

HEN HOUSE

M A R K E T[®]



Volume 3, Issue 9
September 6, 2008

Vine Ripened Tomatoes from River Bluff, Ltd. a GNFF Alliance Member Horace and Jane Creighton and their son Lance Beuttel

River Bluff Farms Ltd. is located 2.5 miles southwest of Pomona, KS. The Marais des Cygnes River delineates the north property line, hence the name River Bluff.

It is the original land that Jane's Great Grandparents, John and Elsira Richardson, purchased in 1869. This land was originally owned by Keokuk, Chief of the Sac and Fox Indian Nation. Later, Jane's Grandparents, Green Berry and Jennie Dozier Richardson, purchased the land from John and Elsira. Green loved eating tomatoes and Jennie loved to feel the soil in her hands. Jennie grew many of the now defined heirloom tomato varieties, the emphasis always on taste. However, the expertise of growing River Bluff's vine ripened tomatoes comes from 3 generations of Horace's family who have grown fresh produce in Alabama. In 1830, Horace's Great-Great-Grandfather Creighton, began growing cotton and fresh vegetables in Alabama. After the Civil War, it was impossible to hire labor to pick cotton, so in early 1900's, the family moved to Mobile and farmed and sold fresh vegetables.

Horace and Jane have relied on the family skill, knowledge and expertise that has been cultivated over 100 years of family farming experience. Horace and Jane have been farming the 7 acre farm since 2003. River Bluff Farms grows Better Boy and Mountain Spring Tomatoes. They also grow a minimum of 3 new varieties each year, comparing taste, size, hardiness and disease resistance to the Better Boy and Mountain Spring plants. River Bluff is trying out hoop houses to grow their tomatoes. They are also concerned about water conservation in their farming practicing. If you would ask Jane and Horace how they grow and handle their tomatoes- they would tell you, "the old fashioned way". That means the tomatoes are picked at their peak, washed, dried and carefully packed for sale. They admit it is very labor intensive but the results outweigh many of the newer methods of growing and harvesting.



Tomatoes Belong to the Nightshade Family: Tomatoes are a fruit and part of the nightshade family (like potatoes and eggplants), but they are served and prepared as a vegetable, which is why most people consider them a vegetable and not a fruit.

Tomatoes are native to South America, and were brought to Europe by Spanish explorers. The tomato took some time to be accepted because tomatoes were thought to be poisonous, like other members of the nightshade family. It was not until the 1900s that tomatoes started to gain popularity in the US.

How to select: Available year round, but at their peak in June to September. The most flavorful are ripened on the vine, like locally produced tomatoes. Choose firm tomatoes, richly colored and noticeably fragrant.

How to store: Ripe tomatoes should be stored at room temperature and used within a few days. Never refrigerate tomatoes as the cold temperature kills the flavor and turns the flesh grainy.

How to prepare: bake, broil, fry, grill, raw, sauté, stew

Matches well with: anchovies, arugula, basil, bread crumbs, cheese, chilies, chives, cucumbers, eggs, garlic, lemon, marjoram, mint, mushrooms, olive oil, olives, onions, oregano, parsley, pasta, pepper, peppers, saffron, salt, seafood, shallots, sugar, tarragon, thyme, vinegar
(www.recipezaar.com)

Nutrition Facts

Per one cup of Tomatoes, they contain about 79 calories. No cholesterol, 1.7 grams of fiber and 2 grams of protein. Tomatoes are also a very good source of vitamin K. They provide 17.8% of the daily requirement for vitamin K that is found in one cup of raw tomato, which is important for maintaining bone health.

Tips for Preparing Tomatoes:

Before serving, wash tomatoes under cool running water and pat dry.

If your recipe requires seeded tomatoes, cut the fruit in half horizontally and gently squeeze out the seeds and the juice. It is especially important when cooking tomatoes to not use aluminum cookware since their high acid content will interact with the metal. This may result in the migration of the aluminum into the food, which will not only impart an unpleasant taste, but more importantly, may have deleterious effects on your health.

A Few Quick Serving Ideas:

To make your own tomato paste, sauté a couple of cloves of chopped garlic and/or 1-2 large chopped onions a couple of minutes until translucent, then add 8-10 chopped whole tomatoes, a teaspoon of dried or several teaspoons of fresh chopped oregano, basil, and any other herbs you enjoy, such as parsley or rosemary, and simmer for 30-45 minutes. Remove from the heat, drizzle with olive oil, and add sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste. For a fancier version, sauté chopped olives and/or mushrooms along with the garlic and onions.

Tomatoes are a great addition to bean and vegetable soups.

Enjoy a classic Italian salad-sliced onions, tomatoes and mozzarella cheese drizzled with olive oil.

Combine chopped onions, tomatoes, and chili peppers for an easy to make salsa dip.

Purée tomatoes, cucumbers, bell peppers and scallions together in a food processor and season with herbs and spices of your choice to make the refreshing cold soup, gazpacho.

Add tomato slices to sandwiches and salads. To keep things colorful, use yellow, green and purple tomatoes in addition to red ones.

Roasted Eggplants and Tomatoes

4 eggplants, halved lengthwise

4 tomatoes, halved lengthwise

6 tablespoons olive oil

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

4 teaspoons minced garlic

1/2 teaspoon dried oregano leaves

1 (14-ounce) can diced tomatoes, drained

1/3 cup dried plain bread crumbs

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees F.

Line a heavy large baking sheet with foil. Cut cross-hatch marks over the cut side of the eggplants. Arrange the eggplants and the Roma tomatoes cut side up on the prepared baking sheet. Brush with 2 tablespoons of oil. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Whisk 2 tablespoons of oil, 2 teaspoons of garlic, and 1/4 teaspoon of oregano in a small bowl to blend. Stir in the diced tomatoes. Season with salt. Spoon the oil mixture over the eggplants. Sprinkle the eggplants with salt and pepper.

Stir the bread crumbs, remaining 2 tablespoons of oil, 2 teaspoons of garlic, and 1/4 teaspoon of oregano in another small bowl to blend. Sprinkle the bread crumb mixture over the Roma tomatoes.

Bake until the vegetables are tender and the bread crumb topping is brown, about 30 minutes. (foodnetwork.com)

We would like to have your favorite recipes using local foods to share in the CSA Newsletter. We will feature several recipes in each week's newsletter. We are looking for recipes with heirloom tomatoes, tofu, basil, bison, eggs, chicken, sweet corn, peaches, Athena melons, vine ripened tomatoes, zucchini, and yellow squash. Just send them to Jennifer Egeland at 5300 Speaker Rd, Kansas City, KS 66106 or email to jennifer.egeland@ballsfoods.com

Good Natured Family Farms



Our labor of love is taking local farm fresh foods from the small family farm to the mainstream supermarket. Today the GNFF alliance is comprised of over 100 family farmers in KS & MO. Reach us at www.goodnatured.net