



PRODUCE	Seasonal Availability							FLAVOUR AFFINITIES
	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	
<b>FRUIT</b>								
Strawberries								almonds, balsamic vinegar, champagne, custards, walnuts
Cheeries (Sweet, Sour)*								duck, goose, bison, elk, venison, pork, chocolate, cinnamon, red wine, yogurt
Raspberries								champagne, honey, peaches, pears, vanilla, sour cream
Yellow Plums								port, brandy, white wine, yogurt, allspice, black pepper
Apricots								lamb, pork, poultry, orange, Bavarian cream, cardamom
Peaches								pork, poultry, sugar, vanilla, white wine, cream, ginger
Blueberries								venison, elk, lemon, melons, walnuts, yogurt, ginger, nutmeg
Muskmelon								mint, pecorino, prosciutto, salami, smoked duck, tequila
Nectarines								Champagne, cream, honey, pork, poultry, red wine
Plums (Blue, Prune)								cardamom, cinnamon, crème fraiche. Ginger, sour cream
Watermelon								feta, lime, mint, yogurt, basil, balsamic (especially reduced!)
<b>Apples*</b>								pork, poultry, vanilla, nuts, onion, cinnamon, clove, curry
Pears(Clapp's,Bartlett)								blue cheese, duck, pork, poultry, allspice, cardamom
Grapes								venison, blue cheese, chicken, fish, pears, pistachios
Bosc Pears								chocolate, white wine, blue cheese, duck, pork

\* See page 2 for more information on fruits and vegetables shown in bold letters

VEGETABLES	Seasonal Availability							FLAVOUR AFFINITIES
	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	
<b>Asparagus*</b>								eggs, lemon, olive oil, pasta, rice or risotto, seafood, tomato
Rhubarb								duck, goose, oily fish, orange, brown sugar, maple syrup
Green Peas								salmon, sorrel, tarragon, chervil
Cucumber								tomato, dill, mint, salmon, buttermilk
Radishes								chicken liver, mild fish, mint, scallops, smoked salmon
Spinach								chicken, aged cheese, egg noodles, mushrooms, onions
Snow Peas								lettuce, crabmeat, mint, shrimp
Beans (Green, Wax)								bacon, olive oil, orange, pine nuts, tomatoes, dill, butter
Green Onions								all savoury food, typically raw for lightly sautéed for garnish
Zucchini								eggplant, garlic, fish, olive oil, goat cheese, pasta,
Lettuce								red wine vinegar, balsamic vinegar, olive oil, lemon
Broccoli								butter, cheese, chicken, chiles, garlic, pasta, balsamic
<b>Beets*</b>								game meat, braised beef or pork, spinach, tarragon, yogurt
Cabbage (Red, Green, Savoy)								venison, bison, mustard, bacon, butter, game birds, onions, garlic, olive oil, polenta
Carrots								beef, chicken, chives, cumin, honey, onion, raisins, rosemary
Leeks								butter, chicken, cream, fish, mussels, mustard, potatoes
Cabbage (Nappa)								garlic, onions, mushrooms, peanut oil, chicken broth, sesame
<b>Tomatoes (Field)*</b>								basil, cucumbers, feta, fish, mint, mozzarella, onion, oregano
Peppers (Green, Yellow & Red)								beef, all cheeses, garlic, hot chile pepper, pork, sausage, tomato
Celery								blue cheese, butter, chicken soup, fish, mountain cheeses
Corn								tomatoes, butter, fish, lobster, red onion, shrimp
Eggplant								capers, lamb, marinara sauce, melting cheeses,
Cauliflower								mustard seed, olives, Parmigiano, thyme, turmeric
Fingerling Potatoes								see potatoes
<b>Asian Vegetables</b> (see other page) *								chiles, ginger, pork, chicken, rice, mushrooms, soy sauce, garlic, sesame oil
Rapini								Parmigiano, butter, chicken, chiles, garlic, pasta sauce
Garlic								almost everything!
Mushrooms								beef, chicken, cream, fish, garlic, onion, pasta, pork, rice
Onions (Cooking)								all savoury food
Red Onions								all savoury food
Parsnips								apples, curry, leeks, oranges, root vegetables, stews, truffles
<b>Potatoes*</b>								butter, olive oil, meat & poultry, herbs, mayonnaise, onions
Squash								corn, dill, garlic, mint, olive oil, goat cheese, onion, rice
Sunchokes								mushroom, cider vinegar, apples, pears, blue cheese
Brussel Sprouts								bacon, butter, chestnuts, chicken stock, shallots
Rutabaga								cream, curry, duck, lamb, thyme, potatoes, pork, lemon

