



This year I have grown 38 different varieties. A few have lost their labels, or been late to mature, but I have photos of 34 of them, and the notes from our taste test and my opinion as a grower. People always want to know which are my favourites, but I grow them for flavour, looks and different purposes, so I couldn't easily pick out a single variety.



Let's start with the Cherry tomatoes. Eat them straight off the vine, share them with friends and a glass of rosé, put them whole in salads or cut them in half, sprinkle with salt and sun dry them (only take 3 days to get to be "mi-cuit" and I store them in olive oil, brilliant added to melon, cucumber and goat's cheese salad, or to perk up all sorts of dishes).





More or less in order of preference:

Sungold. Earliest to ripen, long productive season, lovely orangey colour, good flavour. Skin can be a bit tough.

Green Grape. Great colour, good crop, interesting flavour, nice thin skin

Black Russian Plum. A long standing favourite, looks good, tastes good and produces reasonable quantities. I sun dry a lot of them. They vary a lot in size, from cherry to medium, so actually the cut photo for this is in with the larger ones, but it is there in the mixed basket. Has green shoulders.

Black Cherry. Good flavour and texture, good reliable crop

Orange Tiger. A happy accident that seems to be running true from seed. Looks amazing and tastes nice and tangy.

Brown Berry. Nice thin skin, flavour ok, consistent crop over long period.

White Cherry. Basically grown as a colour contrast, from seed I saved at a BBQ of one I thought tasted and looked good.

Amish Gold. Starting yellow with green shoulders, it matures to a beautiful orange colour and attractive shape, it is one I love to sun-dry along with BRP, or slice into salads for a contrast. It also comes in various sizes.

Yellow Pear. Really only grown for the colour and shape, it doesn't really taste of anything much.

Supersweet. The smallest of all I have grown and the only red one. Unremarkable, and skin a bit tough, but hey, it looks cute.

I would find it really hard to choose less than 6 of these to grow next year!

I should also say, the majority of these are heritage varieties that will grow true from seed. The exception is Sungold, which is an F1 hybrid, that I buy, usually from T & M.

In the basket above there are some small red plum tomatoes. I have no idea what they are, they were labelled 'Green Grape'! But I will save some seeds and see what happens next year.





Moving on to larger tomatoes, I have split them into colour groupings. This is all about Red ones.

One reason for having so many varieties is that I wanted to find a good reliable standard round red, not too large and not too small. The funny thing is, now that I have them, I realise I actually rarely choose to use them fresh, and they sit in the basket, glaring at me, until they end up getting turned into Gazpacho... which has been an absolute joy during this hot summer. I do also make a lot of soup for the freezer, with roasted tomatoes, and these medium and large ones will be the basis of all sorts of salsas. I also freeze good shaped medium to large fruits, to use with bacon and eggs for breakfast in the winter, and any that are at risk of getting over-ripe will likely end up in the freezer to use in cooked dishes later (the skins are easy to remove as they defrost, so I don't bother to peel them).

Sort of in order of whether I would grow them again. How on earth can I ever get to growing just a few varieties, I wonder?

Thessaloniki. This has been one of the new stars for me, and was pretty much what I was hoping for, a good firm large slicing tomato for Greek style salads, with a good flavour.

Good Old Fashioned Red. Larger than I expected, it has produced a good number of big fruits and I would certainly grow it again.

Clint Eastwood's Rowdy Red. This has been a great cropper and seemed to avoid the blossom end rot that plagued a lot of my early harvest. An overall good tom.

Craigella. This was one of the earliest to ripen, and has a nice flavour.

Arkansas Traveller. Really quite impressive, large crops of consistently sized medium-large tomatoes. These mostly get cut in half and frozen.

Gardeners Delight. Mostly a bit too big to be classed as a cherry, I tend to use them a lot in salad, they have a good tomato flavour

Mortgage Lifter, Radiator Charlies. This was the first of my really large tomatoes to ripen.

Then there was a long gap, and now they are harvesting again. A good large tom

Long Keeper. Well, as its name suggests, this is very slow to ripen, but is expected to last late into the season. I haven't eaten one as they aren't ready yet!



Marmande. Good flavour and nice to eat. I am never very impressed by quantity though and I find that later ones are often awkwardly shaped.

Fireworks. Prolific, small to medium. Not so tasty as others.

Merveille de Marchés. Tasty medium-large toms, but not really many of them.

Rose de Berne. I have had some lovely ones in the past, but wasn't much impressed with them this year. Maybe I will treat myself to some new seeds. These were smaller than expected and a bit watery in flavour.



