

Eat What You Can, Can What You Can't

The dog days of summer are here and for the farmers among us who grow edible crops, we're basking in our bounty right about now. It's a good tomato year, thanks to the heat wave and plentiful sun this season, the plums are dropping quicker than we can keep up with picking them, and the corn tasseled long ago. Summer evenings are long, warm and often spent outside, most likely after sharing a good meal from the garden with friends.

But that means it's one of the busiest for us "edible farmers." The harvest! The harvest! How to keep up? No need to throw those zucchinis in the nearest unlocked car. And by all means, do not let those berries go to waste. You may be tiring of them now, but come winter's grey months, the satisfaction of opening a jar of homemade jam and eating a spoonful of summer on your morning toast is a little slice of joy—one of my favorite coping mechanisms for our long, dark winters.

A friend once told me this fun little saying: "Eat what you can, can what you can't." So first up: are you eating your harvest? No, are you *really* eating your harvest? Because that means zucchini for breakfast. One of my favorite ways of eating zucchini is cubed and barbecued in a grill basket until just done but with grill marks. Make a lot, enjoy what you can for dinner, but save a handful or two for a morning omelet. Combine with fresh herbs (cilantro and basil are my favorites), chopped



THE SASSY GARDENER

by LeAnn Locher

tomato and queso fresco for a fantastic way to start your day.

More ideas? Zucchini bread. Remember: it freezes well. So start baking. What about zucchini pickles? I'm not a pickle fan, but having tasted the zucchini pickles served at Higgins and Pause, I'm a believer. I followed the recipe from the Zuni Café, and it couldn't have been easier. Turmeric really makes these zucchini pickles sing.

You're still swamped with summer squash? Start grating and measuring by 2-cup increments. Store in freezer bags (don't forget to date and label them) and come November when you're in more of a baking mood, pull out your 2 cups of grated zucchinis and bake bread to your heart's content.

As for all of you tomato lovers, now is your time. Caprese salads (tomato, basil, mozzarella drizzled with balsamic and olive oil) are a staple at our house come August, picked fresh from the garden. But what about preservation? Slow roasting tomatoes has become one of my favorite ways to keep



LEANN LOCHER

Slow Roasted Tomatoes

Halve, lengthwise, your tomatoes. Romas work great for this. Use a rimmed baking sheet and drizzle it with olive oil, salt, pepper and seasonings, if you like (fennel seed is especially nice). Arrange the tomatoes, cut-side down, in a single layer on your pan. Roast for 10 hours in a 200 degrees F oven. When cooled, slip off the skins, then pack into freezer bag portions for winter meals and

or help build a rich base for a pasta dish in December.

One of the simplest and most rewarding ways to hang on to and enjoy your garden bounty is by making and freezing pesto. Spread it in ice cube trays, freeze and the next day, pop the pesto cubes into freezer bags.

And then there's the wonderful world of canning. We've been putting up berry and peach preserves, Asian plum sauce, and soon we'll be canning tomato sauce. Most of the produce we use for canning doesn't come from our own garden, but from local farmers from where we u-pick or directly buy. The Portland Fruit Tree Project (www.portland-fruit.org) organizes harvest parties of urban fruit trees. Owners give permission to the group to pick the unused fruit, and part of the harvest goes to a local food bank, part to the volunteers.

When it comes down to it, enjoy the bounty as much as you can now, but make sure you put some away for the coming months. On the warm evening I stayed up late canning plum sauce, I knew one of those jars would be opened and used for Thanksgiving dinner, when friends and family gather at our table. They, too, will enjoy the harvest and our work this summer.

tomatoes long after their season is gone. They make for a fabulous pizza in January

LEANN LOCHER blogs about her adventures in her kitchen and garden at lelono.com.

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