Recipes and Tips for Enjoying Your Harvest
As any cook knows, the success of a recipe depends on the quality of the ingredients. And as any gardener knows, freshness is everything when it comes to vegetables. Tomatoes, peppers, corn, green beans, lettuce— their homegrown flavors are so exquisite that gardeners tend to go light on the usual herbs and spices and salt. That’s why the recipes in this guide are straightforward, allowing the vegetables to star in their own right. Cooking times are relatively short to make the most of nutritional value and fresh flavor.

You’ll find suggestions for when to harvest vegetables to catch them at their very best. And, assuming that the garden will produce more than you can eat in one serving, you can use the tips on refrigerating, drying, and freezing the harvest. There’s no need to fuss with traditional canning rituals as long as you have room in the refrigerator and freezer.

All the while, you’ll have the assurance of knowing your produce is free of the various coatings used to keep supermarket vegetables looking good despite being trucked and flown from around the world. Carnauba wax, beeswax, shellac, petrolatum— these are some of the unlabeled ingredients you are apt to be putting in your shopping cart. Grow your own, and you can take satisfaction in knowing that you couldn’t be serving a more healthful or flavorful meal.
Lemony Green Beans with Sunchokes

Sunchokes are also known as Jerusalem artichokes, although they are not artichokes but the roots of a sunflower. In Italy, “sunflower” is *girasole*, which sounds something like Jerusalem; hence, the name. Sunchokes have a delicious nutty flavor and crunchy texture that work well with braised vegetables.

1 lb green beans, trimmed
½ c sliced sunchokes
¼ c defatted chicken stock
¼ c lemon juice
1 Tbsp chopped fresh oregano
1 tsp Dijon mustard
1 tsp honey
Coarsely ground black pepper

To prepare the sunchokes, remove the tough outer layer with a sharp knife or vegetable peeler.

In a large nonstick frying pan over medium heat, combine the green beans, sunchokes, chicken stock, and lemon juice. Cover, and cook for 3 minutes, or until the beans are tender.

Add the oregano, mustard, and honey. Cook, stirring, for 1 minute, or until the liquid is reduced to a glaze. Add pepper to taste.

Serves 4

Dilly Beans

Barely cooked beans can be packed into a pickle jar after the half-sours are gone. Don’t let that good garlicky brine go to waste!

Into the Harvest Basket

The saying “tough beans” must have originated in the garden. If harvested late, green beans are apt to be somewhat leathery. Check them just a week or so after you see blossoms, and test a couple by trying to break them. They should snap crisply in two; the seeds should be small and only partly formed; and the beans should not be wider than a pencil. To pick beans without hurting the plant, pinch the stems between your thumbnail and index finger.

Keeping Them at Their Best

To store beans for up to 4 days, rinse them and place them—still wet—in a plastic bag with a few perforations, then refrigerate. Beans will be okay for up to a week if you blanch them first; just steam for 1 or 2 minutes, allow to cool, then bag and refrigerate. To freeze them for long-term storage, snap the ends, cut to size if you wish, blanch in steam for 4 minutes, quickly dry them with toweling, and place in a sealed plastic bag. Remember to reduce cooking times for beans that have been blanched.
Roasted Beets with Herbs and Garlic

Here’s a way to prepare beets that will win over anyone who has yet to enjoy this vegetable.

2 lb small beets, scrubbed
2 Tbsp chicken or vegetable broth
1 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 large shallot, finely chopped
½ tsp dried sage, crushed
Pinch of ground allspice
½ tsp salt
½ tsp freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Cut each beet into 8 wedges. Place the beets, broth, oil, garlic, shallot, sage, allspice, salt, and pepper in an 11" × 7" baking dish. Toss to coat well.

Cover tightly with foil, and bake, stirring occasionally, for 1 hour, or until the beets are very tender.

Serves 4

Per serving: 132 cal, 4 g pro, 23 g carb, 4 g fat, 1 g sat fat, 0 mg chol, 5 g fiber, 288 mg sodium

Beets

The brilliant pink of beets makes them the most colorful of vegetables. In contrast to their flesh, they carry a hint of earthiness in their flavor. If you roast them rather than steaming or boiling, you can bring out an inherent sweetness.

