

Foods For Thought

From the Vegetable Garden Team of Eden Mill Nature Center

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Featuring:

HEIRLOOM TOMATOES



Presented by
Harford County
Master
Gardeners
and
Family &
Consumer
Sciences
Educator

Heirloom Tomato and Feta Toast

Ingredients

Whipped Feta and Cottage Cheese
(1/2 cup low-fat cottage cheese,
2 tablespoons feta cheese, and
1 teaspoon olive oil, blended.)
2 slices sourdough bread
1 medium heirloom tomato, sliced
2 tablespoons fresh basil, sliced
1 tablespoon butter
Salt to taste

Directions

Melt butter over medium heat in a skillet.



Add slices of bread in a single layer. Toast for 1 to 2 minutes until golden brown, then flip and toast for an additional 1 to 2 minutes. Spread about 1/4 cup of the whipped cheese mixture on each slice of toast, then top with sliced basil and tomatoes. Sprinkle with salt and serve.

Nutrition Info per serving (1 slice): Calories 293; Fat 13g; Protein 12g; Sodium 645mg; Sodium 965 mg

Fresh Heirloom Tomato Pasta

Ingredients

3 cups chopped tomatoes
3 - 4 tablespoons chopped fresh
herbs (basil, oregano, thyme)
1 -2 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
14 oz pasta (ex: penne, rigatoni)

Directions

To a large bowl, add the tomatoes, herbs, garlic, salt and pepper. Gently toss to



combine. Let rest for 10-20 minutes at room temperature to allow the flavors to marinate. Cook the pasta according to the package directions. Drain, and return the pasta to the pot. Add the tomato mixture and toss to combine.

Nutrition Info per serving (serves 4): Calories 394; Carbs 80g; Protein 14 g; Fat 2g; Sodium 307 mg

Heirloom Tomato Salsa

Ingredients

3 large heirloom tomatoes, diced
1 large serrano pepper, chopped
(remove seeds and stems)
1 large garlic clove, minced
1/2 cup red onion, diced
2 limes - 2 tablespoons of juice
1/4 teaspoon cumin
1/4 teaspoon salt

Directions

In a large bowl, mix the roughly chopped serrano pepper, minced garlic, diced red



onion, lime juice, cumin and salt. While the ingredients are marinating, dice the tomatoes. Add the diced tomatoes to a strainer to help drain off excess liquid and then add to the rest of the ingredients. Mix and chill for 30 minutes in the refrigerator.

Nutrition info per serving (1/4 cup): Calories 22; Carbs 5g; Protein 1g; Fat 1g; Sodium 55g

Recipes courtesy of Harford County Master Gardeners. Images from allrecipes.com and MGs.



Who said this?

Don't ripen picked tomatoes in the sun. Put underripe tomatoes and stone fruits in a paper bag in a cool, dark place, and magic happens. Never, ever store them in the fridge: they turn mushy and flavorless. - *Andrew Zimmern, American chef*

I love to pick tomatoes at the end of the day, when they're still warm from the sun. - *Alain Ducasse, French chef*

I think we all have a dream of what it would be like not to work and grow heirloom tomatoes, and I do have that dream. It would be lovely. - *Helen Mirren, British actor*

There ain't nothing better in life than true love and a homegrown tomato. - old saying

If you're buying tomatoes pick them up and smell them - they should have a lovely perfume. They need to be kept at fifty degrees or above, particularly during the growing season, because that's when they develop their flavor. - *Julia Child, American chef*



How do you fix a broken tomato? *Tomato paste!*

Where do tomatoes go on a date? *To the salad bar!*

Believe It or Not!

There are more than 3000 varieties of heirloom or heritage tomatoes and more than 15,000 total varieties of tomatoes grown globally.

An heirloom tomato is an open-pollinated, non-hybrid heirloom cultivar of tomato. They are classified as family heirlooms, commercial heirlooms, mystery heirlooms, or created heirlooms.

An heirloom tomato must come from an original plant with seeds traceable back to 1951 or older. Most varieties are well over 100 years old.

Heirlooms have a short shelf life and are less disease resistant than hybrids.

What are heirloom tomatoes?

An heirloom is a valuable object that is passed down from older generation of a family to the younger generation. An heirloom tomato itself is not the treasure, but the seeds are because they are passed down from season to season. Heirloom tomatoes are varieties that have been grown without crossbreeding for 40 or more years. It is an open-pollinated variety that has been passed down through several generations in a family, ethnic, religious, or tribal group, or was commercially introduced before 1940. In general, heirlooms are less seedy, more flavorful and colorful, and sweeter



than hybrid tomatoes. Because the tomato has been selected for flavor, heirlooms may be more susceptible to disease and cracking. Their skin is thinner, and they cannot be stored for very long. Hybrid tomatoes have been bred to be round, red, uniform in size, and easy to store. Flavor is a secondary thought in their production.

At the Eden Mill Demonstration Garden we debate every year as to whether to grow heirloom tomatoes. They have minds of their own and often develop into grotesque shapes with hard cores and bumpy shoulders. Sometimes it is difficult to find a sizable slice of the fruit to put upon a hamburger. But cut up chunks of these odd shaped, artistically colored tomatoes for a salad, and you have made yourself a delicious treat.

This year we grew from seed five tomato varieties that the University of Maryland Grow It Eat It program provided for us in order to observe the Year of the Heirloom Tomato. We chose Yellow Pear, Kellogg's Breakfast, Hillbilly, Aunt Ruby, and Rutgers. The tomato plants grew tall and lush. The tomatoes did not fare so well. These poor results probably had a great deal to do with the drought conditions, heavy rains, and high temperatures this summer. The tomato that fared the best was the yellow pear. So the garden team is again at the crossroads for next year's tomato crop. Heirloom tomatoes or hybrid tomatoes? Next year we will probably lean towards more hybrids that can withstand the unpredictable Maryland weather.

Health Benefits

Heirloom tomatoes provide a vast number of nutrients including potassium, niacin, vitamin B6 and folate and cancer fighting antioxidant lycopene. Since they are picked when ripe and spend little time traveling from farm to plate, these nutrients are readily available to nourish your body.

Heirloom tomatoes are also a rich source of vitamin C and vitamin K. They add flavor to your cooking and are low in calories. You can find heirloom tomatoes at local farmers' markets. Give them a try. You will be pleasantly surprised!



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