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# PRODUCE NOTES

August 31, 2008

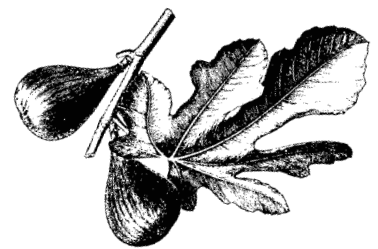
## August Market News:

### Highlights from the Cornucopia!

As the slow transition out of summer begins, this time of year feels the most abundant; lingering summer fruit and vegetables are peppered with early fall arrivals of apples, pears and hard squash. This is the perfect time to eat tomatoes, especially slicers, dry-farmed Early Girls, heirlooms, and cherry tomatoes. Stock up, take advantage of great prices, and enjoy, as the market will most likely tighten up towards mid-late September. Eggplant will also be in good supply for the next few weeks, as will zucchini; although, many varieties are becoming lighter in availability. Bell peppers are slowly starting to color up, with local red, orange and yellow bell supply drastically improving in the next few weeks.

California apples already began, with Washington not too far behind—expect to see Washington Fuji, Braeburn, Jonagold, and Granny Smith apples by mid-late September. Sadly, due to the early spring frost, Cuyama Orchard in Los Angeles lost most of their Gala, Fuji, and Pink Lady apples, and will only have an abbreviated crop available to sell this season. Strawberries and raspberries peak in supply, price, and flavor in the next few weeks, yet blueberries are winding down and will probably vanish in the same time frame.

With the exception of Champagne grapes, which finish this week, most grape varieties are cresting: Flames, Autumn Royals, Muscats, Concords, and Thompsons are all available in volume, and smatterings of Bronx grapes grace us with their presence—get them while they last! Figs also reach their zenith at this time, with all varieties represented. California peaches and nectarines are ending, resuming with Northwest fruit through September. California plums and pluots will also continue in strong supply through September. In this plentiful fruit time, don't forget about melons from the Capay Valley and Hollister, which will persist through this month.



*Ficus carica*

New crop sweet potato prices are coming down as supply improves, while potato supply migrates to the Pacific Northwest. In other root news, local onions finally appeared from Hollister, and parsnips, brussel sprouts, and turnips should return by mid-September. Broccoli prices stabilized after a hard month of quality problems, and supply is predicted to be steady for the next month. Salinas grown cauliflower reappears by mid-late September, as does local Romanesco, our fractal favorite! Unfortunately, our lettuce growers are battling it out with aphids, which propped up prices quite dramatically in the past week; however, this problem will resolve itself once the weather cools off. Darcy, our illustrious veg buyer, hinted that asparagus from Chile and Argentina may arrive by mid-September—stay tuned!

