

## All About Tomatoes

Once feared as poisonous, then considered a possible aphrodisiac, the “love apple” now adds its vivid color and delicious flesh to innumerable dishes. Like the potato, this fruit (which is generally treated as a vegetable) is a member of the nightshade family and is native to South America.

After finally gaining acceptance as a food in Europe and the United States, tomatoes became an inextricable part of many cuisines, especially those of the Mediterranean. In Italy, they are used to make sauce for pasta, pizza and many other dishes. Sliced tomatoes are served with fresh mozzarella and fresh basil leaves, and the trio is sprinkled with olive oil. Other dishes that depend on tomatoes for their character include minestrone, gazpacho, ratatouille, Greek salad and tomato soup. And, of course, tomatoes are a staple of New World cuisine, from the American South’s fried green tomatoes to Texas’s chili con carne, from Latin America’s salsa cruda to bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwiches.

Today’s health-conscious cooks know that, far from being poisonous, the tomato is high in vitamin C and cancer-fighting antioxidants. The tomato comes in a wide range of sizes, from tiny currant tomatoes no bigger than blueberries to fat beefsteaks up to 5 inches in diameter. The colors are varied, too, from white to purple-black to reddish black, with green-striped zebra tomatoes somewhere in between.

Dedicated gardeners have traced and reintroduced a number of heirloom tomatoes, that is, old-fashioned varieties that don’t work as well for modern commercial processing. (They may not keep as long, have thinner skins that won’t stand up to jostling, or may just have a taste that, delicious though it may be, is less of a crowd-pleaser.) Look for heirloom tomatoes in a wide variety of colors and patterns, with evocative names like Elephant Heart, Lemon Boy and Golden Jubilee. At the other end of the spectrum, hybridists have introduced many new varieties for the sake of variation in color, size and other attributes, including thriving in a range of growing conditions.

Sun-dried tomatoes and tomato sauce, puree and paste are commonly used to flavor a wide variety of dishes. Tomato sauce can be used straight from the can in sauces and casseroles. Tomato puree is a more concentrated version of the sauce, while tomato paste is the thickest and most intense mixture of all. Tomato puree and tomato paste are often used to flavor soups and sauces.

### Preparing

Wash and dry tomatoes to be sliced. Cut out the stem end and leave the tomatoes whole or cut them into crosswise or lengthwise slices or into wedges, or chop, according to the recipe. Pull off the stems of cherry tomatoes. Some recipes call for peeled and/or seeded tomatoes, usually when the tomatoes are to be chopped for a sauce.

Adapted from *Williams-Sonoma Kitchen Companion*, (Time-Life Books, 2000).

May 30, 2010

### Selecting

Although tomatoes are available year-round, they top the list of produce that is best when eaten at the height of its natural season. You can find hothouse or imported Mexican tomatoes during the off-season, but in general it is a good idea to wait until local vines are producing, usually June through September, to serve tomatoes sliced. If you must choose fresh tomatoes out of season, plum tomatoes and cherry tomatoes are the best bet, as they have more flavor and a better texture than hothouse slicing tomatoes. Otherwise, use canned (or packaged) imported plum tomatoes, usually called Italian tomatoes. They will have a much better flavor than will poor-quality fresh ones.

For the best summer tomatoes, visit farm stands, farmers’ markets and natural-food stores for vine-ripened tomatoes, or grow your own. Most supermarket tomatoes are picked unripe and then ripened with ethylene gas, so they never develop a full flavor. Choose organic tomatoes, if possible, as they are likely to be more flavorful.

### Storing

Store ripe tomatoes at room temperature for up to 3 days. If they are slightly unripe, put them in a sunny place for several days and they will ripen further. Although whole fresh tomatoes should not be refrigerated, cut tomatoes should be wrapped in plastic wrap or waxed paper and refrigerated. Put leftover canned tomatoes, sauces, puree and paste in glass jars, cover and refrigerate for several days.

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# Technique Class: Memorial Day with Michael Symon

Michael Symon is a James Beard Foundation Award-winning American chef, an Iron Chef on Food Network, a restaurateur and author—the perfect person to provide culinary inspiration for Memorial Day weekend. We’ll be featuring some of Michael’s favorite dishes that are easy to prepare, so you can kick off your summer Iron Chef style!

