In the Share

Cherry Tomatoes, members 46-66
Carnival Squash, 1 piece
Green Beans, 1 bag
Carmen Sweet Peppers, 2 pieces
Red or Yellow Bell Pepper, 1 piece
Edamame, 1 bag
Leeks, 2 pieces
Beets, 1 bunch
Choice of Dragon or Romano, 1 bag
Lettuce, 1 head
Garlic, 1 head

Tomatoes, as noted on signs

Claire’s Comments

Tomato Bosses, 2012

Every season there comes a week when the tomatoes take charge. One week the plants are full of promising green orbs. The next there is red dripping from very vine, demanding attention, threatening to drop to the ground and burst into a messy soup if ignored. This was the week the tomatoes transformed themselves from just another crop to the boss of us all.

I remember back in July when the very first fruits started to ripen. Jake and I looked out at the field and groaned and hung our heads, suddenly heavy with the knowledge of what was to come. The interns looked at us and wondered at our reaction. At the time they were still innocent of the demands of the tomato kingdom. Now that the joy of the first ripe fruit is past, they are beginning to understand how ruthless the tomato bosses can be. We harvest and haul and sort, careful not to slip on the fallen fruits that have started to rot and stink in the aisles, careful not to carry disease from the early varieties to the late ones. We work hard to keep the plants happy and to keep the fruits coming even though they have already filled all our crates and taxed our patience with their all-or-nothing ripening habit.

I wasn’t really sure it would happen this year. The plants were off to an earlier than usual start, and for reasons still unknown refused to produce much unblemished fruits. It was slow and steady and unusually manageable. For a while there I was wondering if we would ever reach the point of being overwhelmed with tomatoes. It finally happened on Wednesday.

We were late to get started on the tomatoes because we had a small crew and extra work packing orders to pack for the Good Food Garden Party this weekend. So, we knew it was going to be rough. But when the crew pulled in 20 buckets of tomatoes from the first bed they harvested, a bed that produced 12 buckets the week before, we understood the full magnitude of what was ahead. Let’s just say, we did not finish by quitting time...

The good and bad news is that the tomatoes will one day die. Whether from disease or frost, they will die. There is no way to stop this natural process. It happens every year. Every year we try to hold it off, and every year we cannot help but smile when the tomatoes are finally taken down by forces more powerful than they, and we are freed from their relentless harvest schedule.

Meanwhile we pick and haul and sort and pack, and we are grateful for this bounty, as demanding as it is. No matter how many we put up for use later in the year, nothing can compare to the fresh tomatoes of summer. They are well worth the stink of fallen fruit clinging to our shoes. So, we conform ourselves to the needs of this crop and enjoy its beauty and flavor as long as it commands us.
Recipe

I consider myself somewhat of a tomato fiend. It's hard for me to bring myself, in anything but a year of huge abundance, to eat tomatoes any way other than sliced with a bit of salt. But when I do, this is one of my favorite things to make. It's best with several different types of tomatoes if you have them.

- Eric Udelhofen, Farm Intern

Tomato Galette
from Harvest to Heat by Naomi Pomeroy

1 cup flour
1/2 tsp course salt plus more for tomatoes
1 tsp baking powder
1 stick butter chilled (I cut this by as much as half)
1/2 cup crème fraîche, cream, or half and half
1 pint of tomatoes sliced
1/3 pound of cheese
1/2 cup crème fraîche or half and half
1 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp course salt plus more for tomatoes
1 cup flour

1. Dough: combine flour, salt, baking powder and butter pieces (I usually grate frozen or chilled butter). Mix until butter is incorporated. Mix in cream. Turn onto a plate and cover to chill for 2 hours (this step is skippable if you're in a rush).
2. Put the tomatoes in a colander and sprinkle with salt. Drain for a while.
3. Heat oven to 425. Dust a work surface with flour, and roll dough into 12 inch round about 1/8 inch thick. Dust flour under dough if it sticks.
4. Slide a baking sheet under the dough (rimmed is harder to slide under, but fewer juices seep over and burn on the bottom of the oven). Leaving a 3-inch border, scatter cheese on top of dough and then arrange tomatoes evenly over the cheese. Fold the sides over the tomatoes, pleating as you go around.
5. Bake until golden brown, 30-40 minutes. I like it better on the more done side.

Larry Meiller Show on WPR

Garden Talk on WI Public Radio
Friday, September 7th
11:00 am to 12:30 pm
Ideas Network 90.9 FM

Claire Strader and Megan Cain of Madison FarmWorks will talk about our urban garden design, installation, and education business. They will also answer garden questions from callers.

Troy Community Farm
Claire Strader • 442-6760 • claire@troygardens.org