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TOMATO, TOMAHTO: WHY HEIRLOOM TOMATOES ARE A CELEBRATION OF SUMMER

GREENSBORO, NC (July 7, 2020) -- While typical summer activities may need to be modified this year, there are still ways we can come together. One of those ways is by celebrating summer's bounty of seasonal foods. The produce section is where summer reigns, and The Fresh Market has curated a selection of one of the season's shining stars: heirloom tomatoes.

Heirloom tomatoes are only available in the summer months with peak season being July and August. What makes a tomato an heirloom is that it is a variety that has been grown without crossbreeding for 40 or more years. They are bred for flavor but not necessarily to be sturdy like their conventional cousins. Whereas conventional tomatoes are grown to be durable from field to grocery store, with thicker skin and are typically harvested before fully ripened, heirloom tomatoes are matured on the vine for maximum flavor.

They are incredibly complex and difficult to grow, with only 55 – 60% of the crop making it into the market since they are very susceptible to weather. Those that make it to consumers should be appreciated for the intense flavor qualities they impart in our dishes, whether on top of a burger, in a BLT, a caprese salad, gazpacho, or just enjoyed with a little salt and olive oil all on their own.

Heirloom tomato season starts to hit its peak in July and runs through September. This is the first year that The Fresh Market has expanded their offerings, working with heirloom tomato farmers like Hans Wilgenburg in Dinuba, CA. He has been growing heirloom tomatoes since 1989, and his farming philosophy is based on flavor, nutrition, and sustainability.

"I handle my heirlooms with 'kid gloves'," said Hans. "Each worker wears cotton gloves when picking and packing the fruit. Bumble bees pollinate the tomato flowers, searching and finding the flowers that need to be pollinated. They only work the flowers that have pollen available for them to store. Good pollination is essential to achieve the final result of a good, firm, tasty and juicy tomato."

The variations in each variety are nuanced each year from the open pollination as well as the environment, but here are some of the top varieties The Fresh Market has available, along with their flavor attributes:

Brandywine

- This big, beefsteak variety has a thin skin and a deep red color inside and out. Widely considered one of the best-tasting tomatoes, for their robust, full-bodied, low-acidity flavor.

- more -

Cherokee Purple

- If you like “beefsteak” tomatoes because they are large and juicy, give this variety a try. This heirloom gets its name from its skin color which is a deep reddish purple with some pinkish areas. The flesh is a deep rose, with a balanced, smoky flavor that is a perfect mix between being sweet with just the right touch of acidity.

Marvel Stripe

- Named for its “marvelous” stripes of red, this thin-skinned yet beefy yellow/orange tomato has gazpacho written all over it. This variety has a sweet, fruity taste.

Red Oxheart

- As the name implies, these are large, heart-shaped tomatoes that have a sweet, rich flavor and meaty texture with very few seeds.

Persimmon

- This peachy-yellow beefsteak tomato has a sweet, vibrant flavor with low acidity. It also has a high ratio of flesh to seeds, making it perfect for pairing with a delicate cheese like creamy burrata.

Here are some easy recipes from The Fresh Market featuring heirloom tomatoes:

- [Heirloom Tomato Caprese Salad](#)
- [Apricot, Heirloom Tomato and Mozzarella Salad](#)
- [Roasted Chicken Bruschetta](#)

“I am really excited to be able to offer our guests the best of the heirloom tomato crop this summer,” said Chris Romano, Vice President of Produce Merchandising. “I encourage our guests to come and explore the different varieties we are bringing in over the next few months as soon as they are harvested. The flavors of heirloom tomatoes are so nuanced, and it is truly one of my favorite seasonal produce items that I look forward to every year.”

About The Fresh Market, Inc.

Since 1982, The Fresh Market, Inc. has helped guests make every day eating extraordinary with time-saving meal solutions, unique ingredients and delicious food for any occasion. From fresh produce and exceptional meat and seafood, to signature baked goods and thousands of organic options, this specialty grocery retailer has something to please every palate. The Fresh Market currently operates 159 stores in 22 states across the U.S., inspiring guests to discover new flavors and cook with confidence. For more information, please visit www.thefreshmarket.com or follow the company on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Pinterest](#).

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