## About Michael Symon

Hometown boy turned superstar, Michael Symon is one of the hottest food personalities in America. Hailing from Cleveland, Ohio, he is counted among the nation’s greatest chefs, having joined the ranks of Mario Batali, Bobby Flay and Masaharu Morimoto as one of America’s Iron Chefs.

At his core, though, he’s a Midwestern guy with family roots in old-world traditions. Michael is known for his easy, fresh food. He means it when he says that if a dish requires more than two pans to finish, he’s not going to make it. Cooking what he calls “heritage” food based on the recipes beloved by his Greek-Italian-Eastern European-American parents and the community in Cleveland, Michael draws on the flavors of traditional recipes to create sophisticated dishes.

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## Memorial Day Menu

### *Appetizer*

Grilled Crostini with Goat Cheese  
and ’wichcraft Tomato Relish

### *Main Course*

Pork Tenderloin with Heirloom Tomato Salad  
Grilled Radicchio with Orange and Balsamic

### *Dessert*

Lemon-Ricotta Blini with Raspberry Sorbet

**Ingredients for Grilled Crostini with Goat Cheese and 'wichcraft Tomato Relish**

1 baguette, cut into ¼-inch-thick rounds

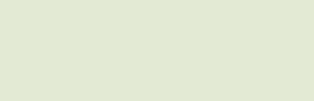
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

8 oz. goat cheese, at room temperature

1 jar 'wichcraft Tomato Relish\*

¼ cup fresh basil leaves, finely chopped

\* Available at Williams-Sonoma stores.



**Ingredients for Pork Tenderloin with Heirloom Tomato Salad**

2 lb. pork tenderloin

1 tsp. coriander seed, toasted

¼ tsp. cumin seed, toasted

Zest and juice of 2 limes

3 Tbs. olive oil

1 tsp. salt

1 garlic clove, minced

1 shallot, minced

4 oz. chicken stock

2 oz. red wine vinegar

1 tsp. honey

4 oz. extra-virgin olive oil

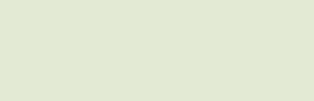
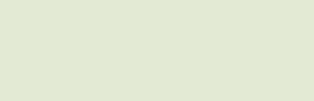
3 large heirloom tomatoes

2 cups watercress

¼ cup fresh mint leaves

¼ cup toasted almonds

\* Available at Williams-Sonoma stores.



## Grilled Crostini with Goat Cheese and 'wichcraft Tomato Relish

Heat a grill pan over medium heat. Arrange the baguette slices on a baking sheet and brush lightly on both sides with the olive oil.

Working in batches, place the baguette slices on the preheated pan and cook, turning once, until light golden brown and toasted on both sides, about 2 minutes per side. Transfer to a baking sheet.

Spread about 3 tsp. of the goat cheese on each crostini and top with 'wichcraft Tomato Relish. Sprinkle with the basil. Makes about 24 crostini.

Recipe Courtesy of Williams-Sonoma



## Pork Tenderloin with Heirloom Tomato Salad

Cut the pork into medallions 1½ to 2 inches thick and place in a baking dish. In a small bowl, whisk together the coriander, cumin, lime zest, lime juice, olive oil, salt, garlic and shallot. Pour the marinade over the pork, cover and refrigerate for 2 hours.

Preheat an oven to 375°F.

Heat a grill pan over medium heat. Remove the pork from the marinade and reserve the marinade. Sear the pork on the preheated pan, turning once, for 3 minutes per side. Transfer the pan to the oven and cook the pork for 3 minutes.

Remove the pan from the oven and transfer the pork to a platter. Add the reserved marinade, the stock, vinegar and honey to the pan and bring to a simmer on the stovetop. Simmer until reduced by one-third. Whisk in the extra-virgin olive oil.

Cut the tomatoes into bite-size pieces, place in a bowl and mix with the watercress, mint and almonds. Toss the warm dressing over the tomato mixture and serve with the pork. Serves 4.

