

You Like Tomato and I Like Tomahto

Written by Debbi Covington
Tuesday, 08 June 2010 09:59



You can't go wrong with fresh South Carolina tomatoes! The east coast of the Carolinas is the home of the most delicious and flavorful tomatoes that have ever been grown! Tomatoes are rich in vitamin C, are loaded with fiber, and are only about 35 calories each! Tomatoes become more flavorful when they're allowed to ripen on the vine. Green tomatoes will change color and soften, but the sugar, acid and aroma compounds are locked in once the fruit is picked. Choose local vine-ripened tomatoes because the less the tomatoes have to travel the more likely it is that they were picked ripe. Fragrance is a better indicator of a good tomato than color. If the tomatoes smell fresh and tomato-y, they will taste that way. Remember – never refrigerate fresh tomatoes. Cold temperatures make the flesh pulpy and destroy the flavor. Always store fresh tomatoes at room temperature, stem up. When I was growing up, no Sunday dinner was complete without fresh, sliced tomatoes. Granny Baker used to peel her tomatoes, cut them into thick slices, and serve them with salt and pepper. What I wouldn't give for one of those Sunday dinners!

Avocado, Tomato, and Mozzarella Salad

6 medium tomatoes

8 ounces fresh or buffalo mozzarella cheese

1 ripe avocado

3 tablespoons olive oil

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1 tablespoon red wine vinegar

1/2 teaspoon balsamic vinegar

1/2 teaspoon whole-grain mustard

Pinch of sugar

Salt

Freshly ground pepper

2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil

2 tablespoons pine nuts, toasted

Using a sharp knife, slice the tomatoes and mozzarella cheese into thin rounds. Halve the avocado, remove the pit and peel off the skin. Slice the flesh lengthwise. Place the next 4 ingredients in a small bowl and whisk until well blended. Season with a pinch of sugar, salt, and pepper. Arrange the sliced tomato, mozzarella, and avocado overlapping around the edge of a flat serving plate. Drizzle with the vinaigrette. Sprinkle evenly with chopped fresh basil and toasted pine nuts. Serve immediately. Serves 6 to 8.

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Beaufort Tomato Pie

1 (9-inch) deep dish frozen pie shell, baked and cooled

2-3 large ripe tomatoes, thickly sliced

Salt, to taste

Pepper, to taste

Dried sweet basil

Chives

3 green onions, chopped

1 cup (scant) salad dressing

1 cup (8 ounces) shredded sharp Cheddar cheese

Fill pie shell with tomato slices. Sprinkle with salt, pepper, basil, chives, and green onion. Mix salad dressing and cheese. Spread over tomatoes, sealing to the edges. Bake for 35 minutes at 350 degrees. Serves 6 to 8.

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Tomatoes Florentine

8 medium tomatoes

8 strips bacon

1/2 cup chopped onion

2 (10-ounce) boxes frozen, chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry

1 cup sour cream

Salt

Pepper

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

Few drops hot sauce

1 cup (4 ounces) shredded Mozzarella cheese, divided

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Cut across stem end of tomatoes and remove pulp. Salt tomato shells and turn upside down on paper towels to drain well. Cook bacon until crisp. Drain, saving 4 tablespoons drippings. Crumble bacon and set aside. Saute onion in bacon drippings. Stir in spinach and cook, covered, until tender - about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and add sour cream, bacon, Worcestershire sauce, hot sauce, and half of cheese. Salt and pepper to taste. Fill tomatoes with spinach mixture and bake in a preheated 350 degree oven for 30 minutes. Top with remaining cheese and place back in oven until cheese is melted. Serves 8.

Summer Salad

1/2 cup cider vinegar

3 tablespoons sugar

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon pepper

4 medium sized tomatoes, seeded and diced

2 large cucumbers, peeled and diced

1 small green pepper, chopped

1 small sweet red pepper, chopped

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1 small jalapeno pepper, diced

Mix vinegar, sugar, salt, and pepper in a small bowl. Place tomatoes, cucumbers, and peppers in a salad bowl. Toss with the vinaigrette. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve. Serves 6 to 8.

Tomatoes Provencal

4 slices bacon, diced

1 clove garlic, minced

1 medium onion, thinly sliced

4 ounces fresh mushrooms, sliced

1 tablespoon flour

1/2 teaspoon seasoned salt

5 medium tomatoes

1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese, divided

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1 tablespoon butter

Fry bacon in a medium skillet until crisp; remove bacon, reserving drippings in skillet. Drain bacon and set aside. Saute onion, garlic and mushrooms in skillet until tender. Stir in bacon, flour, and seasoned salt. Cut tomatoes into 1/2- inch slices. Place 1/2 of slices in a lightly greased 8-inch square baking dish. Spoon 1/2 of bacon mixture over tomatoes; sprinkle with 3 tablespoons Parmesan cheese. Repeat layers. Dot with butter. Bake at 350 degrees for 25 minutes.

Serves 6 to 8.

The writer owns Catering by Debbi Covington and is the author of the cookbook, Dining Under the Carolina Moon. Debbi's website address is www.cateringbydebbicovington.com . She may be reached at 525-0350 or by email at debbic@cateringbydebbicovington.com.

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