Into the Harvest Basket

As you thin young beets, be sure to use the greens. For optimal flavor and texture, yank the roots before they grow more than 3" in diameter. Older beets may tend to crack and fissure, but they’re still good to eat. Harvest before the first good frost kills the plants. Or, you can store a late-season crop right where it is by covering it with a 6” layer of mulch.

Keeping Them at Their Best

Beets can be stored in the refrigerator for a few weeks. Twist off the tops, and put the beets in plastic bags. Leave the bags open so moisture does not build up inside. Beet greens will also keep, if wrapped and refrigerated, for about a week.

To freeze, cut, slice, or grate beets, and store in freezer bags. Thaw before using in recipes that call for fresh beets. To freeze beet greens, wash them, dry thoroughly, and trim the stems. Stack the leaves flat between squares of waxed paper. Seal stacks in plastic bags, and freeze. Defrost before using.

If you’re storing your beets in a root cellar, don’t wash them. Gently twist off leaves, leaving about 2 inches of stem. Left on, leaves will drain moisture from the beets, causing them to shrivel.

Digging for Gold

If you don’t care for the way that red beets turn every dish into something that looks like a preschooler’s watercolor, try growing a yellow variety. The flavor is a tad milder. For a spectacular summer soup, make a borscht out of red beets and another out of yellow, then swirl the two together in each bowl.
Asian Slaw

Think of this cabbage recipe as coleslaw with a passport. The flavors of ginger and sesame transform the shredded cabbage into something exotic.

- ¼ c rice wine vinegar or white wine vinegar
- 2 Tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp grated fresh ginger
- 1 tsp toasted sesame oil
- ½ head Chinese or Savoy cabbage, shredded
- 2 carrots, shredded
- 3 scallions, sliced
- ½ red bell pepper, cut into slivers
- 2 Tbsp chopped fresh cilantro
- 2 tsp sesame seeds, toasted

In a large bowl, combine the vinegar, soy sauce, ginger, and oil. Add the cabbage, carrots, scallions, bell pepper, and cilantro. Toss to coat. Sprinkle each serving with sesame seeds.

Serves 4

Cabbage isn’t about to challenge tomatoes or lettuce as the most popular garden vegetable. Flavor aside, the heads keep so well that store-bought cabbage is nearly as crisp and sweet as the crop you’d carry in from the backyard. The key word in the previous sentence is nearly. Even this humble, working-class vegetable is best enjoyed fresh. And by growing your own, you have your choice of varieties from around the world—green or red, crinkled or smooth.

Into the Harvest Basket

Harvest the cabbage heads when full and firm, but don’t look on admiringly while they grow needlessly large—big heads are prone to spoiling. If you cut the heads off high on the stem without disturbing the roots, the plants may push out little heads (they’re something like brussels sprouts) for a second, miniature harvest. Cabbage tends to improve in flavor with a couple of mild frosts, but round them up before the first hard freeze.

Keeping Them at Their Best

Cabbage heads will stay in good shape for 2 weeks if placed moist in a plastic bag and stored in the refrigerator. If you have an unheated basement that hovers just above freezing through the winter—that’s traditionally known as a root cellar—you can store cabbage there for 2 or 3 months.

Cabbage for Color

To lend some spark to an all-green salad, simply quarter a head of fresh red cabbage, and grate a bit into the salad bowl. The same goes for stir-fries and sautéed dishes that look a little bland.

Per serving: 85 cal, 4 g pro, 16 g carb, 2 g fat, 0 g sat fat, 0 mg chol, 5 g fiber, 634 mg sodium
**Corn-off-the-Cob Salad**

Tired of corn on the cob? Here is a quick way to combine vegetable proteins in a simple dish.

