

Tomatoes

Tomatoes are the homecoming queen of the vegetable world. CSA shareholders, count yourselves lucky, because the tomatoes coming your way are the best to be found: they're truly vine-ripened, juicy, sweet, and flavorful.

STORAGE

If your tomatoes smell fragrant and yield slightly when squeezed, they are ready to use. If not, store them for a few days at room temperature until they are ripe. Unless you have some very ripe tomatoes near to spoiling, avoid refrigerating them; cold temperatures diminish their flavor and texture.

A Shareholder

I just ate the year's most perfect tomato. The flavor was amazing, indescribable. Full, rich, the perfect amount of acidity, the perfect amount of that resinous tomato flavor. I sit here, in tomato afterglow. The Summer has been consummated.

Fried Green Tomatoes with Crispy Cornmeal Crust

Green tomatoes are surprisingly wonderful but very different from ripe tomatoes. Bacon drippings were traditionally used to fry green tomatoes, but now only the most diehard Southerners—and a few inspired cooks—do it that way. *Angelic Organics Kitchen.*

Serves 4 to 6

1/2 cup milk, or 1 egg beaten with 1/4 cup water
1/2 cup cornmeal or flour, or a combination
1 1/4 teaspoons salt plus more to taste
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper plus more to taste
mild-flavored vegetable oil
4 large firm green tomatoes, cored, cut into 1/4-inch slices

1. Line a plate with paper towels.
2. Put the milk or the egg-water mixture in a shallow bowl; set aside. Put the cornmeal or flour in another small, shallow bowl and stir in the salt and pepper.
3. Fill a large skillet 1/4-inch deep with oil. Heat over high heat until the oil just begins to smoke, about 3 minutes.
4. Dip each tomato slice into the liquid, then into the cornmeal or flour. Carefully place the tomato slices in the oil and cook until golden and soft (but not mushy), 3 to 4 minutes on each side (working in batches as necessary). Adjust the heat as necessary to prevent burning.
5. Transfer the fried tomatoes to the paper towel-lined plate to drain. Season with more salt to taste. Serve immediately.

HANDLING

If serving tomatoes raw or lightly cooked, give them a quick rinse and slice, chop, or cut them into chunks as desired. To remove the skin, score a small X in the bottom of each tomato and place into a pot of boiling water (or, pour boiling water over the X's); the skin will loosen and peel back slightly; peel them under cool running water.

Some cooks recommend removing tomato seeds because they can distract visually from a dish. To remove seeds, slice your tomato in half horizontally and squeeze it gently over a strainer into a bowl. Reserve the juice for cooking; it's full of vitamin C.

Roasted Tomato Basil Pesto

This variation on pesto is so delightful it's amazing that it's not more common. The roasted tomato flavor is superbly highlighted by the sweet aromatic basil—but a very ripe regular tomato will work well too. Don't limit this pesto to just pasta; try it on pizzas and roasted potatoes, in an omelette, or over grilled vegetables. You can make an equally delicious variation by using cilantro instead of basil. *Shareholder* (adapted from the *Seed Savers Calendar*, 1998).

Serves 2



2 pre-roasted tomatoes or 1 large fresh tomato
2–3 cloves garlic, peeled, halved
3 tablespoons pine nuts
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 cup fresh whole basil leaves
1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
2 tablespoons butter, softened
salt
freshly ground black pepper

1. Combine the tomatoes, garlic, pine nuts, and oil in a blender and process until just combined. Add a handful of basil and process again briefly; continue adding the basil in small amounts until all is combined.
2. Stir in the Parmesan cheese and butter and season with salt and pepper to taste.

A Shareholder

I wanted to tell you that never in my life have I liked tomatoes. In my first box I gave almost all of them away. It wasn't until someone offered me a slice of one of the tomatoes I had given her that I realized how much I love tomatoes. I almost wept! Never have I tasted such wonderful, heavenly tomatoes! Now I rarely give them away; I want them myself. Besides, there usually aren't any left to give to anyone!

Excerpted from *Farmer John's Cookbook: The Real Dirt On Vegetables: Seasonal Recipes and Stories from a Community Supported Farm* by Farmer John Peterson & Angelic Organics (Gibbs Smith Publisher). Check with your local farm or bookstore for availability. Additional recipes, charts, individual copies of this book, and quantity discounts available at www.AngelicOrganics.com/cookbook.

