



BETWEEN THE ROWS
WENDY SCHMIDT

Summer's over? Let's squash that idea

Chayote squash, also known as "vegetable pear" and "mirliton," is a member of the gourd family, but certainly doesn't look like a gourd. In mild-winter areas it grows like a perennial. Frost will kill back the tops, but the vine renews itself in spring. It is fast-growing and best handled on a trellis or fence. Flowers appear in late summer and fruit is harvested about a month later, continuing until frost.

Plant chayote in the spring after all frost danger. The whole fruit is used as the seed. Place it on a slant with the wide end down, stem end slightly exposed. The vines are vigorous and grow quite large — one plant can produce three dozen fruits, more than enough for most home gardens.

In cold climates, mulch the roots heavily with compost or similar material for winter protection. Pull the mulch aside in spring at sprouting time. The growing plant will need plenty of water and fertilizer, but go easy with nitrogen: too much will produce excessive growth.

Store chayote fruits in a cool place. They will keep for two or three months for later eating or for seeding in the spring. If the plant sends out shoots in storage, which is likely, cut them back to 2 inches when you plant.

Chayote is not started from seed, but you can plant fruits from the market. Over the last few years, chayote have become more and more commonly found, especially with increasing Latino populations and popularity of Mexican cuisine. I think they look comical. Looking at their big end head on they resemble a person with no teeth.

Young chayote can be cooked without peeling. Large, fully mature fruit will have a tough skin. Cut into slices, right through the flat inner seed. The seed has a nut-like flavor after cooking.

Chayote can be used in more ways than zucchini. It may be diced and steamed until tender, baked and stuffed, cooked and marinated for use in cold salads, or pickled and candied. It is a favorite of Mexican cooks, it takes seasonings well and complements most every dish.

Chayote can be a fun project for children of all ages by a window in winter, similar to growing an avocado pit suspended in water; a sweet potato suspended in water; or a chayote planted big end up in a pot of damp dirt/peat/soil mix. Avocado grows a tree and the other two grow long vines.

Summer Squashes

The entire squash-pumpkin-gourd family, or Cucurbitaceae, are all native to the Americas. Most of our pumpkins and squashes originated in Mexico and Central America and were used all over North America by the native peoples. Most of our winter squashes originated in or near the Andes in northern Argentina.

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Plenty Of Options With Peaches



Eric Seals/Detroit Free Press-TNS

Peach potpie with vanilla bean ice cream.

IT'S JUST PEACHY

By **Susan Selasky**
Detroit Free Press

We love peaches a bushel and a peck. The summer sweeties have been kissed with plenty of sunshine this year in Michigan, and now is the time to enjoy them. The crop is right on schedule and bountiful at roadside stands, farms, farmers markets and orchards. Because this summer has been unusually dry, you can expect this season's fruit to be sweeter, growers say.

Katrina Roy, co-owner of Westview Orchards in Macomb County's Washington Township, says the 2018 growing season has been almost perfect. "Peaches love that sunshine and hot humid growing season," she says.

Peaches should keep about a week after they've been picked, Roy says. Once you bring them home, you can store them in a refrigerator to stop the maturing. A few days before you're ready to use them, Roy suggests putting a few peaches on the kitchen counter on a towel (with another towel on top) and leaving them to ripen for a few days.

"The towel helps keep the fruit flies at a minimum," she says.

Don't wash the peaches until you're ready

to use them, advises Roy. Washing them under warm water takes care of the peach fuzz, she says.

PEACH POTPIE

Serves: 8 / Prep time: 30 minutes / Total time: 1 hour 15 minutes

- Unbleached all-purpose flour, for dusting
- 1 sheet puff pastry, thawed but still cold
- ¼ cup light-brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1¼ pounds ripe peaches (about 5), cut into ½-inch wedges
- 1 tablespoon bourbon, optional
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 large egg
- Coarse sanding sugar
- Vanilla ice cream, for serving

Preheat oven to 350 degrees with racks in top and bottom thirds, and a foil-lined rimmed baking sheet on bottom of oven to catch drips.

On a lightly floured sheet of parchment, unfold pastry; roll out to a 10- to 12-inch square.

Center an 9- to 10-inch cake pan upside down on pastry; trace a circle around it with a paring knife. Remove pan; remove and discard excess pastry. Transfer parchment with pastry circle to a baking sheet. Create a crosshatch pattern by scoring lines, 2 inches apart, horizontally and vertically on pastry (do not cut through dough). Refrigerate 5 to 10 minutes.

In a large bowl, whisk together brown sugar, cornstarch and salt. Add peaches and toss to coat. Stir in bourbon and vanilla. Transfer mixture to a 9-inch pie dish. Cover with parchment-lined foil; bake on lower rack 20 minutes.

Whisk egg with 1 teaspoon water. Brush over the pastry circle; sprinkle with sanding or turbinado sugar. Place baking sheet with pastry on top rack of oven. Bake until pastry is puffed and golden while fruit in dish is bubbling, about 35 to 40 minutes. (If pastry is browning too quickly, tent with foil.) Remove from oven; uncover fruit. Carefully place pastry circle on top of fruit and bake 10 minutes more. Let cool 15 minutes; serve with ice cream.

— Adapted from [marthastewart.com](#)

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Scratch that: Solutions to cats that have a clawing issue

Cats that scratch can inflict significant and irreparable property damage. Unfortunately, scratching of furniture is not that uncommon. In fact, cat owners report that approximately 60 percent of cats scratch inappropriately at home.

It has long been thought that when cats scratch, they are merely sharpening their claws — or even worse, scratching spitefully. As it turns out, scratching is a normal feline behavior that serves as a method of communication between cats. By scratching on objects



PROTECTING YOUR PETS

DR. JERELD RICE

in their environment, cats provide visual clues to other cats regarding their presence. Claw maintenance and stretching muscles are side benefits of scratching.

Cats will oftentimes choose a small number

of objects in their environments to scratch such as fence posts, the corner of the couch or your favorite chair or the bed, returning to them repeatedly. The scratched surface leaves a highly visible mark that is readily seen by other cats. Additionally, cats have scent glands in their paws so that when cats scratch an object not only are they leaving visual clues, but also odor clues that provide personal identification information that other cats can smell.

Cat scratching preferences can be hard to predict. Some cats prefer vertical surfaces

while others would rather scratch on a horizontal surface. Some cats prefer fabric covered scratching surfaces (like your favorite chair), while others would rather scratch on a wood surface with texture. For example, cats often choose a prominent location or a spot near their favorite resting place. When scratching occurs indoors, it can result in considerable damage, owner frustration, and even the loss of a home for the perpetrator.

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