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\begin{align*}
\frac{1}{4} & \text{ c red wine vinegar} \\
2 & \text{ Tbsp olive oil} \\
1 & \text{ tsp lemon juice} \\
1 & \text{ clove garlic, minced} \\
2 & \text{ tsp sugar} \\
1 & \text{ can (15 oz) black beans, rinsed and drained} \\
1 & \text{ c fresh or frozen corn kernels, thawed} \\
1 & \text{ c chopped red bell pepper} \\
\frac{1}{4} & \text{ c chopped fresh parsley}
\end{align*}
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In a small bowl, whisk together the vinegar, oil, lemon juice, garlic, and sugar. In a separate bowl, combine the beans, corn, bell pepper, and parsley. Pour the dressing over the corn and beans, and toss to combine.

Serves 9

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**Into the Harvest Basket**

Tucked in their husks, ears of corn don’t advertise how ready they are for picking. You can judge by the silks—they should be browned but also still damp to the touch. Double-check by exposing a bit of an ear and piercing a kernel with your fingernail or a knife blade; the juice within should look milky, not clear. (No juice? Sorry, but the ear is probably past ripe.) Traditional wisdom has it that you should harvest corn late in the afternoon and have it for dinner that same day.

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**Keeping Them at Their Best**

Although corn is best enjoyed right off the stalk, you can store ears in the refrigerator for a day or two. Corn freezes well. Get to the job quickly, while the ears are still fresh; steam them for 6 to 8 minutes, then cut the kernels with a knife or corn cutter, and freeze until needed.

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**Grow Your Own Popcorn**

It’s easy to grow ears of gourmet popcorn, and the stalks take up less space than conventional varieties. The little ears can also be used for fall decorations. Or, shell and pop a few whenever you plan to watch a video.

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**Per serving:** 80 cal, 3 g pro, 11 g carb, 4 g fat, 0 g sat fat, 0 mg chol, 2 g fiber, 125 mg sodium
Cucumbers

Notice how supermarket cucumbers tend to be greasy to the touch? Chances are they’ve been coated with an oil or wax to prevent them from drying out. You can bypass the yuckiness by growing your own. And because you control the time of harvest, you can ensure that the cukes are plucked before they have a chance to become seedy and bland.

Into the Harvest Basket

Pick cucumbers when they have turned a rich green and are still slender; fruits allowed to become large and pale are apt to be watery and flavorless. Harvest daily to encourage the vines to be more productive. When picking cukes for pickling, keep the size of your jars in mind.

Keeping Them at Their Best

Cucumbers are good for a week or two in the refrigerator. The pickle jar is the best place to keep them longer than that. For a healthful no-salt pickle, you can use equal parts of white vinegar and water flavored with garlic, grape leaves, horseradish root, and dill. Cool as they may be, cukes don’t take particularly well to freezing. You can peel them, then dice or puree, and freeze without blanching. The texture is sacrificed in the process, but you can use cucumbers stored this way in soups and casseroles.

Cold Tomato and Cucumber Soup

Combine two favorite garden veggies in this healthful dish. It has lots of vitamins A, C, and K plus chromium and potassium.

2 lb tomatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
1 large clove garlic
1 large cucumber, peeled, halved, seeded, and finely chopped
1 c tomato juice
½ c finely chopped fresh basil
1 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
1 Tbsp red wine vinegar
½ tsp salt
¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper

In 2 batches in a food processor, combine the tomatoes and garlic. Process until smooth. Place in a bowl.

Add the cucumber, tomato juice, basil, oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper to the bowl. Cover, and chill for at least 3 hours, or until very cold and the flavors have blended.

Serves 4

The Coolest Dish of Summer

In India, where the weather is hot and the cuisine even hotter, a raita [RI-tah] is a popular side dish. Simply grate or finely dice peeled cukes, and stir into plain yogurt. Refrigerate before serving.

Per serving: 100 cal, 3 g pro, 16 g carb, 4 g fat, 1 g sat fat, 0 mg chol, 3 g fiber, 410 mg sodium
Freshly picked herbs have more zip and more subtlety than the dried, store-bought versions. For convenience, grow them right in your kitchen or near your back door. If you pinch them with care as you use them, herbs make shapely houseplants; rosemary can be given the form of little weath-ered trees, for example, and purple-leaved basils are especially attractive. Put them near a window that gets a good amount of sun.

