



Kevin Milaeger

Milaeger's

It's true!---Sometimes tomato beauty is only skin deep!

Kevin Milaeger

I was so looking forward to trying a new tomato called 'Florentine Yellow.' It was bright golden yellow, with a faint red blush at the blossom end; rather squat in shape, with heavy pleats, or lobes. Too pretty to eat, almost. I sliced one of these beauties while some guests watched. I was wary right away, as it seemed to be mealy. Absent any salt or pepper, we gave it a try. All agreed---a mealy texture, and flavorless. Yuk. Looking more closely, we noticed the shoulders of the fruit were a little green. Maybe it wasn't fully ripe. We waited a few days before the next 'Florentine Yellow' was fully ripe, but the results were similar. Disappointing, but this is why we trial a new variety in our limited Vintage Veggie program before offering it in our regular lineup. We need to check it out, with your help, before we add it to our regular spring offering. If you have any tomato suggestions for next year, we'd love to [hear from you](#). Our 2017 list was started months ago.



Tomato 'Florentine Yellow'

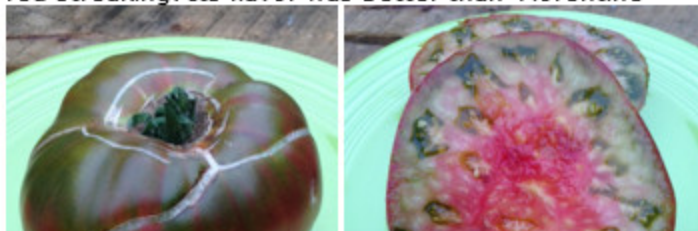
I had a similar result with two other varieties, though I haven't yet tried a second fruit of either. Forming an opinion based on one sample is never a good idea, in tomatoes, and in life, I suppose. It's important that the fruit be sampled at its peak readiness---even tried and true types don't taste good if they are eaten when they are under or over ripe. 'Beauty King' and 'Goliath' were both in our Vintage Veggie program this year. 'Goliath,' a newer hybrid, has been around for a while, so I was certain it would be a winner. The one I tasted wasn't terrible, it just reminded me too much of supermarket tomatoes in the winter. I'll sample at least one more before writing it off. It certainly looks great, but that's not enough. 'Beauty King' is a large bicolor, mostly yellow with some red streaking. Its flavor was better than 'Florentine

Yellow,' but not as good as other bicolors. It may have been slightly overripe. We'll try another before deciding on it.

"Black" tomatoes are



Tomato Goliath



sought after by many of our customers. Of course the tomatoes aren't really black, but they are considerably darker than typical



Tomato Copper River

tomatoes. The skin sometimes takes on a purple or brown tone, and the shoulders of the fruit are often greenish. The flesh of the tomato is even darker--especially the locules, the gel-like part that holds the seed. Most of today's dark



Hornworm

tomatoes originated in the Ukraine, but they are found in other parts of the world, too. The black tomato that sounded good to us this year was 'Copper River.' It's a modern hybrid from California, and I'm betting the parents have heirloom blood. The largest fruits are over a pound, and there is concentric cracking in the skin. This type of cracking is genetic, so there is nothing to be done about it. Just

focus on the flavor and the great color, especially when sliced. I think it's fantastic. It's not acidic like many bright red tomatoes, but not overly sweet, either. I think it has a rich, smooth taste, more like a pink tomato than a scarlet red variety. You'll have to try it for yourself and see what you think. We all know a little sea salt or fresh ground pepper greatly alters the flavor of all tomatoes. Those spices add a lot, but for initial tasting, we sample the plain fruit. The word oftentimes used to describe "black" tomatoes is "smoky." Not sure if that applies here, but you can be the judge. We will likely have some fruit for you to try at our 15th Annual Tomatomania on September 10.

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Hawk Moth

The dreaded tomato hornworm has not yet shown up this year. I'm sure some of you have seen this beautiful but troublesome critter. Fortunately, they are easy to control, unless you are a little squeamish. The hornworm can eat a lot of leaves and fruit very quickly so you should check regularly starting in midsummer.



Pepper Xanthi

Look for dark frass (droppings) near the top of your plants. Hornworms like the new tender leaves. The worm's color is nearly identical to that of the tomato plant stem, and their body size is about the same diameter as the stem, so you have to look carefully. Once you spot one, the next one will be easy. Of course, the hornworm is just one stage of the creature's lifecycle. Soon it will form a chrysalis, from which a beautiful hawk moth emerges. If you love both hawk moths and tomatoes, here is a solution offered by a friend of mine. If you grew tomatoes last year, you probably have a few "volunteer" tomato seedlings popping up here and there. Allow a few of these unwanted plants to grow, and put the hornworms on them,

letting them feast away. Your main plants will be safe, and everyone will be happy.

Causing some excitement here is the "new" pepper category that we are calling "seasoning peppers." These are neither hot nor sweet; they each have a distinct flavor. Next year we are planning on having a special section devoted to this category, hopefully eight or ten varieties. We hope you find something interesting to try. Just



harvested from our garden are two promising bullhorn varieties: 'Xanthi,' a hybrid, and 'Beaver Dam,' a Hungarian heirloom type. 'Beaver Dam' has mild heat, but considerably less than a jalapeno. 'Xanthi' is a yellow, elongated pepper that could be described as mild, though I wouldn't call it sweet. When a morsel of one of these finds its way to your tongue, you say to yourself---that's something new (in a good way)!



Pepper Beaver Dam