



August 17, 2002

This Week at Market

- Summer Squash “Yellow Crookneck”
- Zucchini “Cocozella di Napoli”
- Spaghetti Squash
- Green Beans “Prolific”, “Kentucky Wonder”
- Heirloom Tomatoes “Cherokee Purple”, “Black Krim”, “Tigerella”, “Green Zebra”, “Aunt Ruby’s Green”
- Cucumber “Armenian”
- Carrots “Red Core Chantenay”
- Eggs from Free Range Hens

Tomato Bread Pudding

- 1 cup peeled and seeded tomatoes**
- 3 slices country-style bread, cut into ½ inch cubes**
- 1 cup golden brown sugar**
- ¾ cup water**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- ½ cup softened butter**
- 2 tsp freshly squeezed lemon juice**

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Cut the tomatoes in small pieces, reserving all juice. Toast the bread cubes lightly. Set aside. Place the brown sugar, water, and salt in a medium saucepan over low heat. Cook until the sugar and water have combined, about 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes, bread cubes, butter, and lemon juice. Cook, stirring very gently until the butter has melted, about 3 to 4 minutes. Pour the tomato mixture into a baking dish. Bake until bubbling, 30-35 minutes. Serve piping hot.

Baked tomato pudding recipes have been a southern staple since before the Civil War. Like biscuits, every southern mother had her own recipe. This one is from Joan Neilson’s mother. Joan is the co-author of *The Great Tomato Book*.

Boánn’s Banks

Sustainable Agriculture Along the Broad River

Hello! All sun and no rain make Jack something something. How does that saying go? With everything baking now, it’s hard to remember cooler weather is growing near. Hopefully seedlings for the

fall veggies this week will help remind us. Thanks for coming to market. Eat well!

-- Chris and Eric Wagoner
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Featured Vegetable

For the next few weeks, we turn our attention to the fruit that’s legally a vegetable: tomatoes, *Lycopersicon esculentum*. Tomatoes, one of the most universally popular vegetables, are a relatively recent addition to the world’s kitchens. They were domesticated in Peru thousands of years ago (a dozen wild varieties grow there still, each with tiny red berries) and spread throughout south and central America. The Aztecs really took a shine to them, calling the berries “Xitomatl”. They used them in a dish of chopped tomatoes, peppers, and salt – the first salsa. The first European mention of them comes from an Italian herbalist in 1544 where they were called *pomi d’oro*, or “Golden Apple”, and eaten with oil, salt, and pepper. From there, they spread to Spain where they were called *pome dei Moro* (“Moor’s Apple”), and from there to France, where the name was corrupted to *pomme d’amour*, “Love Apple”. The spread slowed there, though, as the tomato closely resembles a variety of the deadly nightshade that grows extensively in Northern Europe. The consumption of the fruit was one of the things that differentiated northern Europeans from southerners through the early 1800’s. This bias spread to the American colonies where few people would eat it. George Washington Carver talked up tomatoes as much as he did peanuts, but few listened. One story has Colonel Robert Gibbon Johnson announcing that at noon on September 26, 1820, he would eat a bushel of tomatoes on the courthouse steps in Boston. Scores of people showed up to watch the poor man poison himself, only to be amazed when he lived. The story may be apocryphal, but it was about that time that the tomato really caught on. By 1835, tomatoes were sold by the dozen in Boston’s Quincy Market. Seed catalogs began list a few different varieties, and by the 1880’s, there were 171 named cultivars, including “Trophy”, the first large red smooth-skinned variety – what most people now think of as tomatoes.

Like with most other vegetables, the last 50 years has seen many of the old varieties lost in favor of a few that have been bred for thick skin, firm flesh, and shipability. Fifteen years ago, one would be hard-pressed to find even twenty varieties available. Luckily, tomato seeds were often kept by families from one generation to the next, so many of those lost varieties are being re-discovered, grown by families in mountain hollows for unbroken generations. Others are emerging from areas just now opening up to research in Eastern Europe and Russia. As people rediscover what a real tomato tastes like, interest in heirlooms have grown and varieties of a range of vegetables are coming back from the brink of being lost forever.

Oh... about tomatoes being “legally a vegetable”? That issue was settled in 1893 by the US Supreme Court (*Nix vs Hedden*). A tomato importer used the botanical fact that tomatoes are a fruit to avoid paying the 10% tariff that the US charges (still!) on all imported vegetables. The court ruled, “Botanically speaking, tomatoes are fruits of a vine, just as are cucumbers, squashes, beans, and peas. But in the common language of the people...all these are vegetables, which are grown in kitchen gardens, and which, whether eaten cooked or raw, are, like potatoes, carrots, parsnips, turnips, beets, cauliflower, cabbage, celery and lettuce, usually served at dinner in, with or after the soup, fish or meats which constitute the principal part of the repast, and not, like fruits generally, as dessert.” And so the tax had to be paid.

Next week: The stories behind the varieties we grow.