

The mission of the 'Food Section' is to provide our readers with great tasting healthy recipes and useful household information. The Portland Observer respectfully requests all comments, and/or family recipes that you would like to share with us are addressed in email to: [www.foods@portlandobserver.com](mailto:www.foods@portlandobserver.com)

# FOOD

## The Taste of Summer Fresh Garden Tomatoes



Summer wouldn't be the same without the taste of fresh tomatoes straight off the vine.

Mid July is about the time of year when tomatoes start coming full steam into season. I have 3 tomato plants in my container garden that are now producing more tomatoes than we can think up ways of using them. When you are working with garden fresh tomatoes, sometimes doing less

is more, because the produce is so good to begin with.

It's hard to believe that such a widely-used food source was once considered deadly poisonous. A member of the deadly nightshade family, tomatoes were erroneously thought to be poisonous (although the leaves are poisonous).

The tomato is native to western South America and Central America. In 1519, Cortez discovered toma-

atoes growing in Montezuma's gardens and brought seeds back to Europe where they were planted as ornamental curiosities, but not eaten.

Up until the end of the eighteenth century, physicians warned against eating tomatoes, fearing they caused not only appendicitis but also stomach cancer from tomato skins adhering to the lining of the stomach.

Seventy-seven years later, in 1897, Campbell's came out with condensed tomato soup, a move that set the company on the road to wealth as well as further endearing the tomato to the general public. Due to the tomato having such a high Acidic content it quickly became a favorite for canning and was on the most popular canned items by the end of the nineteenth Century.

## Unfried Green Tomatoes with Fresh Tomato Gravy

"We found a way to get the flavor of a fried tomato without all the oil. To make sure the pan is hot enough to yield a crispy crust, preheat it while you're preparing the green tomatoes."



### Green Tomatoes

- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup yellow cornmeal
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper
- Dash of sugar
- 16 (1/2-inch-thick) slices green tomatoes (about 3 green tomatoes)
- 1/3 cup fat-free milk
- Cooking spray

### Gravy

- 1 Tbs. butter
- 1 cup chopped mushrooms
- 1/2 cup finely chopped onion
- 2 cups finely chopped peeled red tomato
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400°.
2. To prepare the green tomatoes, combine flour and next 4 ingredients (flour through sugar) in a shallow dish. Dip tomato slices in milk; dredge in flour mixture. Lightly coat both sides of tomato slices with cooking spray.
3. Place a baking sheet in oven; heat at 400° for 5 minutes. Remove from oven; immediately coat with cooking spray. Place tomato slices on preheated baking sheet. Bake at 400° for 25 minutes, turning after 15 minutes.
4. To prepare the gravy, melt butter in a medium nonstick saucepan over medium heat. Add mushrooms and onion, and cook 4 minutes or until tender, stirring frequently. Add chopped red tomato; bring to a boil, and cook for 10 minutes or until liquid almost evaporates. Stir in 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Spoon the gravy over the tomato slices. Yield: 4 servings and 1/3 cup gravy

## Granny's Tomato Pie

"Granny shared this secret family recipe one hot July afternoon; as a reward for picking the ripe tomatoes from her garden. It really does taste like a BLT."



### Ingredients

- 1 double pie crust recipe (9" pie), feel free to cheat and use refrigerated
- 4 very ripe tomatoes, peeled, cored and sliced
- 1/2 medium red onion, very thinly sliced
- 3/4 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 3/4 cup Monterey Jack cheese
- 1/2 pound bacon, cooked, drained and chopped
- 3 Tbs. mayonnaise
- 1 tsp. dried basil, divided
- 1 clove fresh garlic, minced
- Salt/pepper to taste

### Directions

1. Place the peeled and sliced tomatoes in a colander over a large bowl or the sink, sprinkle with salt and pepper. Allow to sit while preparing the other ingredients.
2. Preheat the oven to 425F. In a bowl combine the cheese, bacon, and 3-Tbs. mayo. Mix thoroughly. Carefully lay the bottom pie crust in a 9"-inch pie plate. Arrange a layer of tomatoes, sprinkle with half the sliced onion, half the garlic, and 1/2-tsp. dried basil. Repeat the first layer with the remaining tomatoes, onions, garlic and basil. Top with cheese mixture.
3. Add second crust, seal the edges, and cut slits in the top.
4. Bake for 45 minutes, checking after 30 minutes (cover with foil if the crust browns early).
5. Let cool 10-15 minutes to allow cheese to set.

Note: A quick hot water bath will make the tomatoes easier to peel.



## Green Tomato Cake

"This is a moist, spice-type cake...a good way to use some of those extra green tomatoes."

### Ingredients

- 4 cups chopped green tomatoes
- 1 Tbs. salt
- 1/2 cup butter
- 2 cups white sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts

### Directions

1. Place chopped tomatoes in a bowl and sprinkle with 1 tablespoon salt. Let stand 10 minutes. Place in a colander, rinse with cold water and drain.
2. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease and flour a 9x13-inch baking pan.
3. Cream together, butter and sugar until smooth. Add eggs and beat until creamy.
4. Sift together flour, cinnamon, nutmeg, soda and 1/4 teaspoon salt. Add raisins and nuts to dry mixture; add dry ingredients to creamed mixture.
5. Dough will be very stiff. Mix well.
6. Add drained tomatoes and mix well. Pour into the prepared 9 x 13 inch pan.
7. Bake for 40 to 45 minutes in the preheated oven, or until toothpick inserted into cake comes out clean.

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