



Great-grandfather's barn at Spring Brook Farm, circa 1901

What's in the box and where do I keep it?

	Fridge?	Bag?	Notes & Varieties
Basil	No	Plastic	
Carrots	Yes	Plastic	
Cucumbers	Yes	Plastic	
Green Beans	Yes	Plastic	
Herbs	Yes	Plastic	Chives, Thyme
Leeks	Yes	Plastic	
Peppers	Yes	Plastic	Green Bell, Serrano
Sweet Corn	Yes	Plastic	
Tomatoes	No	No	
Watermelon	Yes	No	

Tomatoes

The tomatoes have begun to ripen here at the farm. The first few tomatoes tend to be a bit uglier than the later ones since they've spent their entire life at the deep, dark bottom of the tomato plant. You may also notice a few weird yellow dots on the exterior of some of the tomatoes. This is damage from a bug which pierces the tomato with its stinger, much like a mosquito does to your arm. It can make the outer surface of the tomato a little tougher, but is otherwise harmless. This too will go away with the later tomatoes.

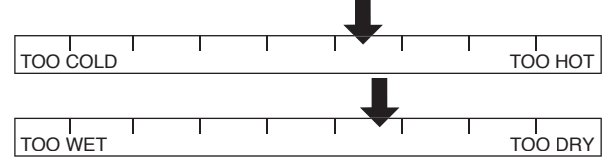
These first tomatoes are also the most difficult to pick, and this year is no exception. The tomatoes are a completely overgrown jungle this year. The heat has caused them to get a little crazy. The tallest variety is about 6 1/2 ft tall right now. It's difficult to tell if some of them are even in tomato cages, since the cage has been swallowed up by the enormous plants. Maybe I spread a little too much compost on them this spring.

With the massive size of the plants comes restricted air flow in and around them. This tends to cause some

Farm Report

Rainfall0.15"
 High Temperature 86°
 Low Temperature 64°

Farmer Complaint Indicators™:



fungal problems in tomatoes. For that reason I am seeing a little more early blight in them than I usually see by this time of year. Hopefully this won't be a concern and we'll have a good 6–7 weeks of tomatoes.

The varieties of tomatoes in the boxes will be familiar to most of you by now. We have the regular red tomatoes, the yellow heirlooms called Persimmon, the dark magenta heirloom with the greenish shoulders known as Cherokee Purple, and the small pink heirloom Rose de Berne. I'm also trialing several new varieties of regular red tomato this year hoping to replace my standard Big Beef variety.

The reason I'm trying to replace a variety that I love is because the company that produces it (Semenis) was bought out by Monsanto last year. Monsanto's buyout of Semenis has caused a lot of consternation amongst contrarian agrarians like myself. No one wants to send their money (your money) to Monsanto, but unfortunately Semenis has the best hybrid vegetable varieties on the market right now. Several of my favorite varieties are Semenis varieties. And while I do enjoy growing some open-pollinated heirloom varieties, especially in the tomato field, to get consistent production I need to have the newer hybrids. This is the kind of quandry we seem to find ourselves in more and more these days, wanting to do the right thing but not given good alternatives to the status quo. Hard to believe that choosing a tomato variety can be as complicated as choosing a politician.

Store your tomatoes at room temperature, upside down on the counter. Or keep them in a large bowl for a nice display, but keep an eye on them so you don't get a rotter ruining the other ones. Most of all enjoy the first tomatoes of the season.

Oh, I guess there's some other stuff in the box too...

A little more basil this week along with a couple of

other herbs, chives and thyme. We have a nice little herb patch this year which is just getting harvestable.

More carrots this week, but this may be the last of the cucumbers. It has not been a good year for cucumbers and zucchini.

There's a few more green beans in the box this week. The hot weather caused them to behave quite strangely. Hopefully we'll get some more in a week or two.

Some nice summer leeks are in the box. We'll have these this week and next week.

More green peppers this week along with a hot serrano pepper.

Hopefully there will be enough watermelons for everyone to get one this week. This is not a good melon year for us. We'll just have this one week of watermelon and may not have any week of cantaloupe. The cantaloupe suffered the same fate as the cucumbers and zucchini, early attack by cucumber beetles, followed by slow death of bacterial wilt. Memories of last year's fantastic melons will have to suffice this year. It's also quite difficult to get 90 or so perfectly ripe watermelons at the same time, so my apologies if you get one that's a little underripe.

Also in the box this week is a couple copies of the 2006 Farm Fresh Atlas of Western Wisconsin. This is a new publication this year and will give you an idea of where the farm is if you've never been here. There's also many good producers of all kinds of products listed in case you are looking for other items.

Farm News

Sometime I'd like to write that it's been a slow week on the farm. This is not the week. Last Friday was spent getting the last of the onions out of the field and laid out in the shed to cure. We had some nice rain and a little wind over the weekend which made some weeding projects this week a little easier. We're still playing catch-up with the weeds from the very hot weather, they got quite a bit ahead of us last week.

This week we've weeded and thinned the fall beets, weeded the herbs, celeriac and leeks. Picking tomatoes took a big part of the day on Tuesday, and after harvesting on Wednesday there was time to seed some fall turnips and the first of the fall spinach and arugula. It will be September in just a few weeks, folks.

We also have gotten all of the ground worked up for next year's veggies. I'll go through it once or twice more and then will seed a cover crop of oats and peas over most of it, leaving some areas where I'll put in some winter rye.

Here's a recipe for a simple fresh tomato pasta. You should have about 2 pounds of tomatoes in the box this week. And it's always nice to eat the first tomatoes of the year raw, but if not this week save this recipe for next.

Pasta and Fresh Tomato Sauce

- 3 Tbs. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 large garlic clove, minced
- 2 pounds ripe tomatoes, cored, peeled, seeded, and cut into 1/2 inch pieces (we never peel and seed ours for something like this, why bother)
- 2 Tbs. chopped fresh basil leaves
- Salt
- 1 pound pasta, penne, rigatoni and fusilli work well

Bring 4 quarts of water to a rolling boil in a large pot. Meanwhile, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil and the garlic in a medium skillet over medium heat until the garlic is fragrant but not browned, about 2 minutes. Stir in the tomatoes; increase the heat to medium-high and cook until any liquid given off by the tomatoes evaporates and the tomato pieces lose their shape to form a chunky sauce, about 10 minutes. Stir in the basil and salt to taste; cover to keep warm.

Add 1 tablespoon salt and the pasta to the boiling water and stir to separate the noodles. Cook until the pasta is al dente. Reserve 3/4 cup of the cooking water and drain pasta. Transfer the drained pasta back to the cooking pot. Add the reserved water, tomato sauce and remaining 1 tablespoon oil; toss well to combine, serve immediately.

Variations: In our house we make some variant of this dish at least once a week in the summer. When we have sweet corn we usually will cut the kernels off of 2 or 3 cobs and add them with the tomatoes to cook. Many times we will make this recipe and not cook the tomatoes at all, just add them to the oil and garlic and turn the pan off. We also always end a recipe like this with some sort of cheese, a fresh mozzarella is a good choice, but a nice parmesan is equally as good.

Coming next week: Tomatoes, Onions, Garlic, Shallots, Leeks, Italian Parsley, Carrots, Peppers.