



BETWEEN THE ROWS
WENDY SCHMIDT

Consider growing season when you choose tomatoes

If you're trying to have a lot of vegetables to preserve in various ways, to add variety to your pantry shelves, it is good to read and understand what your seed catalogs tell you.

Mostly, the vegetables with a short growing season will produce best for you in this climate zone because our growing season can be short. Late spring frosts and early autumn killing frosts can leave you with a lot of green tomatoes.

For successful canning, avoid the heirloom tomatoes that take more than 90 days to grow, mature and fruit. Be mindful of the length of the growing season. Even some cherry tomatoes require 80 days. The size of the tomato doesn't seem to have a lot to do with growing season length.

Some of the hybrid tomatoes claim to be ready in as little as 55 days. Some heirlooms are 65 to 75 days.

Catalogs claim that hybrids lack full flavor and their heirloom tomatoes have a more complex and delicious flavor.

A lot of the claims about tomato flavor are subjective opinions. Flavor can be affected by soil fertility and the amount and quality of sunlight and how evenly they are watered.

Most people have favorite tomato varieties. Flavor and tradition play a big part in choosing favorites.

Since tomato plants can't be planted out in the garden until May, it's a bit early to start seeds indoors. Even if your plants are small when you set them out, they will grow rapidly in warm soil.

If you have garden questions or comments, please write to greengardencolumn@yahoo.com. Thanks for reading!



Abel Uribe/Chicago Tribune-TNS

This cheesy cream of cauliflower soup takes less than an hour to make from prep time to the finished dish.

STILL GREAT TASTE, WITH LESS WASTE

James P. DeWan
Chicago Tribune

I should come clean about a recent New Year's resolution, the one where I swore to contemporize my cultural references. I have failed. Miserably.

Which brings us to the irrepressible Irving Berlin. "Just around the corner, there's a rainbow in the sky, so let's have another cup of coffee and let's have another piece of pie." Golly, that man had pluck.

But, speaking of resolutions, you may recall they were the topic of last month's Prep School. Today, we'll tackle Resolutions, Part 2: In Which We Inhabit Frugality.

We'll do more and waste less. We'll harness that pluck. With a song in our heart and a sandwich in our satchel, we'll aim for a teenier garbage footprint as we roam this

wide earth and, in so doing, maybe make it a better place.

Why you need to learn this

Yorbus crispy, have you forgotten 2020 already? The fires? The murder hornets? The plague? I'm thinking our had-it-up-to-here planet's giving us a hint. I'm thinking it's time to slow our headlong plunge into the abyss. Save more. Use less.

The steps you take

Our species (*homo sapiens*) is the only planetary resident that creates actual, use-less waste. Birds don't do it. Bees don't do it. Even educated fleas don't do it.

Nobody else produces waste because every byproduct of every species but our own becomes food for some other species. Out

Himalaya way, water buffalo dung nourishes the grass of the Terai-Duar savanna. Those grasses give sustenance to the blackbuck antelope, whose carcass later feeds the noble white-rumped vulture who herself ends up in the belly of bacteria who render her to dust. Same with the maple and the mulberry bush, the bison's boogers and the tapir's tush. Everything becomes food for somebody else.

Humans, on the other hand, produce garbage. We throw out actual food, pile it into plastic and lob it full tilt into landfills, where it rests, undisturbed for thousands of years. Waste.

Here's an idea: Let's reduce that waste. Let's leave the planet like we should be leaving our kitchen: cleaner than we found it.

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A salad that combines cold, salty and sweetness

