



## *Cooking Notes*

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The Colorful Heirloom Tomato

What's all the fuss about Heirloom tomatoes you might ask? They are vibrant, intensely flavorful, meaty and juicy – all at the same time. Even people who don't like tomatoes may make an exception for these delicious beauties.

There are literally hundreds of heirloom tomato varieties and they all have one thing in common: robust flavor. Heirlooms lean towards sweet or tart, so here are a few flavor notes to keep in mind when shopping. Red or pink varieties offer a wonderful balance between sweet and acid, resembling a more classic, yet more intense tomato flavor. Brandywine is one of the most popular heirloom variety – wonderfully big, red, and meaty.

Yellow and orange colored heirlooms tend to have a mild, sweet flavor. The Golden Jubilee is a golden orange variety known for its firm, juicy character and mildly tangy yet sweet flavor. It's a great choice for fresh tomato juice.

Purple and black varieties can appear more deep maroon or brown and have a subtle smoky sweet flavor. The Cherokee Purple is one of the most noticed of this category with its Beefsteak shape, striking color and sweet juicy fruit.

White heirlooms generally have a creamy or yellow tinge to them. White tomatoes have less acidity than the red heirlooms and some white varieties are extremely sweet. They stand out in a salad and are wonderful in spaghetti or pizza sauce.

Green varieties are sweet, flavorful and often stunning to look at. The Green Zebra is a luscious green with lime green stripes. It's a popular heirloom for foodies and gourmet meals with its fabulous tomato flavors.

Other popular varieties of heirloom tomatoes include the mildly sweet, very juicy Garden Peach, the Costoluto Genovese – fabulous for sauces, and the well-balanced Yellow Pear.

Whether you grow your own or buy from your local market, you will have fun exploring all the flavors and characteristics of heirlooms. They are wonderful additions to your favorite tomato dishes and make sensational salads. For an easy Caprese Salad, layer heirlooms, slices of fresh mozzarella and fresh basil leaves then drizzle with a simple dressing of 3 tablespoons roasted garlic olive oil, 1 tablespoon aged balsamic vinegar and a hint of Dijon mustard (shake together) and season to taste with freshly ground salt and pepper.