### Into the Harvest Basket

Allow herb plants to establish themselves before harvesting their leaves; perennials do best if only a few leaves are snipped in their first year. Generally, the best stage at which to harvest herbs is just before the plants come into flower. A morning picking, after the dew has evaporated, will catch them at their most flavorful.

### Keeping Them at Their Best

The best herb candidates for drying include marjoram, mint, oregano, rosemary, and thyme. To freeze herbs, first blanch them for a few seconds by dipping sprigs in boiling water, cooling them under running water, then packing them in freezer bags. Another strategy is to capture the character of your favorite herbs in flavored vinegars and oils. As a general guideline, use three or four sprigs per quart of vinegar or oil.

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### Garden Mayonnaise

Try topping plain burgers with this spread.

- \( \frac{3}{4} \) c lightly packed fresh parsley
- \( \frac{1}{2} \) c low-fat mayonnaise
- \( \frac{1}{2} \) c lightly packed fresh basil
- 2 tsp wine vinegar
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 small onion, quartered
- Salt
- Ground black pepper

In a food processor, combine the parsley, basil, garlic, and onion. Process until very finely chopped. Mix in the mayonnaise and vinegar. Pulse to mix. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Yields about 1 cup

**Per tablespoon:** 30 cal, 0 g pro, 2 g carb, 3 g fat, 0 g sat fat, 5 mg chol, 0 g fiber, 105 mg sodium

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### Pesto

This pesto can be frozen for up to 3 months in an airtight container. To use, spoon out the required amount of frozen pesto needed to add to pizza, soup, pasta, or a sandwich.

- 2\( \frac{1}{2} \) c packed fresh basil
- \( \frac{3}{4} \) c packed fresh parsley
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic
- 2 Tbsp pine nuts or walnuts, toasted
- Salt
- Ground black pepper
- \( \frac{1}{4} \) c grated Parmesan cheese
- \( \frac{1}{4} \) c fat-free reduced-sodium chicken broth

In a food processor or blender, combine the basil, parsley, oil, garlic, pine nuts or walnuts, and a pinch each of salt and pepper. Pulse to finely chop. Sprinkle with the Parmesan cheese. With the machine running, add the broth, 1 tablespoon at a time, until the mixture is the consistency of prepared mustard.

Yields about 1 cup

**Per tablespoon:** 30 cal, 1 g pro, 1 g carb, 3 g fat, 1 g sat fat, 0 mg chol, 0 g fiber, 65 mg sodium
Great salads can’t be had without great greens, and the best source is the home garden. For those of us who grew up knowing only iceberg and romaine lettuces, the offerings in seed catalogs are a revelation, with their speckled, frilled, and brilliantly colored varieties. You can buy mesclun mixes of lettuces, with or without other greens to add piquancy; or buy several varieties and come up with your own blend.

Into the Harvest Basket
When you thin your lettuce plants, make salads from the plants you pull out. As the lettuce matures, snip off the outer leaves of leaf lettuce; this will prompt the plants to produce new growth. Or use scissors to regularly mow the tops off plants. As the weather heats up and the lettuce is in danger of bolting, pull entire plants. As for head lettuce, wait for the heads to fill out, and then pull the plants for use.

Keeping Them at Their Best
Leaf lettuce is best eaten right away, but you can keep it fresh for a few days by rinsing it in cool water, shaking off the excess water, sealing it in a plastic bag along with a moistened paper towel, and storing it in the refrigerator.

Puree of Peas with Lettuce
Serve this side dish with roasted meats or poultry. Making puree is a good way to use older peas.

1 Tbsp butter
¼ c minced onions
¾ c chicken stock or water
2½ c shelled peas
1 head Boston lettuce, rinsed, cored, and shredded
2 Tbsp minced fresh parsley
1 Tbsp minced fresh tarragon (or ½ tsp dried)
¼ tsp freshly ground white pepper

Melt the butter in a medium saucepan over low heat. Add the onions, and cook for 4 minutes, or until soft.

Add the chicken stock or water. Bring to a boil. Add the peas and the lettuce. Cover, and simmer for 3 to 10 minutes, or until the peas are tender.

