

FOOD & DRINK

Ontario vegetables make creating meals easy

Tomatoes, eggplant and sweet corn are almost ready to be served on your dinner table

A bountiful harvest of Ontario tomatoes, corn and eggplant is good news for food lovers.

"This season's Ontario tomato crop looks good. They will have good sugars and colour because we've had lots of heat," said Meribeth Fitts, fruit and vegetable specialist, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Ontario field tomatoes are ready. Consumers will notice some new novelty varieties of tomatoes — in different colours and sizes — ideal for salads — at roadside stands, in speciality markets and restaurants this summer.

Sweet corn was off to an early start this year, and will peak the first week of August, with availability extending into late September, according to Fitts.

"Eggplants love the heat, so they're doing really well and they should be ready for market during the second week of August," vegetable specialist Jody Bodner said.

If you're grilling meat, poultry or fish, why not avoid the hot kitchen entirely and prepare your vegetables on the grill, too? With

just a few minutes preparation and some simple cooking techniques, you can serve a delectable summertime meal.

Ontario eggplant and zucchini can be grilled ahead of time, then tossed in salads. Combined with zucchini, peppers and onions, eggplant makes a colourful, delicious kebab.

For a quick sauce just bursting with summer flavour, grill Ontario tomato halves, zucchini slices and onion wedges brushed with olive oil until tender, then chop and toss with hot pasta. Sprinkle with parmesan cheese.

Grilled vegetables are a natural ingredient for lasagna, too. Try Ontario sweet peppers, onions, zucchini and eggplant.

When you grill Ontario corn, it takes on a whole new sweet, rich flavour. Mix the grilled kernels with black beans, sweet peppers and onions and your favourite Italian-style salad dressing for light, fresh summer dining.

With Ontario vegetables and your grill, you'll hardly have to fire up your stove this summer.

Mediterranean zucchini and eggplant

Because this dish is equally delicious at room temperature, the eggplant and zucchini can be grilled ahead of time, then drizzled with reserved dressing and feta just before serving. Try the different summer squashes, such as Sunburst, for interesting shapes. For added colour, surround with wedges or slices of Ontario tomato.

Preparation time: 10 minutes
Barbecuing time: Eight minutes
Serves: Four

- 1/3 cup lemon juice (one to two lemons)
- finely grated rind from one lemon
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tsp dried oregano
- 1/2 tsp salt
- black pepper to taste
- 1 small Ontario eggplant, sliced lengthwise into 1/4-inch thick strips
- 2 small Ontario zucchini, sliced lengthwise into 1/2-inch thick strips
- 1/4 cup crumbled feta cheese

☐ Preheat barbecue to medium and grease grill.

☐ In a small bowl, stir together lemon juice and rind, oil, garlic, oregano, salt and pepper; set two tablespoons aside.

☐ Place eggplant and zucchini on grill,

brushing lightly with remaining lemon juice mixture. Barbecue, turning frequently, for five to 10 minutes or until vegetables are tender.

☐ Arrange vegetables in rows on serving platter. Drizzle with reserved lemon juice mixture. Sprinkle with feta cheese. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Nutritional Information
Protein: 3 grams; fat: 14 grams; carbohydrates: 6 grams; calories: 6 grams



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Fresh ideas with Ontario vegetables

Grilled Greek potato salad: Cut three or four Ontario potatoes in half. Simmer in salted water until barely tender. Drain and cool completely. Cut in half-inch thick slices. Brush lightly with olive oil, sprinkle lightly with dried oregano, salt and pepper. Grill, turning occasionally, over medium heat until hot. Toss with thick wedges of Ontario tomatoes, crumbled feta cheese, black olives and chopped Ontario green onions. Serve on a bed of Ontario lettuce.

Steak, mushrooms and onions: Skewer Ontario red onion wedges with Ontario mushrooms, brush lightly with vegetable oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper and barbecue over medium heat until tender.

Stuffed zucchini halves: Grill whole small Ontario zucchini over medium heat, turning frequently until just tender. Cut in half lengthwise and hollow out, leaving quarter-inch thick shells. Chop flesh and mix with shredded cheese, chopped Ontario tomato, bread crumbs, chopped fresh Ontario herbs, salt and pepper; stuff into shells.

BBQ sweet pepper ideas: Grill Ontario sweet red peppers until blackened all over. Place under tea towel or in a bag and let cool. Peel skin and discard seeds. Chop peppers and use in scrambled eggs, savoury muffins, meatloaf or meatballs.

Tomato bruschetta: Cut Ontario tomatoes in half horizontally, removing stem. Grill over medium heat until tender. When cool enough to handle, chop. Toss with minced garlic, chopped fresh basil, salt and pepper. Grill thick slices of French bread just until toasted. Top with tomato mixture. Sprinkle with parmesan cheese, if desired.

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