

Better Know Your Vegetables:

This week... Tomatoes

Tomatoes are obviously very popular in the United States. In fact, they are the most popular home-grown vegetable here. Hopefully after eating the tomatoes from this season you will realize that fresh, in season tomatoes are a world apart from the pink tennis balls we get during the winter. Waiting to eat a tomato in season is well worth it. Here are some helpful hints to help you use your tomatoes wisely this summer and beyond:

- For daily use, hold your tomatoes at room temperature. Don't refrigerate unless absolutely necessary. Store in the refrigerator but bring back to room temperature before serving
- If you end up with a glut of tomatoes, make some tomato sauce and freeze it! (See below.)
- When you are adding raw tomatoes to a dish to be cooked, drain them well so they won't thin the sauce too much.
- Don't add raw tomatoes to a salad until you are ready to serve. They can make salads somewhat watery.
- A bit of sugar or sweet carrots can counteract the tomatoes acidity.

The acidity in tomatoes can react with certain metals, such as aluminum and change the flavor of your dish. Cook with stainless steel, enamel or some of the newer coated pans.

Gazpacho

Adapted from Moosewood
Cookbook by Mollie Katzen

Yields 6 servings

4 cups tomato juice
½ cup finely minced onion (can add scallions too!)
1 medium clove garlic, minced
1 bell pepper, chopped roughly
1 tsp honey
1 medium cucumber, peeled, and chopped roughly
juice of ½ lemon plus 1 lime
2 Tbsp wine vinegar
½ tsp cumin
¼ cup fresh parsley, minced
2-3 Tbsp olive oil
Salt, pepper and cayenne pepper to taste
2 cups tomatoes, chopped roughly.
2 fresh corn cobs, kernels removed

Combine all ingredients in a food processor. Pulse lightly or puree until smooth depending upon preference. Add fresh corn kernels to float. NOTE: You can chop some of the vegetables into a small dice, leave them out of the food processor and add them at the end. Chill

How to Peel Tomatoes

Boil a large pot of water. Remove all stickers and stems from your tomatoes. Cut a very shallow and small "X" on the bottom of your tomato. This will aid the skin in peeling away from the tomato. Drop the tomatoes into boiling water and let them cook for about 10-30 seconds, or until you see the skin begin to curl away. Remove from the water and plunge into an ice bath. When the tomatoes become cool enough to handle pull off the skin with a small paring knife. The peel should come off quite easily.

Fall Freezer Tomato Sauce

Adapted from The Victory Garden Cookbook by Marian Morash
Yields about 6 pints

6-7 lbs tomatoes
4 Tbsp olive oil
2 cups finely chopped onions
½ cup chopped carrots
1 ½ cups finely chopped celery
1 cup finely chopped green peppers
2-3 tsp chopped garlic
½ cup broth (beef or vegetable, or water)
1 cup tomato paste
2 bay leaves
salt and freshly ground pepper
¼ cup chopped fresh basil (or 1 Tbsp dried)
1 tsp oregano

Peel, seed, and chop tomatoes: you should end up with 9-10 cups. (See note on peeling tomatoes). Heat oil, and sauté the onions and carrots until the onions are golden and wilted. Add celery and green peppers and cook for 2-3 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 30 seconds. Add the broth or water, tomatoes, tomato paste, and crumbled bay leaves. Reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes. Add the herbs and simmer 5 minutes longer. Lightly process the sauce so it still has some texture or blend it to a smooth sauce if you prefer. If you don't have a food processor put the sauce through a food mill