

Peak Flavor Tomatoes Newsletter

Edition I

Research and Writing by Vivian Ortecho

Tomatoes and Wine; A Charming Co-Promotion

There is a growing trend to pair tomato varieties and tomato-based dishes with wine. Though this is the tenth year that Sonoma County hosted its sold-out annual Kendall-Jackson Heirloom Tomato Festival, it seems the idea is beginning to catch on at industry events, wineries, and restaurants. “At Kendall-Jackson, we are trying to dispel the myth that tomatoes are too acidic to pair with wine. In reality, they are a marriage made in heaven!” commented George Rose, V.P. of Communications for Kendall-Jackson. Gardener’s Markets, a gourmet bistro and caterer with stores across southeastern Florida, is also taking advantage of this wonderful co-promotion by hosting its second Wine and Farm Festival in January, where participants can sample delicious tomatoes and wines together.

Restaurants and grocery chains can capitalize on both products by showcasing and suggesting them together. Rose explained that when coupling tomatoes with wine, it is best to pair with matching color. Sauvignon Blanc goes wonderfully with light, strawberry colored tomatoes, whereas Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon compliment the dark purple and red varieties. Chianti, Sangiovese, and Zinfandel have also been used to pair with tomato-based dishes.

Crop Outlook;

Take into account the latest field bulletins when planning your use of tomatoes for promotion.

- Nationally, tomato acreage for the summer was down 3% compared to last year.
- In California, crops have benefited from the summer heat, recovering well after a cold soggy spring. Tomato acreage was down nearly 7% in July compared to 2005.
- Acreage for the summer harvest in Florida was down 1 percent from 2005. Florida’s heavy rainfall has delayed some fall and winter crop preparations, particularly in the west central and southern counties.
- Shipping point prices have been higher than average, partly due to higher energy costs. Retail prices were also up 2% for fresh tomatoes.
- As most summer harvests come to a close in early fall, expect the majority of winter’s tomatoes to come from Florida, where winter planning is well underway despite periods of excess rainfall, and Mexico.

Tomato Inspiration

Supply your customers with a unique, tasty recipe like this one that highlights tomatoes; watch them fly off the stands! Chef Tyson Harding of The Little Nell restaurant in Aspen, Colorado provided the following recipe utilizing tomatoes and another summer favorite, watermelons. He uses heirloom tomatoes in the recipe, commenting, "I absolutely love heirloom tomatoes and I am always very sad to see them end each year." Need another reason to pair them? Let your customers know that fresh tomatoes and watermelon are the top sources of lycopene, an antioxidant that guards against heart disease and some cancers.

(Photo courtesy of Chef Tyson Harding)



TOMATO WATERMELON GAZPACHO

Recipe courtesy of Chef Ryan Hardy
The Little Nell Restaurant
Aspen, Colorado
www.thelittlenell.com

Gazpacho

- 1 (28 ounce) can **diced** tomatoes
- 2 cucumbers, peeled and diced
- 1/2 watermelon, peeled and seeded
- 1 red bell pepper
- 1 large red onion
- 4 garlic cloves
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 cup V-8® vegetable juice
- 1 cup tomato juice
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon champagne vinegar