-Denise McAllan

### Staff Picks: Sweet Summer Treats

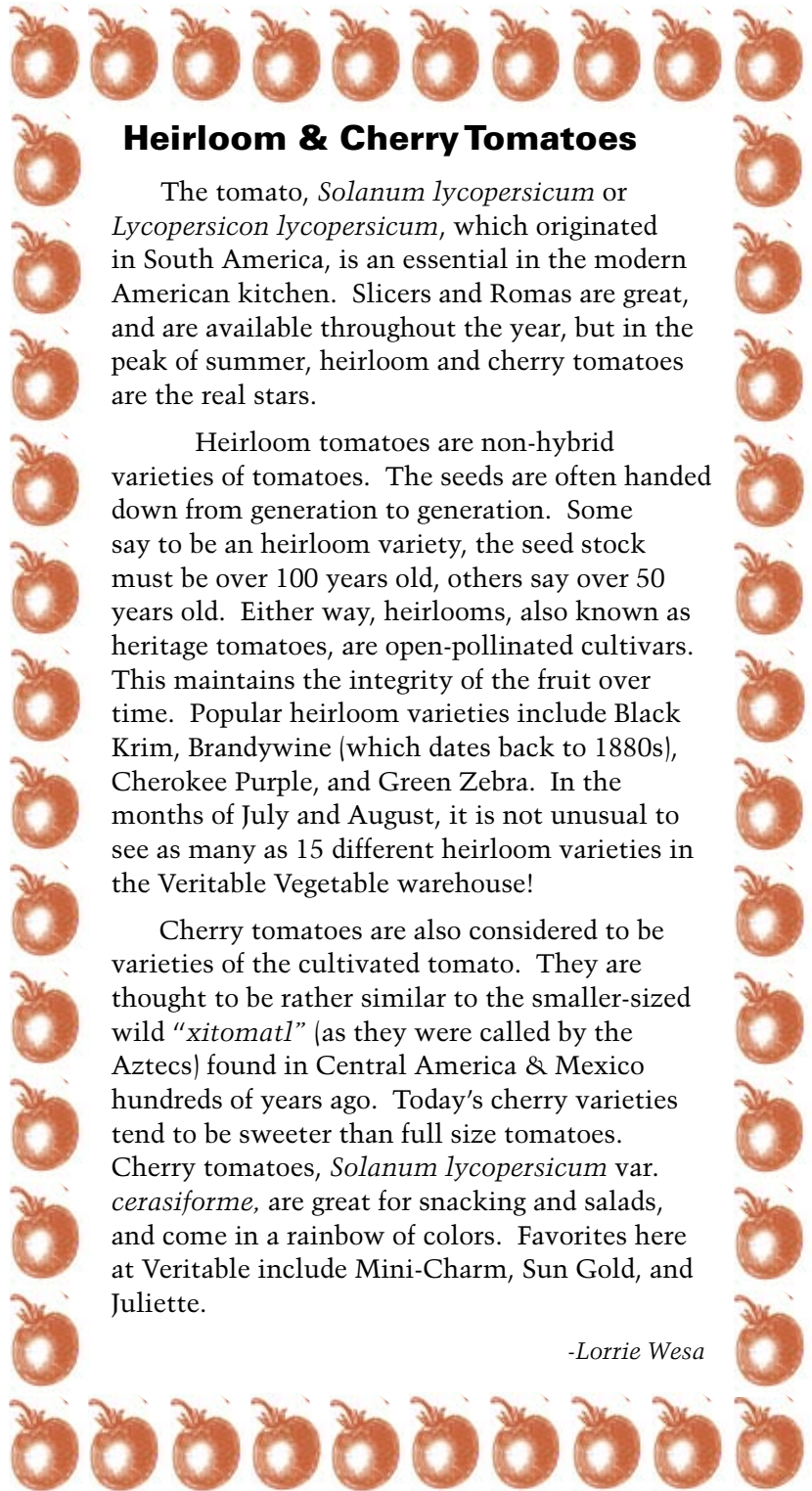
My favorite fruit at this time of the year is figs. I am a BIG fan of the brown turkey—plump and sweet and a perfect fruit for anytime. I like them with goat cheese, or wrapped with prosciutto and grilled. The best way to eat a fig is to flip them upside down with the stem end pointing up, and then ever so slightly crack the fig open just enough to see the center. But don't pull it apart—join the two halves together and move them around so that the center creates this combination of sugar—it's the way I have been shown to eat figs by one of our customers. You can't go wrong with any fig you purchase right now!

Mary Rendon—Sales

(Staff Picks, continued)

In the 4 years I have worked in the organic produce industry, the Bronx Grape is the one specific variety of fruit whose arrival is greeted with cheers in my household. While my housemates have appreciated all the delicious produce I've been bringing home while we've lived together, the Bronx Grape has earned its own special nickname. I won't tell you what it is, but it refers to the grape's highly addictive qualities (and rhymes with "whack.") Grown by John Lagier of Lagier Ranches (also famous for such goodies as cherries, preserves, and flavored roasted almonds—not to mention his beautiful handlebar mustache), these grapes are a beautiful and unique ambery-pink color, with the tiniest seeds to provide a satisfying, but not intrusive, crunch. They have the perfect sweet-tart balance, and favor the sweet side, but never overly so, even when overripe. I have been bringing the Bronx Grape to picnics in Dolores Park for enough years that no summer would seem complete without them. Lagier has a smaller crop than usual this year, so don't miss out!

Kate Sims--Sales



## Heirloom & Cherry Tomatoes

The tomato, *Solanum lycopersicum* or *Lycopersicon lycopersicum*, which originated in South America, is an essential in the modern American kitchen. Slicers and Romas are great, and are available throughout the year, but in the peak of summer, heirloom and cherry tomatoes are the real stars.

Heirloom tomatoes are non-hybrid varieties of tomatoes. The seeds are often handed down from generation to generation. Some say to be an heirloom variety, the seed stock must be over 100 years old, others say over 50 years old. Either way, heirlooms, also known as heritage tomatoes, are open-pollinated cultivars. This maintains the integrity of the fruit over time. Popular heirloom varieties include Black Krim, Brandywine (which dates back to 1880s), Cherokee Purple, and Green Zebra. In the months of July and August, it is not unusual to see as many as 15 different heirloom varieties in the Veritable Vegetable warehouse!

Cherry tomatoes are also considered to be varieties of the cultivated tomato. They are thought to be rather similar to the smaller-sized wild "*xitomatl*" (as they were called by the Aztecs) found in Central America & Mexico hundreds of years ago. Today's cherry varieties tend to be sweeter than full size tomatoes. Cherry tomatoes, *Solanum lycopersicum* var. *cerasiforme*, are great for snacking and salads, and come in a rainbow of colors. Favorites here at Veritable include Mini-Charm, Sun Gold, and Juliette.

-Lorrie Wesa