# Asparagus

The release of this perennial signifies the beginning of Ontario's season. The ancient Egyptians and Greeks ate wild asparagus shoots as a rare spring delicacy, and asparagus has been prized by nobility for hundreds of years. An underground stem (or crown) produces edible shoots for about 6 weeks each spring. Shoots must be harvested by hand, which accounts for a portion of their high price. If left alone, the tips sprout into tall, feathery, dill-like fronds. The main varieties in Ontario are green Viking and Centennial. Many Northern Europeans prefer white asparagus because of its delicate flavour and fiberless texture. However, white asparagus accounts for only 3 acres of production in Ontario; to grow white asparagus, farmers cover the ground with a mound of loose earth to prevent exposure to sunlight, which would turn the stalks green.



# Cherries

Cherries are categorized as either "sweet" or "sour" varieties (although some crosses have been created forming a "sweet-sour" category). The Bing cherry is the leading commercial sweet cherry in North America - firm, juicy and a deep mahogany red when ripe. Sour cherries are small, bright, and uniformly red with thin skins and are most often used for cooking, preserves, and pies.



# Tomatoes

What would life be like without tomatoes? Italian cuisine certainly wouldn't be as popular, that's for sure. Ironically, the tomato is native to the Americas and was cultivated by the Aztecs and Incas as early as A.D.700. Tomatoes were unknown outside the New World until the Spanish brought them back to Europe in the 16th century. There are more than 300 different varieties commercially grown in Ontario alone! To keep it simple, one can group them into one of three categories: (1) Round medium sized, globe-shaped, ideal for eating raw. Hothouse is a "round" tomato and represents nearly 25% of tomato sales in Canada and the U.S.; (2) Plum or Roma plum shaped, thick-fleshed, excellent for preserving, sauces or making paste; and (3) Beefsteak similar to Round tomatoes, but flatter with fleshier walls and not as juicy, excellent for cooking and eating raw. Unfortunately, tomatoes were the first genetically engineered food approved by the USDA - the purpose of which was to make them ripen on the vine longer, remain firm enough to ship cross-country, and look perfect. Yuk! Unfortunately, the pursuit of this perfection has threatened the near total annihilation of the tomato flavour.

The real tomatoes have been making a comeback under the banner of "heirloom". For years it seemed the only place you could buy heirlooms was off the back of a Mennonite buggy. Not anymore! The heirloom is going mainstream. As evidence, the gargantuan hothouse producer Mastronardi is now shipping heirloom tomatoes under their Sunset label. Availability begins as early as May and lingers until November. This increased supply means that, in addition to farmers' markets and upscale vendors, you will find these tomatoes in the produce aisles of some chain supermarkets.

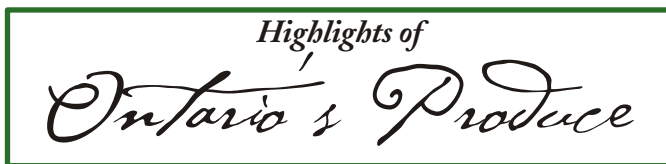


Late July through mid-September is the season for field-grown heirloom tomatoes in Southern Ontario. While location, farm management and Mother Nature will all influence quality and consistency, these tomatoes are generally more flavourful than the hothouse rendition. Try Cherokee Purple, Black Prince, and the rich, meaty, Crimean variety, Black Krim. The red Brandywine is also an excellent, smoothly textured, toothsome variety. The petite Green Zebra is perhaps less richly endowed, but has good sweetness and a crisply defined, vibrant character. Most beautiful of all is the visually enticing Striped German. As these big beauties ripen, they turn deep yellow to orange with a sunburst of bright red streaming out from the blossom end. At their best, they are fleshy, sweet and succulent with sufficient acidity, and require no more adornment than a sprinkle of sea salt. We strongly encourage you to consider canning tomatoes to preserve fall freshness year-round; refer to our newsletter on Canning - <http://www.thehealthybutcher.com/archives.html>, Volume 12.

