

Chef Craig's Culinary Notes

Tomato varieties discussion for culinary uses, with Chef Craig Schaufel

Find on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QMLADtyuqZs>

UC Master Gardeners of Napa County Tomato Sale and Education Presentation

Recorded March 7th, 2022

Intro: I enjoyed being a part of the MG program, volunteering and sharing UC researched based information and knowledge with the residents of Napa County. To That extent, as a chef for over 30 years, I found that in my time volunteering at our annual fundraiser event, The Tomato Plant sale, I was able to apply the culinary knowledge to customers who were wondering what to do with all the varieties of tomatoes. This year there are over 27! We are going to break them down into types of tomatoes as that is the best way to figure out what works best in what types of dishes.

I am going to start with.

Cherry Tomatoes

These are the most versatile tomatoes of the bunch. You can do almost anything with them that you can do with the other 3 types. Although the other 3 types are better for certain uses, more to come on that....

First off, I would like to share that if you have a bumper crop coming in all at once the best thing to do is to freeze them whole.

To Freeze –

- de-stem and wash them and pat dry
- then freeze on a sheet pan or dish in a single layer.
- Once frozen, store in a resealable food bag removing as much air as possible.
 - **Note:** The tomato texture will be softer but they will still have that intense sweet flavor.

Uses; Defrost for a quick **4x4 sauce, pizza topping, bruschetta or salsa**

4x4 Sauce; This is a simple staple sauce that is quick and easy.

4 Tbsp EVO (Extra Virgin Olive Oil)

4 Cloves Garlic, slide thinly

4 Cups Cherry Tomatoes, washed

4 Stems Fresh Basil (Optional), pick leaves and chop

Heat EVO and garlic for 1 minute over medium flame until fragrant. Add in cherry tomatoes, increase flame to medium high and cook until they burst, smashing them, until your desired sauce consistency is reached. Remove from flame, season with S&P then add in basil.

Roast; Like freezing, this is a good way to prepare Cherry or Paste tomatoes for a quick convenient use during winter.

- Cut in half and place cut side up on a sheet pan. Drizzle with olive oil, season with S&P and fresh herbs like oregano, basil, parsley.
- Place in a 400F oven for 20 -30 minutes until tomato and juices are concentrated.
- Cool and store in an airtight container or resealable food bag in the freezer for later use.

Juice; This is good to use for cooking or just drinking straight or to blend with other garden veggies like peppers, cucumbers, celery. Think V8?

- Destem and wash. Cook tomatoes until just heated through, more if you want thicker.
- Puree in a blender and strain through a coarse strainer or process through a food mill.
- You can freeze or use a canning process. Canning you will have to add citric acid which will make the juice more tart/sour.

Salsa - Pico di Gallo style; I personally like to use cherry tomatoes for that chunky blend with other vegetables and/or fruits. I use paste or heirlooms for regular food processed salsa.

I say explore as there are many combinations that work based on the harvest and the time of the year.

Veggies to consider; Corn, Cucumber, Peppers of all types – sweet mild, hot and Avocado. Try charring, grilling or searing them with spices, sugar for added complexity.

Fruit to consider, Peach, Melon, Strawberry, Mango. Great with mint, cilantro, lime and orange juices.

Note;

Pico di Gallo Salsa (also called salsa fresca, salsa cruda or salsa Mexicano) is a raw, fresh salsa with far less liquid than a regular salsa. Ingredients are primarily diced or cubed. Consists of tomatoes mixed with white or red onions, fresh lime juice, chili peppers like jalapeno, and fresh cilantro leaves.

Salsa has more liquid due to the fact that it is often blended in a food processor with the other ingredients and that makes it a runnier, smoother pureed form. Salsa can be made with more ingredients and can be charred or roasted. You can make it chunkier if you do not over process.

Other suggestions;

Dried/sun dried Cherry Tomatoes – Oven dry @200F for 4-8 hours. Or dry n a food dehydrator.

Canning - I don't usually do canning but if you do follow directions carefully and do it safely. For information on canning and preserving, see UC Master Food Preservers site. They provide detailed directions, recipes and classes. Their website is [https:// https://mfp.ucanr.edu](https://mfp.ucanr.edu)

Paste Tomatoes

Characteristics:

- Usually sweeter than the Slicer Red and other Color tomatoes
- Have less water and fewer seeds.
- More easily crush into a sauce or paste
- These are the preferred tomatoes for sun dried, canning, sauce and paste.

