



Kevin Milaeger

# Milaeger's

## Tomatomania Review 2014!

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**Thanks to all of you who joined us** at Tomatomania 2014. The event was a big success and very enjoyable. The weather was ideal and we had a bumper crop of tomatoes. The event centers around the tomato taste test, a "blind" comparison of about 115 kinds of tomatoes. The tomatoes are

grouped by category---paste, cherry, novelty, and so on, so that guests can sample any category that is of particular interest to them. After the tasting



is completed, and you have made notes on your preferences, you cast a ballot for your favorites. We then give you the variety key so that you can record your personal comments and start to plan next year's garden. It's not a truly scientific test, but in the end this is meant to be mostly a fun event. But we do take the test results very seriously. We definitely add and subtract varieties based on the polling results.

Every year there are plenty of surprises. In the large red/pink tomato class, for example, the winner was 'Rose de Berne.'



Mini BLT's

I am guessing most of you have never heard of it. I hadn't either until we grew it for the first time a few years ago. This illustrates my feelings about constantly trying new varieties. You never know when a new favorite will show up. I am always perplexed when someone tells me that they have been growing a certain variety all their life. I think, Really?---with all the thousands of tomato varieties out there, you think

the one you grow is the best? What is the likelihood of that?

You can [click here](#) for the test results, and draw your own conclusions. I'd like to point out a few things that interested me. You might recall that a

guest at Tomatomania 2013 gave me some seed from a family heirloom tomato called 'Macedonia.' We grew it, of course, and it was in this year's taste test. It was the second highest scoring paste tomato, so it will be in our regular production next year. Thanks to the mystery woman who passed along the seed! 'Black Aisburg' was the top vote getter in the darker novelty tomato category.



That's a fairly new one for us, so a bit of a surprise. I'll be adding it to my own garden next year for further evaluation. 'Cherry Roma' was the number one grape tomato. It was first tried by us in 2013, when it also scored well. Now it has proved to be reliably consistent---that is something we look for in tomato quality. Another remarkably consistent variety is 'Husky Cherry Red.' This is a shorter growing type, so it is often



Kevin Milaeger with Macedonia tomato, and peppers Thunderbolt (larger) and Marconi

recommended for containers. It has a stocky habit, so it doesn't need staking. It was number one in its category, as it has been for several years now. Some of my personal favorites did not fare well. I'll still grow them, but with a more critical eye (or maybe tongue). Always looking for something tastier!

This year I grew a new pepper that has done very well. It is an elongated sweet pepper called 'Thunderbolt.' I've grown the similar 'Marconi' for years and I have been happy with it. For this photo I picked the largest of each that I could find. 'Thunderbolt' is bigger, but I don't know if the size difference is consistent. More

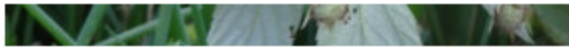
importantly, I failed to note the quantity produced. Regardless, 'Thunderbolt' does look promising, so at the very least, we'll be including it in our "Vintage Veggie" offering for 2015.

My home raspberry patch (I like to call it a patch, but actually it is quite modest in size) performed well this year. I picked quite a few berries in July, more than usual. The variety I am growing is 'Heritage,' an "everbearing" type, which means it bears a second crop in autumn. I have been picking the second crop for the past week or so. I was out there last evening and I noticed an unusually large number of bees; not flying around, but eating the very berries I wanted to pick. This was distressing, particularly because when the berries first





start to ripen there aren't very many, and I didn't feel like sharing. But the weather was cool and the bees seemed to be moving slowly. I hope that means the bees are nearing their end, and large clusters of future berries won't have to be shared with them.



Heritage raspberry (ripe soon!)

You all know how I enjoy harvesting root crops. I am always a little surprised when I pull something out of the ground that has been mostly hidden from view. Although the carrots in this photo are tasty, you can see how many of them are twisted up---



Kevin Milaeger with unknown carrot and Pink Beauty radish

that is because I did a poor job of thinning them out. That's okay for your home garden but if you want to sell them at market you want them to look "normal." The 'Pink Beauty' radishes I sowed specifically for autumn harvest. I sowed the seed on August 18 and now many of them are ready for harvest---

not even a month old. Fun!  
Please email me ([kevin@milaegers.com](mailto:kevin@milaegers.com)) if you have any questions or comments.

