard. With pita, hummus, olives, feta and fresh fruit, it's a simple and delicious meal. I have also made this recipe with farro, which is good but not as satisfactory as the traditional bulgur.

- 1 cup dry bulgur wheat
- 1 ½ cups boiling water
- 1-2 tsp salt
- juice of 1 large lemon (~1/4 cup)
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 2-4 tbs fresh mint leaves, finely minced
- 1 bunch fresh parsley, chopped
- 2-3 red tomatoes, seeded and diced
- 1 cucumber, peeled, seeded and diced

Combine bulgur with salt in a bowl. Pour boiling water over the grain and cover bowl. Let sit ~20 minutes, until bulgur is softened but chewy. Drain any excess water.

Whisk together lemon juice, olive oil, garlic and mint; season with salt and pepper to taste. Toss dressing with bulgur, add parsley and combine well. Refrigerate for 2-3 hours. Shortly before serving, stir in tomatoes and cucumbers.



From the archives

Need more recipe ideas? CSA newsletters back to 2010 are on our website:

www.foxtailcommunityfarm.com/MemberNewsletters.html

Here are a few favorites to re-visit this week:

August 1 2011 – calabacitas

August 11 2011 – summer squash baked with cherry tomatoes, olives & herbs

July 30 2012 – roasted potatoes

August 6 2012 – spaghetti with green beans & tomatoes

July 27 2014 – grilled smoky eggplant salad



A GUIDE TO FOXTAIL TOMATOES

Big Beef- large, red beefsteak tomato. The classic red slicer. Hybrid variety.

New Girl – a small red slicer favored for its early production. Hybrid variety.

Pink Brandywine- large (1+ lbs), irregularly shaped, pink tomatoes with tart-sweet meaty flesh. Many consider this the best tasting tomato. Organic heirloom.

Cherokee Purple – large round to oblong fruits, dusky purplish-brown skin with dark green shoulders, brick-red “winey” & juicy flesh. Organic heirloom variety.

Green Zebra- unusual smallish, green striped tomatoes (yes, green when fully ripe!) with mild and juicy green flesh. Lower in acidity than red tomatoes. Organic heirloom variety.

Jubilee- a large, productive golden yellow tomato. Good taste, meaty texture and lovely appearance with low acidity. Organic heirloom.

Pineapple - exceptionally large and sweet, red-streaked yellow skin with complex, tropical fruit flavor and low acidity. Cracking of skin is normal. Organic heirloom.

Rose de Berne- small, pink tomatoes from France described as hybrids in appearance but heirlooms in taste. Organic heirloom.

Gardener's Sweetheart - a new red cherry we are trying this season for the first time. Sweet bright-red strawberry-shaped firm fruits that resist cracking. Organic heirloom.

Sungold- Hands down our favorite cherry tomato. Hybrid variety. We have watched our children choose these little gold nuggets over candy. Prone to splitting after rain.

Black Cherry – a large, late cherry with dusky purple color and complex flavor. Organic heirloom variety.

White Cherry – an unusual cherry with pale, almost translucent icy yellow skin and mild flavor. Organic heirloom variety.