



Photo courtesy of TomatoFest

Gary Ibsen at home with his tomatoes.

Tomato Phyllo Pie

(Cover Recipe)
Served with a salad, this fresh, simple tart makes a great vegetarian meal. You can use any size phyllo sheets and adjust the toppings accordingly. We used 14-by-18-inch sheets and rolled the rim making a 9-by-13-inch tart.

- ¼ cup butter, melted
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 8 phyllo sheets
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella
- 3 medium red and orange tomatoes, sliced
- 4 ounces crumbled feta cheese
- ⅓ cup chopped fresh basil

1. Lightly grease a large baking sheet. Preheat oven to 375F.
2. Combine butter and garlic. Place 1 phyllo sheet on pan. Brush with butter mixture. Repeat with remaining phyllo sheets and butter mixture.
3. Sprinkle phyllo with mozzarella to within 2½ inches of the edges, top with sliced tomatoes. Sprinkle with feta cheese and basil. Roll phyllo edges to form rim. Bake 20 to 25 minutes, until phyllo is crisp and cheese is melted. Serves 6.

Per serving: 260 calories, 17g fat, 45mg chol., 11g prot., 18g carbs., 1g fiber, 510mg sodium.

TOMATOES — A Love Story

An encounter with an old Portuguese farmer more than 30 years ago forever changed the course of Gary Ibsen's life. That's when Ibsen was offered his first taste of a genuine, organically grown heirloom tomato. He took a bite of "Kellogg's Breakfast," sampled "Cherokee Purple," then bit into "Brandywine."

"The flavor blew me away, and I became a convert," he says. Ibsen took home six varieties of heirloom tomato seedlings that day. With a new-found appreciation for true tomato flavor, he spearheaded a small gathering of tomato lovers 17 years ago, and from these humble beginnings grew the NatureSweet Carmel TomatoFest, a celebration in Carmel, Calif., of tomatoes, food and wine. Scheduled this year for Sept. 14, at the Quail Lodge Resort, the festival draws more than 3,000 people and features 350 heirloom varieties for tasting.

Heirloom varieties, both familiar and foreign, are featured, from exotic-tasting "Pineapple" and the complex smoky flavor of "Paul Robeson" to the boldly patterned colors of "Tigerella" and "Green Zebra." Included in the mix is "Julia Child," an intensely rich, deep pink tomato with a near perfect balance of acid to sugar and a texture that triumphs with firm, juicy flesh.

Ibsen's love affair with tomatoes has made him somewhat of a celebrity within the Carmel community. And he enjoys introducing the object of his affection to everyone he meets. But his passion goes beyond the sensory pleasure and pure romance of heirloom tomatoes. It's also about the cultural history and family stories that come with each variety. Like the Portuguese farmer before him, Ibsen celebrates the harvest of his favorite fruit. More than that, he's carrying on a legacy. ♪

Story by Kris Wetherbee, a freelance writer in Oakland, Ore.

For more information about the NatureSweet Carmel TomatoFest, go to relishmag.com/tomatofest



Kris Wetherbee

NatureSweet Carmel TomatoFest

America's premiere tomato festival, Sept. 14 in Carmel, Calif., includes a salsa tasting showcasing 90 tomato salsas, a buffet of tantalizing tomato dishes created by area chefs and the chance to sample hundreds of fresh, organically grown heirloom tomatoes.