

What's in Season from the Garden State

Biweekly Highlights from Cooperative Extension, a unit of Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

August 6, 2007



Jersey Tomato Taste Testing Wednesday, August 8, 2007; 1 - 3:00 p.m. Rutgers Agricultural Research & Extension Center 121 Northville Road Bridgeton, Cumberland County, NJ

Chefs and the public are invited to taste classic and heirloom variety tomatoes. Join us for a wagon tour of vegetable and fruit projects at our research farm. Bring your business cards for a drawing of Rutgers apparel.

This event is free! Please pre-register online at: http://www.cookce.rutgers.edu/courses/current/fi0602cb.html or call 732-932-9271, ext. 630. For online directions go to: http://njaes.rutgers.edu/centers/quickinfo.asp?RAREC

Great Tomato Tasting
Wednesday, August 29, 3:00 pm - dusk
(Rain or Shine)
140 Locust Grove Road
Snyder Research and Extension Farm,
Pittstown, Hunterdon County, NJ

Tasting of approximately 80 varieties of tomatoes suitable for New Jersey farms and gardens, along with a sampling of tomatillos and sweet to mildly hot peppers. The Melda C. Snyder Teaching Garden will showcase culinary herbs, container garden varieties, and a children's garden alongside perennial deer tolerant plants and plants that attract beneficial insects. Wagon tours will highlight Rutgers NJAES agricultural research.

Registration - \$4.00 per person, children under 10 are free. Please RSVP Rutgers Snyder Research Farm at 908-713-8980. Further information is available at: http://snyderfarm.rutgers.edu/.



Rediscovering the Jersey Tomato: Tomato Tastings

Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) has a long history of researching the best performing market tomatoes for New Jersey farmers. We have vigorously conducted "variety trials," planting several varieties of tomatoes for evaluation under controlled conditions and measuring their characteristics such as insect and disease resistance and crop yield. This information helps New Jersey growers select the best performing varieties for their region and conditions. Now we are also empowering consumers, inviting people who love tomatoes but are disappointed with their flavor, to assist us in bringing great tomatoes back to the plate.

One of the traits not always evaluated in variety trials was flavor. It was in the 1990s when Morris County Agricultural Agent Peter Nitzsche recognized that while tomato varieties had improved for shipping qualities, consumers were complaining about taste. The Jersey Tomato had lost its luster. Nitzsche and colleagues decided to re-emphasize flavor in their variety trials. Working with the Rutgers Department of Food Science, they conducted scientific sensory evaluation studies involving blind taste tests.

Not long after, the Rutgers NJAES Snyder Research Farm in Pittstown implemented its own version of taste testing on tomatoes, but this involved a large public event, which has evolved into the annual "Great Tomato Tasting" held in August.

While incorporating taste testing into variety trials, Rutgers researchers found that the modern varieties of shipping tomatoes were not always as flavorful and hence turned to heirloom tomatoes which opened new doors for flavor, color, size and shape – traits with consumer appeal.

But where does this leave the traditional Jersey Tomato? While heirlooms offer novel traits for the consumer and can provide growers with a niche market, the tasty round red tomatoes of yesterday still loom in our memory.

In 2007 Rutgers NJAES is conducting variety trials with a new twist: trying to get the old Jersey Tomato flavor back. Rutgers researchers have identified several old time tomato varieties that were flavorful but also had satisfactory growing qualities. These are being grown for the 2007 variety trials at Snyder Farm and Rutgers Agricultural Research and Extension Center (RAREC) in Upper Deerfield. Two tomato tastings are scheduled for this summer, the annual Great Tomato Tasting on August 29 at Snyder Farm, and on August 8 at RAREC. The RAREC event will include a new audience whose input to tomato flavor is key: Garden State chefs. Two of the tomato varieties that will be featured will be the 'Rutgers' and 'Ramapo' Tomatoes, developed by Rutgers NJAES.

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New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Jersey Fresh & Seafood Availability Report

Current:

Baby Arugula & Baby Spinach Basil **Beets** Blueberries Cabbage Cantaloupes Collards Cucumbers **Dandelions** Dill Eggplant Kale Leeks & **Green Onions**

Melons Mint

Nectarines Parsley Peaches **Peppers** Squash - yellow and zucchini Sweet Corn **Tomatoes Turnips**

White Potatoes



Black Sea Bass Bluefish Ling Lobster Mahi Mahi Sea Scallops (Day Cape May Salt Boat) Squid

Farm Raised Hard **Clams & Oysters** Littlenecks/Middlenecks Specials Oysters Delaware Bay Oysters



Where to find Jersey Fresh? Ask for it where you shop or dine or go to: http://www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov

To receive these reports by e-mail: njfarmfresh@rce.rutgers.edu Web: http://www.njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu For your county Rutgers Cooperative Extension office go to: http://www.rce.rutgers.edu/county

Rediscovering the Jersey Tomato: 'Rutgers' and 'Ramapo' Tomatoes

The Jersey Tomato has long been renowned for its sweet/tart tasty flavor. But as modern shipping tomatoes came to dominate wholesale produce markets, something got lost in the transition - flavor! That old time classic smell, texture and juicy acid/sweet taste of the Jersey Tomato is hard to find these days, but Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) is working to bring it back.

In 2007 Rutgers NJAES researchers are conducting tomato variety trials looking at old time varieties that were known for their flavor. These varieties will be evaluated for their growing properties and undergo taste tests by the New Jersey public and chefs.

Two of the varieties on the list were developed at Rutgers NJAES. Although no longer grown commercially, they have remained popular especially with home gardeners. The 'Rutgers' tomato is available through many home garden seed catalogues, although as an open-pollinated variety, there now are several strains available.

The 'Rutgers' Tomato was introduced in 1934 by Rutgers breeder Lyman Schermerhorn as an ideal canning tomato at the height of the canning industry in New Jersey. Not only did this provide a top performing tomato for New Jersey's canning industries Campbell's, Heinz and Ritter, but continued to be the preferred choice of 75 percent of commercial growers for the remainder of the twentieth century, with worldwide use.

A few decades later, the Rutgers 'Ramapo' hybrid tomato was developed by Rutgers breeder Bernard Pollack. This medium-sized globe tasty tomato was a preferred home garden variety due to its wonderful eating qualities superior to many heirlooms, combined with excellent fruit quality, reliability, and production. 'Ramapo' is an F1 hybrid, requiring expensive controlled pollination of two parent plant selections for seed production. Fewer seed companies were interested in producing F1 hybrids for a small gardener's market, and about twenty years ago the 'Ramapo' disappeared from seed catalogues. Despite its long absence, Rutgers has continued to receive many requests for Ramapo seed and has produced small batches over the years.

After a long search for a seed company to produce 'Ramapo' seeds, Rutgers is arranging for the first set of commercially produced 'Ramapo' seeds available for the 2008 growing season. Jersey Tomato lovers - get out your saltshakers – good times are ahead! If you would like to be placed on a waiting list for Ramapo seeds for Spring 2008, e-mail nifarmfresh@ njaes.rutgers.edu.

Tomato Care 101: Two Big No No's

There are many factors along the way that can affect a tomato's quality - production methods such as watering, fertilizing, ripeness when picking, and storage and handling factors. Two mistakes often made when tomatoes make it into the kitchen is refrigerating them or leaving them on a sunny windowsill to ripen (only tomato plants need full sun; harvested fruit does not). Both of these practices will degrade flavor.