

WSU Organic Farm
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The u-pick flowers are officially open at the farm. All CSA members are invited to pick at no additional cost. We have scissors and buckets to pick into, so all you need to do is show up. Fridays, during our CSA pickup (3-6pm) is the best time. If you can't make it out on a Friday you're welcome to stop by Mondays, Wednesdays, or Thursday mornings. Those are the best times to catch someone at the farm.

We've got a couple of house-keeping issues to get out of the way. Just a reminder on the pick-up hours: Tuesdays 4:30-6:30 and Fridays 3-6. Please try to come within these times as we are stressed to get set up on time at either site and upon closing we are promptly sending any boxes that were not picked up to the food bank partners. In other words, don't wait until the last 5 minutes to show up for your produce. Our harvest days are very long and the managers are ready to get home at the end of the day.

We are also starting to pack green beans into the Ziploc bags and strawberries into the pint containers. These are both reusable items so please be sure to try to return them. Helen Belt brought me a very nice stack of pint containers and bags last week and she was rewarded with a pint of strawberries. So we will give incentives to folks who bring "large" quantities of reusable items. These include the Ziploc bags, twist ties, pint containers, and either plastic or paper grocery bags. We DO NOT want berry containers with lids (clamshells), salad mix bags, or small paper or plastic bags.

The tomatoes are coming! Last week we started to harvest two varieties: Stupice and New Girl. The Stupice is an heirloom that is fairly small but comes on early and has a wonderful sweeter flavor. New Girl is an indeterminate hybrid that is larger and also has a

great flavor. The tomato hoophouse just got a pruning and weeding last week and is looking really good. We had to actually beef up the trellis system for the two middle beds as the weight of the fruit was pulling the suspended wire down too low. And on the outside beds the cages have begun to fall over for the same reason.

As far as pruning goes we just try to keep the plants manageable so we can get down the pathways to get at the ripe tomatoes. We're not doing any fancy techniques other than just taking out the wild vines that hang into the paths. If the vines have a lot of fruit we try to work it back into the trellis or cage so as not to lose any. As with some of the other crops we will start out giving the tomatoes to the full shares until there is enough to go around for all. This should not be a problem once the main varieties ripen. After pruning and weeding we fertilized with a 1-5-5 mixture and kelp. The 1-5-5 will help promote fruit development rather than more green plant growth. There is plenty of "plant" to support the energy needs of the tomatoes but we want the plants to focus on flowering and growing good fruit now.

Speaking of fertilizers we are also working with the WSU Compost Facility to mix a special blend of compost for the farm. Cece, one of our students, worked out a way that we will be sending our weeds and produce waste to the facility to get mixed into a blend of dairy animal waste and food waste. They will turn and get the mix to high temperatures many times in order to kill any weed seeds or other pathogens. We do not generate enough material at the farm to consistently get our compost piles up to the required 135 degrees. So we'll leave it up to the experts and then get the finished product shipped back to the farm. This in turn will continue to help grow excellent tomatoes!

- Brad Jaeckel



Fennel by Alice Swan.

Tomatoes are best eaten ripe in the garden, says one of my favorite writers, M.F.K. Fisher, and I of course agree with her. She says in the garden you can bend over when the juice drips. Second best, I think, is sliced, with a little salt and olive oil on a platter. Fresh mozzarella and some basil makes it a salad perfect to accompany good bread.

Some recipes call for peeled tomatoes - all this involves is dropping them for a minute in boiling water and then removing them with a slotted spoon. The peels will then come right off with a little finesse from you.

Try not to refrigerate your tomatoes if you can - it takes away some of the flavor.

Here are a couple tomato recipes from *The Cook and the Gardener* by Amanda Hesser.

Seared Tomatoes with Olive Oil and Sage

4 very ripe tomatoes, cored, and halved like grapefruits

Coarse or kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

Pinch sugar

8 sage leaves

1/4 cup best quality olive oil

Heat a large iron skillet or heavy saute' pan over high heat. Meanwhile cut a few slashes in the skin of each tomato half and season with salt, pepper, and a little sugar. Lay a sage leaf on top of each cut side.

When the skillet is almost smoking, reduce the heat to medium high. Sprinkle in 1 tablespoon of olive oil and lay the tomato halves, skin sides down, in the skillet. Sear the tomatoes until they are well browned, adjusting the heat as necessary to prevent burning, about 5 minutes per side. Using a spatula, carefully remove to a serving plate, keeping sage leaves intact. Sprinkle remaining olive oil over tomatoes. Taste and adjust seasonings. They can be served warm or cool and can be stored in fridge for up to three days.

Cool Tomato-Mint Soup

2 shallot lobes, sliced thin

6 medium very ripe tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and chopped

4 cups vegetable stock

Coarse or kosher salt

3-4 sprigs mint, torn into small pieces

Freshly ground black pepper

Juice of 1/2 lemon

1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar

Best quality olive oil

In a large saucepan combine shallot, tomato and stock. Season lightly with salt and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Transfer the soup and mint leaves to a food processor. You may need to do it in batches. Do not puree the soup but pulse it three or four times within 30 seconds to break up the tomatoes. The soup should be a dense puree with random chunks of tomato strewn throughout.

Transfer to a bowl and adjust the seasoning, adding salt and freshly ground black pepper, lemon juice, and vinegar as desired. Let cool and taste again. Serve with olive oil drizzled over the top. Follow with a plate of goat's milk cheese and bread.