

the  
Canticle Farm  
newsletter

# HARVEST TIMES

The Canticle Farm is a Certified Naturally Grown farm and Community Supported Agriculture project sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany. The farm is committed to connecting all peoples, practicing Earth-friendly habits, and realizing a Creation-centered spirituality.



week of August 27, 2007

week # 13 of 20

## The Illustrious Tomato

by Elizabeth Thompson

What is your favorite way to use the tomato? The possibilities could fill several volumes of an encyclopedia of vegetable uses. This round, bright globe of a fruit has worked its way into cuisines worldwide from its humble, cherry sized beginnings in the Americas.

The tomato (*Lycopersicon esculentum*) is native to the Americas. Wild tomatoes, most likely cherry-size and yellow, like those sweet sungolds at Canticle Farm, originated in South America. The tomato seems to have been originally cultivated by the Incas and Aztecs around 700 AD. Around the 16<sup>th</sup> century the tomato found its way to Europe on the ships of the early explorers. It was embraced in southern Europe first, where it was called "yellow apple" and eaten first by the Italians.

In northern Europe tomatoes were thought to be poisonous and cultivated only as ornamentals. The story of why they were thought to be poisonous has many versions. This reputation may have come from the smell of the leaves, the fact that the acidity of tomatoes reacted with the pewter flatware of the rich, or the fact that tomatoes are in the nightshade (*Solanacea*) botanical family, which boasts a number of poisonous members. Whatever the reason for the belief that tomatoes were poisonous, it held for a long time. French botanist Tournefort gave the Latin botanical name, *Lycopersicon esculentum*, to the tomato, which translates into "wolfpeach" — peach because it was round and luscious and wolf because it was considered poisonous.

Cultivated tomatoes were brought to North America with the colonists and cultivated in home gardens. However, the belief in their danger persisted and they were not eaten. Thomas Jefferson was one of the pioneers in eating tomatoes, but they were not fully embraced until one Colonel Johnson took this issue to task. Legend has it that Colonel Johnson stood on the courthouse steps in Salem, NJ and ate a whole bushel of yellow tomatoes. People gathered to watch him, expecting him to keel over and die. Physician James Van Meter supposedly gave the following warning:

"The foolish colonel will foam and froth at the mouth and double over with appendicitis. All that oxalic acid, in one dose, and you're dead. If the Wolf Peach (tomato) is too ripe and warmed by the sun, he'll be exposing himself to brain fever. Should he,

by some unlikely chance, survive, I must warn him that the skin . . . will stick to his stomach and cause cancer."

That is quite a warning! There is no record of what gave Colonel Johnson the courage to stand up to such warnings and the historical belief in the tomato's deadly qualities, but he did and inspired the cultivation of tomatoes for consumption in southern New Jersey. An Ohio plant breeder, Robert Livingston, began developing many of the most well-known tomato cultivars of today, cultivars that produce the large, round, red fruits that we have come to expect. However, these cultivars lacked the flavor of earlier tomato varieties, since they were developed for high yields and ease of storage and transport. Earlier varieties may not have lasted as long (they certainly could never survive the distance that some of our tomatoes travel to reach our supermarkets) but they were grown for taste! There is currently a growing interest in preserving and cultivating some of the more unique and lesser-known tomato varieties. There are hundreds of these varieties and they are known as heirlooms, many passed down from generation to generation in a family. They are like heirloom treasures that we want to preserve — for their flavor, for their colors, for the sake of plant diversity on our planet. Canticle Farm grows several heirloom tomato varieties; look for them on the distribution table and see what new subtleties they lend to your favorite tomato dishes.

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## Calendar Reminders

- Wednesday, August 29<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm at Canticle Farm — presentation on "Organic Gardening for Weed and Insect Control in the Lawn and Garden" by Master Gardener Lyn Chimera.
- Saturday, September 8<sup>th</sup> at 7pm at the St. Elizabeth Motherhouse — Canticle Farm's Annual Community Auction with desserts, beverages, entertainment and a guest speaker in addition to the auction. Volunteers are still needed to plan the event and to donate items to the auction. Contact Kris Later for details at 585-307-9892 or [chogrook@aol.com](mailto:chogrook@aol.com).
- Canticle Farm will have tables at the following local events: Taste of Olean 9/9, Cuba Garlic Festival 9/15 & 16, and Bonagany 9/29. Volunteers are needed to staff the tables.