Transfer the mixture to a food processor. Add the parsley, tarragon, and pepper, and puree until almost smooth. Serve immediately.

Serves 5

Per serving: 90 cal, 5 g pro, 12 g carb, 3 g fat, 2 g sat fat, 5 mg chol, 4 g fiber, 35 mg sodium

Weatherproof Lettuce
Midsummer sunlight beats up lettuce, toughening the leaves and encouraging the plants to bolt. By simply laying down a floating row cover of lightweight fabric, you help to deflect the sun’s rays. Bring out the fabric again in fall to help protect the lettuce from the first frosts.
Onions

Onions are a staple of cuisines around the world. Their personality changes depending on how you prepare them: They have plenty of zip when used raw, are mellowed by stewing, and become sweet with roasting.

Into the Harvest Basket
Harvest onions when their tops flop over and have turned brown, indicating that they are mature. But be sure to pull them before the first heavy frost.

Keeping Them at Their Best
Once you’ve got them inside, cure onions for 2 weeks or so in a cool, dry place away from direct light; this allows them to develop the dry outer scales that extend their shelf life. Remember, Bermuda and Spanish onions don’t hold up particularly well in storage.

Grilled Red Onions
Onions can be roasted along with strips of zucchini and bell pepper, in the oven or on an outdoor grill.

1 large red onion, cut into ¼” slices (don’t separate into rings)
2 tsp olive oil
Fresh thyme sprigs (optional)
Fresh dill sprigs (optional)

Paint the onion slices on both sides with the oil, and grill or broil for about 4 minutes on each side. While the slices are still hot, sprinkle with sprigs of thyme or dill, if using. Serve with fish, meat, or poultry.

Serves 4

Perpetual Onions
You don’t have to buy onion sets every year. Looking ahead to next season, select sets (immature plants) under ¾” in diameter from your own garden, and store them just above freezing, perhaps on a protected porch or in the garage.

Per serving: 35 cal, 0 g pro, 4 g carb, 3 g fat, 0 g sat fat, 0 mg chol, 0 g fiber, 0 mg sodium
Curried Lentil-and-Onion Stew

The russet colors of curried onions and sweet potatoes make this dish a great autumn entrée. Slightly undercook the lentils to keep them from becoming mushy.

1 tsp olive oil
1½ c coarsely chopped onions
2 c peeled, chopped tomatoes
2 c cooked, peeled, and chopped sweet potatoes
2 tsp curry powder
1 c green lentils, rinsed and drained
½ c dry sherry or apple juice
2½ c reduced-sodium vegetable broth or water
4 oz uncooked spaghetti
2 tsp reduced-sodium soy sauce
¼ c chopped fresh parsley

Lightly coat a Dutch oven with cooking spray. Add the oil, and set over medium-high heat. Add the onions, and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onions soften.

Add the tomatoes, sweet potatoes, curry powder, and lentils. Cook, stirring frequently, for 2 minutes. Add the sherry or apple juice, and cook for 1 minute. Add the broth or water, and bring to a boil.

Reduce the heat to medium, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes, or until the lentils are tender. While the vegetables are cooking, cook the spaghetti in a large pot of boiling water until just tender. Drain, and add to the pot. Stir in the soy sauce and parsley.

Serves 4

Per serving: 410 cal, 18 g pro, 80 g carb, 1 g fat, 0 g sat fat, 0 mg chol, 13 g fiber, 220 mg sodium
**Minted Pea Soup**

This fragrant soup has a lovely spring-green color, and it captures the essence of spring itself. You can serve it hot or cold.

4 c water
1½ c fresh peas
2 c vegetable stock
10 oz frozen chopped spinach
1 Tbsp chopped fresh mint
¼ c 2% milk
Salt
Ground black pepper
Fresh mint sprigs

In a large saucepan over high heat, bring the water to a boil. Add the peas, and cook for 1 minute. Add the vegetable stock, spinach, and mint. Lower the heat, and simmer for 20 minutes. Stir in the milk. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Pour the soup into a blender, and puree. Serve hot or cold. Garnish with the mint.