# Beets

The beet is closely related to Swiss chard and spinach, and grown for its root. Beets and their cousins all descended from the sea beet, a wild seashore plant grown throughout southern Europe, which has been eaten since prehistoric times. Low in calories, beets are notable for

their sweetness - they have the highest sugar content of any vegetable. The powerful red dye in common beets is betacyanin this chemical is the cause of your red urine after eating beets; but on a positive note, some studies have shown that betalains (including betacyanin) is a natural antioxidant and exhibits anti-cancer activity. Golden beets are the new stars in the beet family and tend to be much sweeter.



To preserve colour and nutrients, beets should never be cut or peeled before cooking in liquid; they will "bleed" and turn dull brown. Beets are almost always cooked prior to use. To boil, gently scrub the beets and rinse well, add vinegar or

lemon juice to cooking water so that red beets hold their colour better, then place beets in salted boiling water and simmer until tender (about 30-60 min). Alternatively, place foil-wrapped beets on a baking dish and bake at 350C for 1-2 hours. If you really want to get creative, make a borscht - a hearty Eastern European soup... just google a recipe, you can't go wrong.

# Asian Vegetables



Asian vegetables refer to a growing number of ethnic vegetables that are native to the Middle East, India and Pakistan now grown in Ontario to meet the needs of those who have come from those parts of the world. Bok Choy, Nappa (Chinese cabbage), Mustard Cabbage, Water or Chinese Spinach and Chinese Broccoli are perfect examples. Look for firm dense bunches of nappa and bok choy with smooth stems and unwilted leaves. The more delicate Chinese broccoli should be supple, unwilted and have a vivid, clear color. Nappa, bok choy and mustard cabbage are all members of the cabbage family. They will keep well for a week, wrapped in plastic at the bottom of the refrigerator. Chinese broccoli and spinach can be stored in the same way but will wilt and dry out if not used soon after purchase.

# Apples



First off, no one should be eating imported apples come August through the middle of winter. That means stay away from Granny Smiths (an Australian native) and Pink Ladies both of which are always imports. The superstar apple these days is Honeycrisp a new variety introduced to the public in 1991. It's a cross between a Macoun and a Honeygold and grows best in cooler climates like ours - expect explosive crispness and mild, honeyed flavour. The up and comer is Ambrosia, which is sweet and firm. Ontario's top sellers remain McIntosh (Ontario's darling, though some feel its popularity is waning), followed by Red Delicious and Empire. Apples are picked by hand, washed, dried, polished and waxed. Middlemen called marketers put apples into cold storage if they will be sold before Christmas, or controlled atmosphere storage (to moderate temperature and oxygen levels) if they're to be sold after Christmas. Growers must wait until the apples are sold, mainly to supermarket chains, to be paid. Other Ontario varieties include Cortland, Crispin, Fuji, Gala, Idared, Northern Spy, Russet, & Spartan.

# Potatoes

Who doesn't love these versatile tubers? We encourage you to try the many varieties of potatoes which vary not only in taste but appearance. Long potatoes, such as Russets, are the most popular; because they are high in starch and low in sugar; their low sugar content makes them perfect for French fries. Also popular are Yukon golds, which have a dense, creamy texture making them ideal for mashing. Our favourite heirloom variety is Black Fingerling, which has a deep purple firm flesh and memorable earthy flavour; finely dice this delicacy for the illusion of fancy truffles. FYI, "New Potatoes" refer to freshly dug potatoes that have not reached maturity and have never been kept in storage.