Not just red. I delight in the variety of colours that tomatoes come in. From creamy white, through yellow and greens, then pale gold to orange and red, and on to pinky or rusty brown and through to the darkest deep blackish red. The darker fruits tend to be the least acidic in flavour and can be really lush. The bright greens and oranges can have a tasty tang. The paler ones are subtle and delicate. They make a fabulous mixed tomato salad, a fun way to decorate a quiche, or a splendid celebration of tomato as a multicoloured tart. This year I have multicoloured sun dried tomatoes too.



Amish Gold. Made its appearance as a cherry tom, but some of them are much bigger and have an appealing bullet shape.

Banana Legs. These have been productive, but honestly, they have such a huge core that I don't think they make good eating at all. I am at a bit of a loss as to what to do with them.

Golden Sunrise. A nice bright colour and a nice bright flavour to go with it.

Roughwood Golden Plum. A big fat orange fleshy tomato with not too many seeds, so nice to use for a different colour of paste. Better cooked than raw.

White Wonder. The large pale tomatoes look good as a contrast with red and black slices. The early ones were good, but my later ones have been wrinkled, possibly just not picked soon enough as I tend to not notice them!

Green Vernissage. This was a free gift from TomatoFest or Baker's Creek, where I bought a lot of my new seeds from this year. It has been very productive, and I like the way it starts to go just a little pink along with the green as it ripens. The flavour is average, but I grow green tomatoes for visual contrast, rather than flavour.

I am also growing **Green Zebra**, which is very similar, but I planted it late in the polytunnel, and haven't done a taste comparison yet.

Mortgage Lifter Bi-Coloured. I have grown Ananas in previous years, and this is very similar. Large, glorious when cut open and makes a fabulous slice



Black Brandywine. Looks amazing but the taste is nothing to write about.

Black Krim. Luscious and large, a definite grow again variety.

Black Zebra. Lots of fruits, good looking from the outside. Skin a bit tough, but good flavour. This has worked well to add depth of colour to things using chopped tomatoes.

Black Russian Plum. A favourite that I have already reviewed in with the cherry toms, as this year they have mostly been quite small.



Plum tomatoes.

I like to make enough passata and peeled plum tomatoes to see us through the winter months. My aim is to not buy any tomatoes, whether as paste, tinned or fresh. I don't have a cave for storing jars in, so I freeze my produce. I often add garlic, onion and basil when making passata, which makes a great pizza topping.

This year I have about a dozen plants, using 4 different varieties

Rio Grande. A new one to me and it has been excellent, really prolific and a good size.

San Marzano. Good crop over the season, but the early ones suffered badly with blossom end rot

Roma. Started out disappointingly small, but have got better and I've had a good crop over the season

Amish Paste. A nice neat tomato, but they haven't been great croppers and they are a bit small and fiddly when it comes to peeling.



In summary - it has been a generally very good year for my crop overall. I have 60 plants outside. The plot was mulched heavily with well rotted horse manure. The plants were watered well initially and a few times over the first couple of weeks. I have only watered once since, while the plants were still getting established. They have suffered from blossom end rot, but not enough to worry about, except for one variety, **Heinz H9129**, which hasn't yet produced a single good tomato. I used pellets of chicken manure when planting, but haven't done any supplementary feeding. I start with good intentions, and remove side shoots for the indeterminate varieties, but after a bit, I just leave them to their own devices, as I have more than enough other things to do. I also have a dozen plants in the polytunnel, as insurance against blight, and to hopefully extend the season a little. Most years we are still eating fresh tomatoes in late November (the last green ones ripen slowly in a paper bag).

I do collect seeds and aim to grow about half of the varieties from my own, but always buy some new ones, to try different varieties. I buy seeds from 2 US suppliers, TomatoFest and Baker's Creek, both of which have a lovely selection of heritage varieties. I also buy from Seed Parade and Thompson & Morgan in the UK, and Graines Baumaux here in France. I also grow a lot of plants which are sold in aid of a local charity, Aider-Help Hope, that supports refugees.

Finally then, here is my top 10

Cherry: **Sungold F1**. Early, reliable, long season, tasty.

Coloured cherry: **Green Grape**. Love the look and the flavour and lots from one plant.

Large Red: **Thessaloniki**. Good taste and texture, ideal for slicing, reasonably productive.

Medium Red: **Clint Eastwood's Rowdy Red**. Good crop and good flavour.

Small Red: **Gardener's Delight**. Good flavour and deservedly popular.

Yellow/Green: **Amish Gold**. Both shape and colour make a good contrast and the flavour is nice.

Large Black: **Black Krim**. Luscious flavour and dramatically dark

Medium Black: **Black Russian Plum**. Longstanding favourite of mine, multi-purpose

Small Black: **Black Cherry**. Good flavour and texture, plenty of fruits.

Plum: **Rio Grande**. Good crops, good size.