Serves 4

**Peas in a Pinch**

*If you’re short on garden space, try growing a dwarf pea variety such as “Little Marvel” in pots right on the patio. Push a branch into the soil of the pot to provide a support “trellis.”*

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**Peppers**

There’s a quiet riot going on among pepper fanciers, with hundreds of varieties now available in every color and degree of fieriness. They range from Thai ultra-hots to the mild, fruity-flavored heirloom known as Jimmy Nardello’s. Pepper plants are attractive, too, with their bright-green leaves and brilliant fruit; try growing a few in your flower beds to take advantage of their ornamental value.

**Into the Harvest Basket**

You can pick bell peppers green, but they'll have more sweetness and flavor if you allow them to ripen to their mature color—red, yellow, orange, or chocolatey purple. Instead of yanking peppers to harvest them, cut the stems with a knife or garden shears. You can bring out still more flavor in peppers by roasting them in the oven, on a grill, or over the burner of a gas stove. Roast whole peppers until they are blackened all around, then place them in a closed paper bag to cool to help loosen the skins. Peel off the skins, and remove the seeds and veins.

**Keeping Them at Their Best**

Peppers can handle up to a couple of weeks in the refrigerator, preferably in a vegetable drawer kept humid with dampened paper toweling. Unlike some vegetables, peppers don’t have to be blanched before freezing. Just chop them up, freeze them on baking sheets, then place the pieces in plastic bags and return to the freezer.

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**Fresh from the Garden**

22 Peas

**Peas**

**Per serving:** 110 cal, 7 g pro, 20 g carb, 1 g fat, 0 g sat fat, 0 mg chol, 7 g fiber, 590 mg sodium
Roasted Red Pepper Pasta Salad

The slightly sweet, slightly smoky flavor of roasted peppers distinguishes this light pasta salad.

10 oz uncooked angel hair pasta
4 red bell peppers, roasted (see “Into the Harvest Basket”)
¼ c white wine vinegar
3 Tbsp defatted chicken stock
2 Tbsp chopped fresh parsley
1 Tbsp lemon juice
1 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
1 Tbsp chopped fresh oregano
1 tsp grated lemon rind
Salt
Ground black pepper

Cook the pasta in a large pot of boiling water for 4 to 6 minutes, or until just tender. Drain well, and place in a large bowl.

While the pasta is cooking, use a food processor fitted with the steel blade to puree the peppers, vinegar, chicken stock, parsley, lemon juice, oil, oregano, and lemon rind. Add salt and pepper to taste. Pour over the pasta, and toss to coat. Cover with plastic wrap, and allow to marinate for at least 10 minutes before serving, or cover and refrigerate overnight.

Serves 4

Bell Pepper Burritos

This recipe uses both green bell peppers and chiles for the filling.

1 Tbsp corn oil
1 small onion, minced
1 small clove garlic, minced
1½ c chopped green bell peppers
1¼ c freshly cooked or canned kidney beans, drained and mashed (if using canned, rinse in a sieve under running water)
1 Tbsp chopped mild chile peppers
½ tsp ground cumin
¼ tsp dried oregano
8 flour tortillas
½ c shredded Monterey Jack, Cheddar, or Colby cheese
Salsa, pepper sauce, or plain yogurt
Chopped tomatoes
Shredded lettuce

In a medium skillet, heat the oil over low heat. Add the onion and garlic, and cook for 5 minutes, or until soft. Add the bell peppers, and cook for 5 to 10 minutes, or until almost tender. Add the beans, chile peppers, cumin, and oregano, and heat through.

Place a tortilla in a heavy 10” skillet over medium heat, and cook, turning frequently, until soft and pliable. Remove from the skillet. Spread 3 or 4 tablespoons of filling down the center of the tortilla. Sprinkle the filling with 1 tablespoon cheese. Fold and roll up the tortilla. Place in an ovenproof dish. Repeat with the remaining tortillas.

Heat the burritos in a preheated 250°F oven for 20 minutes, or until thoroughly warm. Serve with salsa, pepper sauce, or yogurt, and the tomatoes and lettuce.

Serves 4

Potted Peppers

When frost threatens to nip the plants, you might put up a couple and bring them indoors. Given sunlight and warmth, they may continue to ripen their fruit and remain vital enough for a second summer in the garden.

