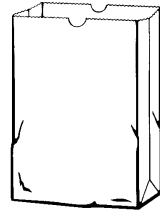


IN THE BAG
Potomac Vegetable Farms
August 27, 2008



Mini: tomatoes, peppers (green and red), spaghetti squash, beans, basil, onion

Regular: tomatoes, peppers (green and red), spaghetti squash, beans, basil, swiss chard, heirloom tomato, summer squash

Robust: tomatoes, peppers (green and red), spaghetti squash, beans, basil, swiss chard, heirloom tomato, summer squash

This is the time to think about putting tomatoes away for later, if you are so inclined. For the next two weeks or so, you have the option of ordering “canning tomatoes” to make sauce or soup or whole peeled tomatoes. These tomatoes will be ripe and ready to cook, but imperfect. CSA customers get a 20% discount (a 30 pound basket will cost you \$20), but you have to come to the farm (either PVF Purcellville, or Vienna) to get your tomatoes because we simply cannot fit another thing into our delivery vehicles. Tomato season often ends abruptly, so if you are thinking about this possibility, make a plan and send an e-mail with your request.

Two new items in the bags this week:

Spaghetti Squash: this is the first variety of winter squash to get ripe. And, it’s even earlier this year than usual. First of all winter squash is called that because it can sit in storage and be eaten in the winter, as opposed to summer squash with its thin skin that lasts only one week after picking. We’ve had some trouble with “pickle worms” in the last couple of years damaging the ripe squash in the field right before we harvest them so this year we planted extra early to avoid those bugs. The strategy seems to have worked. The crop looks good. You’ll be seeing some butternut squashes later in the season.

Spaghetti squash gets its name due to the stringy quality of its flesh. After cooking it can be removed from the outer shell by running a fork through it. It will look kind of like spaghetti noodles. You can get to this point by cutting it in half, removing the seeds and either baking or steaming until tender. Once you get the “noodles” out it is delicious with a tomato sauce or just butter and cheese.

Red Peppers: you finally get some ripe peppers to enjoy. This variety is called Carmen and we grow it expressly for red peppers. You must know that all the peppers you’ve had so far are technically unripe pepper. Almost all sweet pepper start out green and then ripen to either red or yellow or orange. The ripe fruit are just as you would expect – softer and sweeter than their unripe counterparts. These are delicious raw or cooked. More to come in the future!

There have been countless wonderful tomato recipes in the Washington Post the last two weeks or so. If you’re having trouble keeping up with your pile find a recipe on their website.

Gazpacho (Nell Hirsch)

1 small onion, peeled & quartered

2 large or 3 small cloves of garlic

2 pounds ripe tomatoes
½ green pepper
2 medium cucumbers, peeled and in chunks
2 celery stalks, in chunks
1 can (I use Campbell's) tomato juice
¼ cup balsamic vinegar
1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil

Juice of 1 lime, or 2 Tbsp. bottled
½ cup chopped fresh parsley
1/8 tsp cayenne pepper
Grating of black pepper
1 tsp salt
1 Tbsp sugar
Splash of Tabasco

Use food processor with the bottom blade. Blend a little tomato juice, the onion and the garlic. Add some veggies, and process until coarsely chopped. Remove mixture to a large bowl.

Place the rest of the veggies in the food processor. Add the liquid ingredients and seasonings to food processor with remaining tomato juice, and process. Pour into the large bowl and stir it all together. Chill.

Burt's Fresh Tomato Soup

From Washington Post , Sept. 18, 1996

The tomatoes for this do not need to be peeled, because the soup will be run through a food mill or strainer and the debris will be filtered out.

2 large onions, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, peeled
2 ribs celery, peeled (if needed) and finely chopped
2 TBLS olive oil
1 TBLS butter
2 TBLS flour
10 large very ripe tomatoes, coarsely chopped
2 - 3 tsp sugar *
2 large branches fresh basil (8 - 10 leaves) plus 2 TBLS finely chopped fresh basil to be added at the end
1/8 tsp crushed hot red pepper flakes
Salt & Pepper to taste

In a large pot, cook the onions, garlic and celery in the oil and butter until very soft but not brown. Add the flour and cook another minute, stirring frequently.

Add the tomatoes and any juices that have wept from them during the chopping, along with the sugar, basil branches, pepper flakes and salt and pepper. Bring to a gentle boil. Skim away any foam that forms on the surface of the soup with a large spoon or ladle and simmer 10 minutes.

Run the soup thru the fine blade of a food mill or thru a coarse strainer, discarding the pieces of skin, stem and basil that get trapped.

Reheat. Adjust seasoning and stir in the chopped basil just before serving.

*Note: the amount of sugar in this soup depends on the sweetness of the tomatoes. Sometimes you will be able to eliminate it completely, sometimes you will need to add several teaspoons. Never add so much that the soup becomes sweet.

8 - 10 servings