

Enjoy garden-fresh tomatoes in these recipes

This coarse textured salsa is more of a relish or Pico de Gallo. The ingredients can be finely diced or use a medium for chunky salsa. Serve with traditional tortilla chips or use as a side dish with grilled meat, squash cakes or anywhere you want a bright, tart, savory accompaniment.

The mixture and sprinkle on the salt. Allow to rest 30 minutes before serving to allow salt to draw juice from the tomatoes. Stir again just before serving. Makes about 2 cups.

Adapted from the University of Illinois Extension Web site (<http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/veggies/tomato1.html>)

Recipe from "The Best American Recipes 2000" by Fran McCullough and Suzanne Hamlin, (Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

EAST STUFFED TOMATOES, ROMAN STYLE

- 2 1/3 cup long-grain white rice
- 3 cups water
- salt
- 8 medium tomatoes (2 1/2 pounds), ripe but firm
- 2 medium garlic cloves, minced
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh mint
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- mint sprigs, for garnish (optional)

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Boil the rice in a saucepan of boiling salted water for 10 minutes. Rinse with cold water and drain well.

Cut off a slice from the bottom (smooth) end of each tomato, cutting about one-fourth of the tomato; reserve slice as a "hat."

Remove pulp and seeds with a spoon. Finely chop removed pulp; reserve. Sprinkle interior of tomatoes and cut side of hats lightly with salt.

Mix garlic with mint. Mix rice, garlic mixture, 2 1/2 tablespoons oil, 4 tablespoons chopped tomato pulp, and salt and pepper to taste. Mix well.

Put tomato shells in an oiled baking dish. Fill with stuffing, mounding slightly, and cover with hats. Pour diluted tomato paste around tomatoes; sprinkle them with remaining oil. Cover and bake 20 minutes. Uncover and bake, adding a few tablespoons water to pan if it becomes dry, for 10 to 20 more minutes or until tomatoes are tender. Serve hot or cold, garnish with mint sprigs. Makes 8 side-dishes or 4 main-course servings. Recipe from "Faye Levy's International Vegetable Cookbook."

Tomatoes from page D1

■ Maria Pasqualone of Farmington Hills has about 45 tomato plants, many of them the pear-shaped, Italian varieties.

her seeds and they end up in her garden. Once they come in, the tomatoes land on sandwiches, in salads and in spaghetti sauce.

"You name it. I use tomatoes," Pasqualone said.

Gard Andersen of Northville is a lot more scientific when it comes to tomato growing. His garden contains a smorgasbord of tomatoes and he's well versed at naming them.

There's the Early Girl, Big Boy, Celebrity, Rutgers and Fantastic. And then there are the Roma types as well as four different types of cherry or grape tomatoes.

The reason he grows them might be the most important reason of all.

"For the fun of it," he said. "Everybody likes tomatoes, and the ones you grow yourself are so much better than the ones you buy in the store."

Mike Murphy is a Livonia resident and writes about food, theater and movies for the Observer Newspapers. He has two tomato plants in his backyard, but so far no ripe tomatoes.

See recipes on D3.

Sinihtaj said he grows all his plants from seeds that he pulls from previous harvests.

"They're going to ripen in a minute," Sinihtaj said.

He said that he has no problem getting rid of his crop. He cans a quite a few of his tomatoes and he sees a lot of familiar faces come harvest time.

"I have a lot of relatives and they all come and visit me around this time for tomatoes. We find out we're related," Sinihtaj said.

Maria Pasqualone of Farmington Hills has about 45 tomato plants, many of them the pear-shaped, Italian varieties.

Her plants are tied to stakes set up in a teepee-like structure and are about 6 feet tall. She said last year that too much rain made for a bad crop, but this year should be different.

"This year looks good," Pasqualone said. "They're not ripened yet, but once they start to ripen they should be OK."

Pasqualone doesn't even know anymore what varieties of tomatoes she's growing. Friends give

Wine from page D1

of those vines per acre, how much do you plan to charge for this wine?

Babcock's 1999 Syrah Black Label Cuvée \$50 is inky black with blackberries, spice and anise characters. With lush

fruit, it shows a broad palate and great balance. It's worth every penny.

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Babcock has discovered that in the cool climate of Santa Ynez Valley, cabernet franc is the Bordeaux variety that ripens best. In the far eastern end of the valley, where it is warmer, great merlot can be grown to complement the franc. He also has

hopes that one day great cabernet franc - plus apple notes of merlot - will also be grown.

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The Healds are Troy residents who write about wine, food, and dining for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. To leave them a voice mail message, dial (734) 953-2047, mailbox 1864.

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