24 Peppers

Per serving: 330 cal, 11 g pro, 62 g carb, 5 g fat, 1 g sat fat, 0 mg chol, 2 g fiber, 160 mg sodium

Fresh from the Garden 25
Tomatoes

The tomato is the reigning king of the garden, and gardeners find room to stake a plant or two even in the smallest of plots. With the interest in time-tested heirloom varieties, you can find tomato seeds and seedlings for tomatoes with an astounding range of flavors, shapes, and colors. The best way to showcase a number of different tomatoes is the simplest: Slice them, arrange on a plate, drizzle with olive oil, garnish with fresh basil, and sprinkle just enough salt to spike the flavor.

Into the Harvest Basket

Harvest tomatoes when the fruits are uniformly red, but before they become soft, by twisting them gently from the stem. Green, yellow, and near-black varieties don't tip you off to their ripeness by color, so you may want to sample one right off the vine. If pests have been bothering the fruits, you can pick tomatoes a couple of days early and allow them to ripen safely in the kitchen, out of direct sunlight.

Keeping Them at Their Best

Although it’s almost instinctual to preserve a tomato’s goodness by putting it in the refrigerator, low temperatures can turn the texture mealy and unappealing; always store tomatoes at room temperature. Don't give up on green tomatoes left on the vine as fall approaches. You can pick them for use in casseroles or as pickles. Or wrap them in a paper bag, and allow them to ripen at a cool room temperature.

Fresh Tomato and Black Bean Salsa

Here’s a substantial salsa to serve with Tex-Mex dishes or to offer as a snack with corn chips.

1 ¼ cup coarsely chopped tomatoes
1 cup canned black beans, rinsed and drained
¼ cup loosely packed chopped fresh cilantro
1 small jalapeño chile pepper, minced (wear plastic gloves when handling)
1 cup chopped scallions
2 Tbsp red wine vinegar
1 small clove garlic, minced
¼ tsp dried oregano
¼ tsp salt

In a glass bowl, mix the tomatoes, beans, cilantro, pepper, scallions, vinegar, garlic, oregano, and salt. Cover, and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes to allow the flavors to blend.

Yields 3 cups

What’s an Heirloom Tomato?

Seed catalogs and some nurseries offer heirloom tomatoes—older varieties that gardeners continue to grow, year after year, for their special qualities. Some are especially full flavored, others have exotic colors or even stripes. You can grow a hollow variety ready-made for stuffing, and sauce tomatoes that won’t simmer down to nothing when you put them on the stove. Note that heirlooms may be somewhat less productive and more prone to disease than modern hybrid varieties.

Per ¼ cup: 45 cal, 3 g pro, 9 g carb, 0 g fat, 0 g sat fat, 0 mg chol, 3 g fiber, 250 mg sodium
No-Cook Tomato Sauce

A traditional, full-flavored tomato sauce requires a lot of simmering—not the most refreshing of activities on a hot August day. Try making this fresh sauce instead. Use it to top linguine, or serve it over fish, chicken, or eggs.

Plant Those Suckers!

When pruning away the suckers that form at the joints of tomato stems, consider rooting them in a shady spot, keep them well watered, and remove all the leaves below the top set after 2 weeks’ time. Transplant into the garden for a late-season crop.

In a food processor or blender, combine the tomatoes, scallions, garlic, parsley, tarragon, thyme, and chicken stock. Process until well combined but still chunky. You also can turn this sauce into a chilled soup: Add an additional \( \frac{1}{2} \) cup chicken stock, \( \frac{1}{4} \) cup fresh lemon juice, and 1 cup watercress leaves and process briefly.

Yields 3 cups

Winter Squash

Winter squash is a convenient storehouse of nutrition and flavor. The fruits can be used in a dozen different ways, from an Indian pilau or unusual pasta sauce to pumpkin pie.