Helpful Culinary tricks.

- **Core, Score and Freeze!**
 - By coring and scoring the bottom with a paring knife making an X or cross you can then put the fresh Paste tomato into a resealable bag and freeze them.
 - Once defrosted, drain off any free water from defrosting and the skins will peel right off.
 - Dump them into a sauce pan using a recipe similar to the 4x4 sauce I shared for a quick fresh tomato sauce during the winter.
 - Or use them for canning. This is especially good for the slicer tomatoes as well as if you have a small harvest then you can gather a little at a time in the freezer until you have enough to process.
- **Tomato Paste;** why do we categorize them as such!
 - Make your own instead of buying in those little cans. Either use the tomatoes from the Core, Score and Freeze or peel and core fresh paste tomatoes, then cook down in a 300F oven until paste consistency and freeze in Ice cube trays. Makes for a great shot of garden-fresh tomatoes in anything you cook, soups, stews, bakes....
- **Slow Roasted**
 - Wash, Halve and place on a sheet pan cut side down. Bake at 225F for 4-6 hours, Cool. Peel off Skin, Store in resealable bag in freezer. I like to add in some whole garlic cloves, fresh basil leaves, S&P and drizzle with EVO.
 - Great for sandwiches, pizza, bruschetta/antipasto platter, omelets
- **Pico di Gallo** This is the best for this type of salsa!
- **Stuffed** Wash, cut in half, scoop out pulp/seeds and fill with any of the following and bake at 400F for 10-15 minutes
 - Provencal – Mie de Pan or fresh breadcrumbs, shallot, parsley, Parmesan, Garlic, Herbs de Provence (a blend of savory, marjoram, rosemary, thyme, and oregano and fennel)
 - Can add shrimp, crab, sausage to this mixture.
 - Substitute pesto for the Herbs de Provence.
 - Use rice, quinoa, risotto for a gluten free option.

Red and Other Color Tomatoes

Characteristics:

- Usually referred to as Slicer tomatoes as the best use is just to slice and serve them fresh at room temperature with sea salt. Of course, with other ingredients like fresh mozzarella, EVO and basil for caprese or with bacon, lettuce and avocado for a BLTA.
- Do not refrigerate as they lose sweetness and get mealy. If starting to overripe then do the **Core, Score and Freeze Method** we discussed.
- Have more water and seeds which make it less desirable for sauce due to the cook time needed to reduce bitterness from the seeds and lack of pulp.
- These are the preferred tomatoes for eating fresh in salads, soups hot and cold like gazpacho, or just halved and baked.

Baked

- These Large tomatoes are great for baking, either halved and hollowed out or just topped.
 - Like the Provencal stuffed ones we just discussed a mixture of fresh bread, evo, garlic and herbs blended in a food processor. Mix with equal parts Parmesan cheese and top and bake fairly quickly at 400F for 10 minutes.

Panzanella

- A great bread salad! Can use stale bread and grill or char or toast. It absorbs all the juice of the fresh heirloom tomatoes. Just coat the bread with EVO, S&P.
- Mix with half of a Tomato salad. Usually, bread and tomatoes are cut into ½ cubes.
- Tomato salad consists of tomatoes mixed with a little shallots, garlic, cucumber, basil, mint, EVO and Red Wine Vinegar.

Gazpacho

- A simple chilled soup that combines your summer garden harvest in a blender or food processor and in 1 minute your soup is done.
- Seed and pulp your tomatoes first.
- Combine with cucumber, pepper, onion, garlic, sherry and olive oil, S&P.
- Optional
 - to add in a thick slice of white bread or a baguette soaked in water to soften (make sure to squeeze out any free water) to thicken.
 - Add in other seasonal vegetables like corn, zucchini and beets.
 - Add in fruit like watermelon, cantaloupe, strawberry, grapes.
 - Add herbs like Basil, Thyme, Chives, Rosemary
 - Garnish with sour cream, crème fraiche, roasted almonds, flavored oil.