



Kevin Milaeger

*Milaeger's*

## Vintage Veggies Now & Disease Resistant Tomatoes!

Kevin Milaeger

Every year on Mother's Day weekend we put out our new crop of ["Vintage Veggies"](#) (VV from here on.) These are vegetable varieties that looked interesting to us, and we wanted to try some in our trial garden. We thought you might be interested in trying them, too, so we began offering them on our lot about five years ago. They've been well received; gardeners are an adventurous lot. This year we have over sixty varieties. Most of them are old "heirloom" types, but a good number are newer hybrids. That's because we have been intensely searching for disease resistant tomatoes, and many of them are recent introductions. I had first crack at these plants (we only grow about 100 of each of these), so I set aside about eighteen plants for my home garden. Most of my choices are tomatoes, so I'll be waiting until the end of the month, at least, before I plant them.

*photo: territorialseed.com*



**Tomato Buffalo Steak**

These VV plants are so interesting, I can't resist trying many more than I need. (I give much of the fruit away.) Several tomatoes are heavily ribbed, so when they are sliced and set on a plate the slices show the scalloped edge, making for a beautiful and striking presentation. One of these is called 'Mushroom Basket.' I had a hard time tracking down the seed. Finally I found it in an online auction, from a gardener in Russia! We also have a yellow ribbed variety called 'Florentine Beauty.'

*photo: totallytomato.com*



**Tomato Jaune Flamme**

Also appealing to me is 'Buffalo Steak', a meaty tomato with rich, deep red flesh, and very few seeds. Another promising newcomer is 'Cherokee Carbon,' a cross of the popular varieties 'Cherokee Purple' and 'Carbon.' You have probably noticed many articles on canning in recent years; apparently there is a resurgence. From what I've read, the best type of tomatoes for canning are those with high acid content. Some folks like the flavor of high acid tomatoes, even if they aren't canning. We have several high acid types in the VV program: 'Nineveh,' 'Old Brooks,' 'Druzba,' and 'Stone.' Many of you

are familiar with 'Black Cherry,' a dark purple cherry tomato that is always a customer favorite. We still offer it, but in this year's VV collection we have a similar one called 'Black Opal,' a hybrid heirloom. That means it is a new variety, a hybrid using two heirloom varieties as parents. It is reportedly firmer (less cracking) and more flavorful than 'Black Cherry.' I don't give up on old favorites easily---we'll see how this new one fares in comparison. Years ago we tried a noted French variety called 'Jaune Flamme.' Frankly, I don't remember what it tasted like, but we had no feedback from our customers regarding their take on it, so it faded away. Since then, I've read more favorable reviews of it, so we are offering it to you for reevaluation. Let us know what you think. Your opinion counts more than you think.

photo: [totallytomato.com](http://totallytomato.com)



**Pepper Corbaci**

Along with the many VV tomatoes, we have about twenty kinds of VV peppers. Most are either sweet or hot, but there is a new class (not clearly defined) called seasoning peppers. These are neither sweet nor hot, but they

photo: [territorialseed.com](http://territorialseed.com)



**Cucumber Boothby's Blonde**

are pungent, with interesting flavors, according to the seed companies. Varieties include 'Bishop's Hat,' 'Corbaci,' and 'Criolla Cocina.' Other interesting VV vegetables are two "white" cucumbers, 'Boothby's Blonde,' and 'Salt and Pepper,' and also an old round heirloom cuke called 'Lemon.' A few others round out the list---a white eggplant, a mini cuke called 'Mini Munch,' a boldly striped zucchini named 'Safari,' and Kalettes 'Autumn Star,' a hybrid of Brussels sprouts and kale!!!

My heart sinks a little every time a customer tells me they have given up on vegetable gardening. It doesn't happen very often, but still.... My gut feeling is

that the person just didn't follow the plant "recipe"; most of us don't want to admit our errors. I don't think gardening is dissimilar to baking. Some recipes you can fudge a little, and others not at all.

photo: [johnnyseeds.com](http://johnnyseeds.com)

But if you do follow the recipe you are nearly always successful. But unlike baking, gardening has other, uncontrollable factors such as weather, insects, and disease.



**Zucchini Safari**

The two worst diseases in our part of the country are early and late blight. There is no cure for either. Both can remain in your soil for years, so you must find a new location or use containers if you have had blight. You can use a copper fungicide spray, as a preventive. This is safe for organic gardening, according to the label. You spray it on the leaves with an easy to use, pre-mixed hand sprayer. The label says to start application two weeks before the disease normally appears, so I would start in early July. You need to reapply after rain, so, when watering, don't get the leaves wet. Once the plant has grown

quite a bit, I recommend removing the lowest leaves, for better air circulation, and to reduce the chance of water

photo: [totallytomato.com](http://totallytomato.com)





**Kalette Autumn Star**

bouncing up from the soil onto the leaves.

Tomato disease is a problem we have probably all encountered. This year, we at Milaeger's have made an effort to offer a greater number of disease resistant varieties. In the VV program, look for varieties such as 'Bella Rossa,' 'Arkansas Traveler,' 'Iron Lady,' 'Mountain Magic,' 'Old Brooks,' 'Rugged Boy,' 'Rutgers Select,' 'Trust,' and

others. Remember, "disease resistant" does not mean "disease proof." It is still a good idea to follow the "recipe." Plus, there are other diseases that can affect tomatoes, and there can be more than one affecting a plant at the same time. Here is a link to our tomato poster, showing the simple steps for tomato growing. If you follow these steps, you can tip the odds in your favor, and that's something we can all use.

*photo: johnnyseeds.com*



**Tomato Old Brooks**

Please email me ([kevin@milaegers.com](mailto:kevin@milaegers.com)) if you have any questions or comments.