Into the Harvest Basket

Winter squash (with the exception of pattypan) and pumpkins should be well matured on the vine, so that the skin is hard enough that you can’t easily puncture it with a thumbnail. Cut fruit off the vine with a portion of the stem attached. Harvest before the first heavy frost—but after a light frost, if possible, for a sweeter flavor. Pattypans may be picked between 1” and 4” in diameter, with the skin still soft enough to break easily by pressing with your finger; if harvested in this early stage, the vines will continue to bear.

Keeping Them at Their Best

Winter squash may look pretty durable, but you can extend their storage life by curing them—further toughening the skin by placing them out on an open porch for 2 or 3 weeks in the fall. Bring them inside before the advent of hard frosts, and store in a cool, dry place for up to 5 months.
Curried Butternut Squash Soup

Try this hearty, colorful recipe.

1 butternut squash, halved and seeded
2 tsp vegetable oil
1 large onion, chopped
1 rib celery, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tsp curry powder
1 Tbsp grated fresh ginger
½ c white wine or apple juice
2 cans (14½ oz each) fat-free reduced-sodium chicken broth or vegetable broth
½ tsp salt
½ c low-fat plain yogurt, at room temperature

Place the squash, cut side down, on a microwaveable tray. Microwave on high power for 8 to 10 minutes, or until tender. Remove, and let stand for 5 minutes. Scoop out the flesh, and place in a large bowl.

Meanwhile, warm the oil in a Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the onion, celery, and garlic. Cook for 10 minutes, stirring often. Add the curry powder and ginger. Cook for 3 minutes. Add the wine or apple juice. Bring to a boil. Add the broth, the reserved squash, and salt. Reduce the heat to medium. Cook for 10 minutes.

In batches, transfer the soup to a food processor. Puree until smooth. Return to the pot. Stir in the yogurt. Cook until heated through.

Serves 8

Per serving: 106 cal, 6 g pro, 19 g carb, 2 g fat, 0 g sat fat, 0 mg chol, 5 g fiber, 178 mg sodium

Zucchini

Gad-zukes, but these are enthusiastic plants! Zucchinis just love to grow. They hog every nearby inch of garden space and do their best to take over the lawn and patio. Until slain by the first frost, vines sprawl lavishly, surprising you with large fruits tucked under their sunlight-hungry canopy. Choose the familiar dark-green varieties, pastel-green Lebanese squash, or brilliantly colored yellow crooknecks.

Into the Harvest Basket

It’s best to be vigilant and harvest zucchinis before they reach the size of dirigibles. If you cut them from the vine at no more than 6" long, the flavor and texture will be better. Cut the stems cleanly with a sharp knife.

Keeping Them at Their Best

Store zucchinis in unsealed plastic bags in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks; straightnecks generally keep longer than crooknecks. Beyond that, cut them into chunks and freeze them, or into spears to make pickles.
**Corn and Zucchini Cakes**

This recipe turns zucchini’s mild personality into golden pan-fried cakes.

- ¼ c unbleached or all-purpose flour
- ¼ c cornmeal
- ½ tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 2 c fresh or frozen corn kernels, thawed
- ½ c water
- 1 small zucchini, cut into ¼" pieces
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 Tbsp chopped fresh basil or 1 tsp dried
- ¼ c fat-free milk
- 2 eggs

In a large bowl, combine the flour, cornmeal, baking powder, and salt. Set aside. Place the corn and water in a medium skillet over medium-high heat. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes, or until the water has evaporated. Remove 1 cup to a food processor. Add the remaining corn to the flour mixture.

Coat the skillet with cooking spray. Set over medium heat. Add the zucchini, onion, and basil. Cook for 3 to 4 minutes, or until soft. Add to the flour mixture.

Meanwhile, process the milk and eggs in the food processor to make a coarse puree. Add to the flour and zucchini mixture. Stir to combine.

Coat a large skillet with nonstick spray. Set over medium heat. Spoon in about 2 tablespoons of the batter to form each cake. Cook for 3 minutes, or until golden brown and crisp on the bottom. Flip and cook for another 3 minutes. Repeat to make a total of 12 cakes.

Serves 4

**Per serving:** 223 cal, 9 g pro, 35 g carb, 7 g fat, 1 g sat fat, 107 mg chol, 4 g fiber, 398 mg sodium
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