



Milaeger's

TOMATOMANIA Post Event Comments

Kevin Milaeger

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Kevin & Susan Milaeger
at Caprese Bruschetta station

Tomatomania 2011 was a success--- the event was well attended and most all the guest comments were very favorable. Our goal at this event is to get customer's feedback on the many tomato varieties that we grow. Guests sampled as many of the unlabeled 110+ varieties as they cared to, and then gave us their feedback through the tomato popularity poll. We have posted the results on our website--- [click here](#).

When coordinating the taste test, the biggest challenge we had was to have plenty of fully ripe fruit, of each variety, on the precise day of the event. With the many different varieties we grow, and with all of them having different growth habits, that is not an easy task. If we



Taste test

run out of fruit early in the event, the poll results are obviously skewed. This year, with an increased attendance, we ran out of too many varieties too soon. We have already decided to increase production for 2012, but attendance will always be difficult to predict. Despite the minor difficulties, the taste test is reasonably accurate. We don't want it to



Tomato Gold Medal

be so rigid that it is no longer fun. We know it has shortcomings, and we consider them when evaluating the results and planning next year's production.

Keeping the aforementioned in mind, I was pleased to see some of my personal favorites performing well in the test. We all like to have our opinions reaffirmed. 'Bloody Butcher'--- what I consider to be the best tasting early tomato--- was well received, as it has been for the past several years.



Philip at the brick pizza oven



Tomato Berkeley Tie Dye

'Brandy Boy,' a variety that heretofore has received mixed results, scored very well. We'll be adding it to our permanent production next year. Perennial favorites 'Sun Gold' and 'Sun Sugar'----both yellow/orange cherry tomatoes---were numbers one and two, respectively. Not surprising, since they have been at or near

the top most every year. 'Black', a relative newcomer, scored very high. I grew it at home this year and my experience agrees with the poll results. One that surprised me is 'Green Zebra', a variety that has green skin streaked with yellow when ripe. While I will always grow this one for its unusual flavor, I am surprised by its high score because its flavor is decidedly un-tomatoey, at least to me. I have read descriptions that characterize the flavor as zingy or zesty, and I think those adjectives are reasonably accurate. I like 'Green Zebra' in a mixed tomato salad, to add



Kara by
tomato display



Tomato display

a distinct new flavor dimension---and a bright color! Of course, a light sprinkling of your favorite sea salt brings out the flavor of this and most any tomato.

Thinking ahead to 2012, there is, as always, no shortage of "new" varieties that continue to intrigue us. I relish the task of poring over variety lists, searching for the next great variety. The

desire to grow new plants, to plan next year's garden, seems to me to be an almost primal need or urge, a visceral impulse, and a most welcome one. The hope and promise of "next spring" is very powerful. If we, at Milaeger's, can inspire other gardeners to begin dreaming of next year's garden---well, that is very satisfying, too.



Tomato Paul Robeson