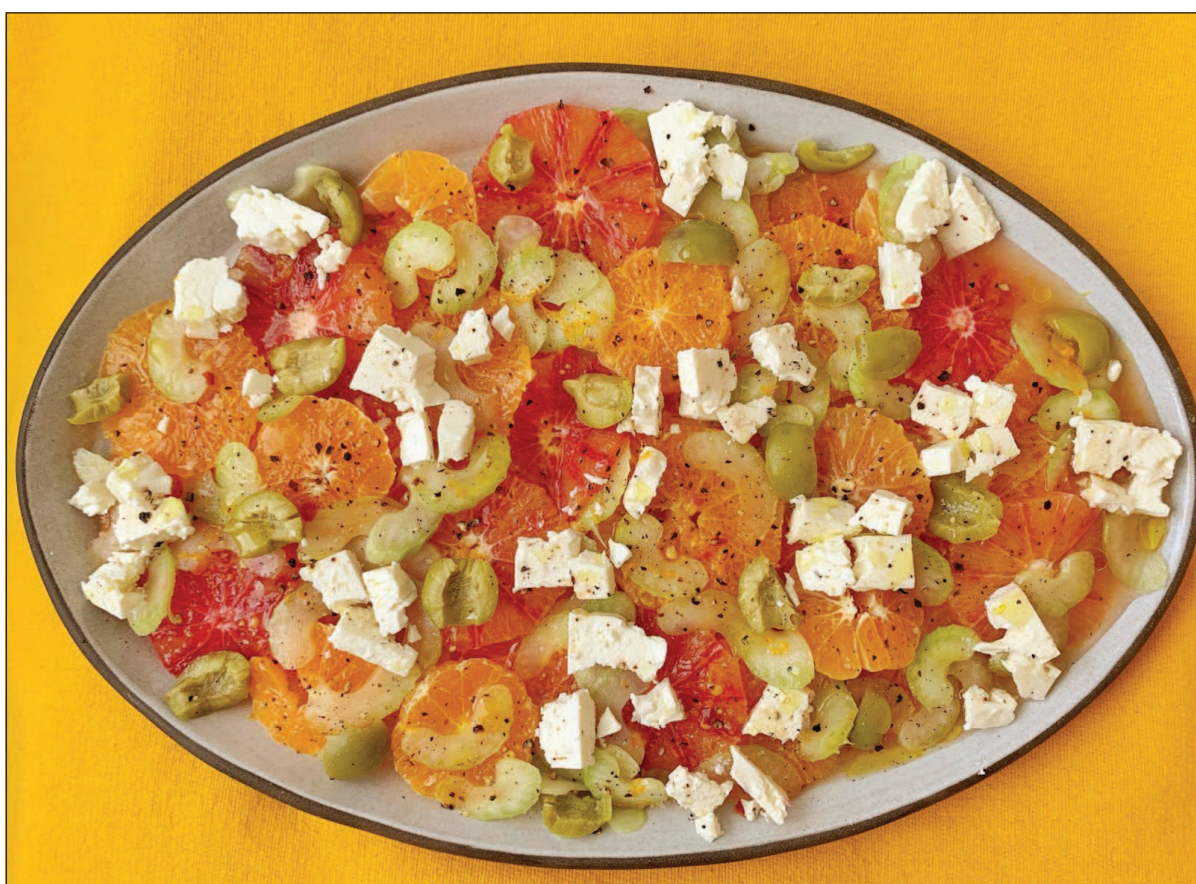
Ben Mims
Los Angeles Times

There are people who eat fruit as a snack, and then there's me. It's not that I haven't tried. Currently, as I stock up on fruit from the farmers market, I have grand visions of reaching for an orange from the fruit bowl, peeling it with my hands, then enjoying the juicy pops of the sections as I eat them. Healthy! Refreshing! "Mother Nature's candy," I've even heard, clenching my smile to stave off an eye roll. It should be so easy, but I can never commit.

Inevitably, I reach for a piece of cake or chips instead (don't worry, I balance my diet in other ways) and have at this point in my life overcome the guilt that used to accompany that.

No, I love fruit best when it's cooked down into a sweet jam or marmalade, baked under a bubbling biscuit crust or even blended into ice cream or sorbet. Influenced by a Southern upbringing, my predilection for eating fruit coated in sugar and butter is a difficult habit to break.

However, the one time I will happily eat fruit in the raw-ish state is citrus season. All those sweet oranges — Cara Caras, page and kishu mandarins and tangerines — are too wonderful to tarnish by cooking. Instead of eating them out of hand, though, I put in the smallest bit of



Ben Mims/Los Angeles Times-TNS

Feta, celery and green olives add just the right amount of saltiness to a salad of sweet orange citrus.

effort and turn them into a salad. But there are no lettuce leaves or other vegetables in this salad to distract from the star ingredients. It's just cold citrus slices, seasoned with a simple vinaigrette and garnished

with a few salty toppings to balance all that sweetness.

On a platter, I layer slices of at least three different sweet orange citrus: something large like Cara Caras or organic navels, something

small like kishus, and then always blood oranges for their deep ruby color. Then, I mix up a tame rice vinegar dressing enhanced with some of the citrus zest and a pinch of chile flakes to spoon over the top,

absorbing into their membranes and mingling with their juices. The vinaigrette makes the oranges taste, um, orange-ier!

Paper-thin slices of celery add crunchy salinity, while crumbles of feta offer a creamy, condensed brine, and torn Castelvetrano olives provide a pop of fatty brackishness. This trio of salty garnishes balances the sweet citrus perfectly, turning them into something one step removed from raw but exponentially more fun to eat.

COLD AND SALTY ORANGE SALAD

Time: 20 minutes, plus 1 hour unattended

Yields: Serves 2 to 4

Any sweet orange citrus shines in this simple salad, which is more of a treatment than an actual recipe. Navels, Cara Caras, tangerines, Page or Daisy mandarins, Kishus and blood oranges fit the bill, particularly blood oranges since their deep red flesh and stripes add colorful contrast. The vinaigrette concentrates their flavor more zest and a shot of mild rice vinegar to add an unobtrusive acidity. Use any kind of chile flakes you like for a spicier, or milder, heat.

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