

Heirloom Vegetables

Searching for mouth-watering flavors? Heirloom vegetables, those old varieties saved from one generation of gardeners to another, have become popular all over again. Heirlooms invite enthusiasm. Their taste, hardness, wonderful shapes, colors, sizes, and flavors spark a sense of wonder about their history and who might have brought them here and where they may have originated.

Many vegetable varieties are pre-Columbian which are 100 to 150 years old, and some crops which are pre-European, may date as far back at 400 years. There are heirlooms that can trace their ancestries to Africa and Asia.

What draws us to heirloom vegetables is the flavor. We want a tomato that tastes like a real tomato, not a plastic one. We long for that first ear of sweet corn that tastes like it did when we were kids. We can't wait for that first crisp, juicy Norfolk (local) melon that tastes and looks better than the picture in the seed catalog. We crave fruits and vegetables that are grown for their flavor, color, and uniqueness. Plus those quirky vegetables that can come in a myriad of shapes, textures, colors, and flavors are the qualities we search for as we shop the farmers' markets, road side stands, in the grocery store and on our dinner plate at our favorite restaurant.

Consider the heirloom because so many of them are threatened with extinction. They are windows to the past and are cultural artifacts, that give us the opportunity to see, taste, and enjoy history.

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Roasted Tomato Salad

Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 4 Roma tomatoes, halved
- ¼ cup vinaigrette
- 4 cups salad greens

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Combine olive oil, salt, and pepper. Toss tomatoes in mixture. Roast tomatoes for about 15 minutes.
3. Serve tomatoes over a bed of salad greens.

Sample picture of recipe



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SUMMERTIME COOKING 2009

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Corn Relish

Serves 12

Ingredients:

- 2 cups, about 4 ears fresh corn
- 1 large carrot, shredded
- 1/3 cup chopped red onions
- 1/2 small red bell pepper
- 1 jalapeno, finely minced, seeds removed
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon celery seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard

Directions:

1. Remove husks and silk from corn. Rinse. At this point, corn can be wrapped in foil and grilled or boiled.
2. Remove corn from cob, measure 2 cups. Add carrots, onion, bell pepper and jalapeno pepper. Set aside.
3. In a small saucepan, combine sugar, vinegar, salt and celery seeds, and mustard. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat. Simmer mixture for 2 minutes. Carefully pour the mixture over the corn. Cool.
4. Cover and refrigerate for 4 hours or overnight. Serve with pork, beef or poultry.



Cucumber and Tomato Salad

Serves 6

Ingredients:

Salad:

- 1 red onion
- 4 Roma tomatoes or
1 cup grape tomatoes
- 1 jalapeno pepper, seeded
- 1 cucumber
- 1 carrot

Dressing:

- 2 Tablespoons water
- 1 Tablespoon sugar
- 1 Tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon celery seeds

Directions:

1. Salad—Thinly slice the onions. Chop tomatoes or cut grape tomatoes in half. Place in bowl. Slice pepper in half, lengthwise. Remove seeds and chop finely. Peel and slice cucumber. Peel and shred carrot. Combine all the vegetables.
2. Dressing—Combine dressing ingredients in a small saucepan. Heat until sugar dissolves. Pour mixture over vegetables. Toss. Chill for about 1 hour and serve.

Note: If tomatoes are allowed to sit in vinegar too long, about 24 hours, the texture will change. It may be best to add tomatoes just before serving.



Summer Fruit Cobbler

Serves 8 to 10

Ingredients:

Filling:

- 6 cups mixed fruit
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 3 Tablespoons cornstarch
- Pinch of salt

Topping:

- 1 1/4 cups all purpose flour
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup milk
- 4 Tablespoons butter, melted and cooled

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. To prepare filling, put fruit in a larger bowl. Mix sugar, cornstarch and salt. Toss with fruit. Pour into 9-inch square baking dish.
3. To prepare topping, combine fruit, sugar, baking powder and salt; set aside.
4. In another bowl, combine egg, milk and butter. Combine with dry ingredients.
5. Pour over fruit. Spread to cover fruit.
6. Bake until filling is bubbling, the topping is browned and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 45 minutes.



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