# HARVEST RECIPES

A small selection of the multitude of possibilities for using tomatoes – from *The Vegetarian Planet* by Didi Emmons.

## Tomato, Corn and Black-Bean Gazpacho

3 ears of corn, shucked  
½ cup coarsely chopped onion  
7 medium round tomatoes or 14 plum tomatoes  
2 slices of bread, toasted or left out to dry for a day, then cut into ½-inch squares  
1 ½ cups cooked black beans or 1 15-ounce can  
3 TBL minced onions  
3 TBL lime juice  
1 TBL olive oil  
3 scallions, green part only, minced  
1 tsp salt  
½ tsp black pepper  
¼ cup chopped cilantro  
1 ½ cups water  
1 jalapeno pepper, minced, seeds included (optional)

Bring 3 quarts of salted water to a boil. Drop in the corn and boil for 2 minutes. Drain and rinse with cold water then cut the kernels off the cob. In a food processor, combine the ½ cup chopped onion, tomatoes and bread. Run the machine in short spurts until the ingredients are pureed. Transfer to a large bowl. Put the beans in a strainer and rinse well with cold water. Add to the pureed ingredients the beans, minced onion, lime juice, olive oil, scallions, salt, pepper and 3 TBL of the cilantro. Add the corn kernels and the water. Stir well and adjust seasoning if desired. Add jalapeno if you like a little heat. Serve soup well chilled, garnished with remaining cilantro. It will keep up to 4 days, covered in the refrigerator.

## Tomato-Raisin Chutney

(make the full batch, or halve it if you have less tomatoes)

1 TBL canola or other vegetable oil  
3 cups chopped onion  
1 tsp fennel seeds  
1 tsp ground coriander seeds  
3 pounds tomatoes  
(about 15 plum or 8 medium round)  
1 cup apple cider vinegar  
1 cup sugar  
½ tsp salt  
2 ¼ cup raisins  
1 cup chopped walnuts, lightly toasted (optional)

In a large saucepan, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the onions, and saute them, stirring occasionally, for 15 minutes or until they begin to brown. Add the fennel seeds and coriander, and cook for another 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes, vinegar, and sugar. Simmer for 1 hour. In a blender or food pro-

cessor, or with an immersion blender, blend the chutney, leaving it a bit chunky if you prefer it that way. Stir in the salt, the raisins and, if you like, the walnuts. Let the chutney cool, then seal it in a tightly-lidded container and refrigerate. The chutney will keep for 3 weeks.

Note: This chutney is delicious with eggs in the morning, or with rice and curried vegetables.

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## How's it GROWin'?

by Garrett Dudley

Last week we were greeted by an unfamiliar stranger - MOISTURE! But we're not going to complain about the weather like most farmers. Instead, we're just going to let you know that this shot of extra juice was enough to push some of your tomatoes over the limit. This explains the split heirlooms on the choice table - ripe tomatoes that have burst before we get a chance to harvest them. Don't be afraid to try one....that splitting only proves they will be juicy!

Also, beans will be returning to your share soon. We had poor germination in our second round of bean seeding, but we will be back on track for beans next week. Please remember that beans present an easy task if you are still looking to fill volunteer hours. We need man/woman hours in the bean patch!

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## Nine Mile Scout

by Garrett Dudley

Harvesting sungolds is a tough job. Maybe the hardest on the farm. Sometimes I have to make crucial decisions like what to do when a sungold is split. I can't distribute that one, can I? And that one looks a little blemished....hmmmm...I wonder what I should do with these? I mean, I can't just leave them in the row...where ever should they go? I probably shouldn't let anyone else make these decisions; they require a certain amount of farming expertise (and willing tastebuds!).

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## WISH LIST

**The farm could use the following items: whiteboards, totes, milk crates, metal shelving and newsletter paper. Thank you!**

*"Be praised, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth who sustains us and produces diverse fruits with colored flowers and herbs...."*

- **St. Francis**  
Canticle of Creation