



## Farmers Market: Tomatoes

# Beyond ketchup

This is the last in a series in which Savor offers a taste of something at the Farmers Market. The market, which runs through Oct. 27, is every Saturday morning.

BY PAMELA S. THOMPSON  
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Tomatoes aren't bottled just for ketchup anymore.

In fact, more people make salsa with fresh, vine-ripened tomatoes than any other recipe, said Tammie Daniels.

Daniels and her husband, Andy, who have owned Daniels Produce of Columbus for 26 years, should know. For six years, she's been selling two crops of tomatoes, first in early July and now until the middle of September.

Next to sweet corn, the healthy and versatile fruit — yes, the tomato is a fruit — is the Daniels' second-largest crop. They farm corn and beans on 300 acres and grow produce on 140 acres. Typically they sell more tomatoes than pumpkins, cantaloupes and watermelons.

ROBERT BECKER/Lincoln Journal Star

Tammie Daniels shows off a box of tomatoes grown on her farm outside Columbus.

DANIELS  
PRODUCE

"People get their fill of sweet corn, but tomatoes are used for so many things, such as salads, sandwiches, salsas and sauces," said Daniels.

Many of her customers, both at the Haymarket Farmers Market and at her roadside stand in Columbus, buy the tomatoes (sold at \$1.50 to \$1.80 a pound) for canning as well as for salsa.

Recently, scientists discovered tomatoes contain disease-fighting antioxidants believed to prevent and even reverse disease. Fresh or canned, raw, cooked or processed, tomatoes are reported to fight cancer, combat heart disease and protect lungs, vision and even reduce sun damage in skin.

To get the greatest benefits from tomatoes, experts recommend eating at least five weekly servings of tomato-based foods, eating them cooked, processed and prepared with a little olive oil and eating a variety of tomato products.

To keep up with the constantly growing popularity, the Daniels family now grows 8,000 tomato plants organized in long rows of 250 plants. Although they hire workers to help around the farm, Tammie and Andy rely on their three children for extra hands on Saturdays. Holly, 23; Jason, 22; and Kelly, 18, are all students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Daniels attributes much of the tomato's popularity to the fact that people respond to the taste and color of the vine-ripened fruit.

"I believe vine-ripened are better, riper, sweeter and juicier than hydroponics," she said. Additionally, hothouse tomatoes have more of an orange color than a true tomato-red hue.

While she doesn't often supply recipes to customers, Daniels said she does give tips.

"We think the simpler the recipe, the better," she said. "Our favorite way is to eat a slice of tomato with cottage cheese, salt and pepper. We live on that during the summer."

Reach Pamela S. Thompson at 473-7113 or [pthompson@journalstar.com](mailto:pthompson@journalstar.com)

### MISS RUBY'S BAKED TOMATOES AND CORN

10 large, ripe, fresh tomatoes  
10 cups corn kernels, scraped from about 2 dozen young and tender ears  
2 sticks unsalted butter, melted  
Salt and pepper to taste  
½ teaspoon ground nutmeg  
1 cup heavy cream (or chicken stock)  
2 cups fine bread crumbs  
Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Plunge tomatoes into boiling water for 30 seconds, then slip off the peels. Core and slice tomatoes and line a 3-quart baking pan with the slices. Spread some corn over the tomatoes. Mix together

butter, salt, pepper and nutmeg, drizzling some over the tomatoes. Continue layering until corn and tomatoes are used up, but save a little of the butter mixture for the top. Pour broth or cream evenly over tomato-corn layers, then sprinkle bread crumbs over the top and drizzle with remaining butter mixture. Bake at 400 degrees for 30 minutes or until crumbs are brown and the casserole is bubbling. Makes 12 hearty servings.

— From "Miss Ruby's American Cooking" by Ruth Adams Bronz and Beth Krommes