Recipe courtesy of Michael Symon

***Symon Says:*** Store tomatoes at room temperature, never in the refrigerator—it kills their sweetness and makes them grainy. Cut tomatoes close to serving time so you don’t lose a lot of their juices. If you buy too many, thinly slice them, sprinkle them with salt and thyme, and put on a cookie sheet. Dry them in a 150°F oven for 4 hours and they will keep for up to a month in the refrigerator.

## Grilled Radicchio with Orange and Balsamic

*This side is super easy and fast. It can be cooked on a grill or in a grill pan in less than five minutes. It’s a great side dish in spring and summer when you’re also grilling lamb chops or steaks. The grilling takes out some of the bitterness and brings out the lettuce’s sweetness, as do the orange and balsamic. You could also add a drizzle of honey and a sprinkle of chopped rosemary to this for a little more complexity, but it’s refreshing just with the vinegar and OJ.*

Heat a grill pan over medium heat. Drizzle the radicchio with the olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Grill the radicchio on the preheated pan for 2 minutes per side. Transfer to a serving platter. Sprinkle the radicchio with salt and pepper. Drizzle with the extra-virgin olive oil, balsamic vinegar, orange zest and orange juice and serve. Serves 4 to 6.

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***Symon Says:*** My basic balsamic is a twenty-year-old La Piana. There are many available at varying prices; I recommend you look for one with an acidity of 6 to 7 percent.

## Lemon-Ricotta Blini with Raspberry Sorbet

*The ricotta cheese lends a delicate texture to these melt-in-your-mouth pancakes. To make this dessert even more decadent, drizzle our Raspberry Ecstasy Sauce on top of each blini sandwich. For an easy alternative, use our Williams-Sonoma Chocolate Pancake Mix to make chocolate blini with raspberry sorbet. Then drizzle both hot chocolate sauce and Raspberry Ecstasy Sauce on top.*

In a large bowl, whisk together the ricotta, milk, egg yolks, sugar, lemon zest and lemon juice until smooth. Sift together the flour, baking powder and ⅛ tsp. of the salt over the ricotta mixture and stir with a wooden spoon until just combined.

In another large bowl, using a whisk, beat the egg whites until frothy. Add the remaining ⅛ tsp. salt and continue beating until soft peaks form. Using a rubber spatula, fold one-third of the egg whites into the ricotta mixture, then gently fold in the remaining whites.

Preheat a griddle over medium heat. Spray the griddle with nonstick cooking spray. Using a tablespoon, drop the batter onto the pan (1 Tbs. batter will make a blini 3 inches in diameter). Cook 3 to 5 blini at a time; do not crowd the pan. Cook, turning once, until golden, about 2 minutes per side. Transfer to a wire rack. Repeat with the remaining batter.

To serve, place 2 blini on each dessert plate. Using a small ice cream scoop, place a scoop of raspberry sorbet on each blini. Top the sorbet with another blini. If desired, drizzle with raspberry sauce and garnish with fresh raspberries. Makes about 20 blini or small pancakes, for servings of 4 blini per person. Serves 5.

Recipe Courtesy of Williams-Sonoma

**Ingredients for Grilled Radicchio with Orange and Balsamic**

2 heads of radicchio, quartered through the core

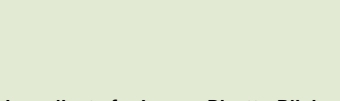
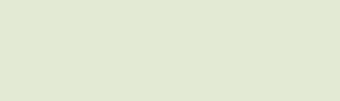
1 Tbs. olive oil

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

1 Tbs. balsamic vinegar

Grated zest and juice of 1 orange



**Ingredients for Lemon-Ricotta Blini with Raspberry Sorbet**

1 cup ricotta cheese

1 cup milk

3 eggs, separated

¼ cup sugar

Zest and juice of 1 lemon

1½ cups cake flour

1 Tbs. baking powder

¼ tsp. salt

½ gallon store-bought raspberry sorbet

Raspberry Ecstasy Sauce for drizzling\* (optional)

Fresh raspberries for garnish (optional)

\* Available at Williams-Sonoma stores.