

What's in Season from the Garden State

Bi-weekly Highlights from Rutgers Cooperative Extension

August 14, 2006

In Search of the Real Jersey Tomato (Part II)

In Part I (<http://njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu/pdfs/whatsinseason7-31.pdf>), we identified Jersey Tomato flavor. It's that sweet-tart high sugar and high acid juicy tomato, a famous trait of the original Rutgers Tomato in the 1930s. So, how do you locate great Jersey Tomatoes today? We suggest exploring local farm markets and stores where vendors grow their own tomatoes or receive tomatoes from known local growers. Supplies are limited. Strike up a dialogue with vendors and tell them you're looking for the old time juicy, "sweet-tart" tasting Jersey Tomatoes. Speak up! When you express preferences, vendors cater to you, and New Jersey farmers increase plantings of old time favorites.



4 Large-size Heirlooms

Cherokee Purple - E

Mortgage Lifter - E

Hawaiian Pineapple - M

Prudents Purple - E

8 Medium-size Heirlooms

Eva Purple Ball - M

Arkansas Traveler - M

Box Car Willie - M

Lemon Boy (hybrid) - M

Costoluto Genovese - E

Ramapo (hybrid) - L

Brandywine Red - M

Green Zebra - E

3 Cherry-size Small Heirlooms

Snow White - E

Isis Candy - E

Yellow Pear - E

Variety becomes available:

E = early season

M = mid season

L = late season

The Heirloom Option

While we list our 15 **Rutgers NJAES Heirloom Tomato All-Stars** (see box), don't get frustrated if you can't find these specific varieties. A vendor's commitment to great tomatoes is more important than varieties. Jack Rabin, Associate Director for Farm Services describes our research to identify the best performing and tasting heirloom varieties. "Passionate tomato lovers turn to Heirloom tomato varieties in search of great tomato flavor, vivid colors, and interesting shapes. Over a five year period, Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) obtained seeds and field-tested 145 different heirloom tomato varieties. In replicated tests, at multiple New Jersey field locations, NJAES scientists evaluated all tomato performance traits of interest to New Jersey farmers and gardeners. We then conducted numerous consumer tomato taste tests. Field tests included freedom from internal and external fruit defects, yield, growing reliability across years, fruit cracking, plant growth habits like foliage protection of fruit, tolerance of destructive plant diseases, and other traits.

Of the original 145 tomatoes, we narrowed the group to the **Rutgers NJAES Heirloom Tomato All-Stars**: a short list of 15 standouts for New Jersey farms and gardens likely to make farmers money and stimulate taste buds. Variety names frequently hint at the tomatoes' color, traits, or taste. While some tomato buyers may be not be attracted to the dark blood color of Cherokee Purple or Eva Purple Ball, they appreciate the tastes and aromas. Some varieties like Yellow Pear appeal to older-age tomato

continued on page 2

New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Jersey Fresh Availability Report

Current:

Arugula and Cilantro

Baby Arugula & Baby Spinach

Basil

Beets

Cabbage

Cantalopes

Dill & Parsley

Cucumbers

Eggplant

Greens: collards, kale, Kholrabi, mustard, dandelions & Swiss

Chard

Leeks & Green Onions

Nectarines

Peaches

Peppers

Radishes

Snap beans

Squash: yellow & zucchini

Sweet corn

Tomatoes

Turnips

Watermelon

White Potatoes

Winter squashes: acorn, spaghetti, butternut



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@rcr.rutgers.edu

Web: <http://www.njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu>

For your county Rutgers Cooperative Extension office go to:

<http://www.rcr.rutgers.edu/county>

lovers and those who prefer less tart fruit that are still attractively sweet. While taste preferences widely vary, we voraciously sample [eat!] ample quantities of tomatoes each year, and can attest the Rutgers NJAES Heirloom All-Stars are an excellent, reliable list. Lemon Boy and Ramapo are F1 hybrids, not firmly Heirloom, but their fruit qualities are so uniformly preferred by tasters, we keep them on the list. Rutgers NJAES Ramapo seeds have proved expensive to produce.

A list of seed sources for our Rutgers NJAES All-Stars list can be obtained from Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Morris County at (973) 285-8307. Your growing performance will vary year-to-year with regards to yields, flavors, and all the usual problems gardeners experience."

Calling All Tastebuds: Participate in Rutgers NJAES Heirloom Taste Tests



There will be two tomato taste tests at NJAES research farms this month. On August 22 join us for the 3rd Annual Heirloom and Round Tomato Taste Testing at Rutgers Agricultural Research & Extension Center, 121 Northville Rd., Upper Deerfield, NJ (outside of Bridgeton, Cumberland County). Taste testings from 5:00 – 6:15 and wagon tours of the research farm from 6:15 - 7:00. Call the research farm for directions at (856) 455-3100.

On August 30, Rutgers Snyder Research & Extension Farm in Pittstown, NJ (Hunterdon County) hosts its 16th Annual Great Tomato

Tasting from 3:00 pm to dusk. Taste over 70 tomato varieties, including heirlooms and hybrids, and enjoy apple tasting and wagon tours of the research farm. Read more about it and get directions at http://www.snyderfarm.rutgers.edu/html/tomato_tasting.html.

Tomato Tips for the Home Gardener

A sure-fire way to get tasty tomatoes is to grow them yourself. Gardeners may find the excess cool rainy weather followed by extreme heat triggers diseases in their vegetable plantings. Martha Maletta, Horticulturalist with Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Hunterdon County says, "Black and sunken areas at the blossom end of tomato fruit are probably Blossom End Rot, a problem caused by lack of calcium in growing fruit. Causes vary, but lack of water or irregular watering is common. Affected tomatoes are edible unless secondary rots invade the fruit. For more on this common disorder and its prevention see the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Factsheet (FS011) Blossom End Rot: Tomatoes, Peppers, Eggplant or Factsheet (FS678) Growing Tomatoes in the Home Garden at <http://www.rcrc.rutgers.edu/pubs/category.asp?cat=5>."

Help! What do we do with all these tomatoes?

Now that you've got all those tomatoes, what to do with them? To beat the heat, try these no cook recipes: Chef Bruce LeFebvre from the Frog and the Peach's Jersey Tomato Gazpacho <http://www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov/recipes/njgazpacho.htm> or Giamarese Farms of East Brunswick's Classic Greek Tomato Salad <http://www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov/recipes/njgreek.htm>.



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