

Flora & Fauna

The Tomato Sauce Garden

If you've been thinking about starting a vegetable garden, or if you're trying to figure out what to plant this year, look no further than the label of any brand of tomato sauce for inspiration. The tastiest sauces come from a wide variety of veggies, and homemade sauce from garden fresh ingredients just can't be beat. Below are a few key ingredients to help get you started (and be sure to check out the recipe on page 3!).

The staples:

- **Tomatoes** – Plant 2-3 large variety tomatoes about 2-3 feet apart. These plants grow well inside a cage and should be pruned regularly to foster good growth and disease resistance.
- **Onions** – Since they can be tricky to grow from seed, novice gardeners should look for onion sets or starters from a local nursery. Plant 5-10 in rows about 6 inches apart.
- **Garlic** – Should be planted in the fall and you won't be able to harvest it until the following spring. So if you didn't plant anything last fall, you'll have to visit your local grocery store for this ingredient.
- **Herbs** – You'll need basil, thyme, oregano, and parsley. All tend to grow relatively quickly and yield more delicious leaves if you make sure to pinch off any flowers. Plant about 2-3 plants of each about a foot apart. All these herbs can be used fresh, or you can dry them and use them later on throughout the year.

The optional extras:

- **Bell peppers** – Both red and green varieties make an excellent addition to any sauce. They tend to grow slowly and require a lot of sun, so you may want to visit your local nursery for a healthy seedling as opposed to planting a seed.
- **Carrots** – For a healthy addition of color and flavor, carrots are a wonderful ingredient to most sauces. Plant them about six inches apart directly in the soil. Do not start them in a seed tray and try to transplant them, they don't handle the transplanting well.

For a Salsa Garden, plant tomatoes, onions, bell peppers, and the ingredients below. Then dice and mix together one tomato, one onion, one bell pepper, one jalapeno, and one tablespoon of cilantro. Add a dash of salt and voila – fresh salsa, a healthy and delicious snack for you and your family!

- **Cilantro** – Grows fast in summer, so water it regularly and be sure to pinch off any flowers so you'll have plenty of leaves. Once the plant flowers and bolts, the leaves take on a bitter flavor.
- **Jalapenos** – Like bell peppers, these can be slow growers and they thrive on lots of sunshine. Pick up a seedling or two from your local nursery.

GUARANTEE SYSTEM.

1518 Steele Ave SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49507
Phone: 616-451-0787
www.guaranteesystem.com

Cleaning Corner: 60-Second Quick Fixes

These simple changes will make your house tidier with no elbow grease required!

- **Place a mat at the front door** and enforce a strict no-shoes-inside rule. You'll eliminate 70-90% of the dirt entering your home.
- **Last person to shower** squeegees the shower door (or sprays shower cleaner) to cut down on mineral deposits and mildew growth.
- **When you see it, clean it!** Spills on the counter or stove, a wet towel left on the floor, an empty soda can sitting on top of the TV, etc. Instead of waiting until later, take care of things as you see them (and remind your family members to do it, too!).
- **Switch to microfiber cloths.** They speed cleaning by trapping and picking up dust, not just moving it around. Wash and hang dry after use (but don't use fabric softener sheets, they'll make the cloth less effective).

May

- 1533 The marriage of England's King Henry VIII to Catharine of Aragon is declared null and void
- 1785 Benjamin Franklin announces his invention of bifocals
- 1817 The first private mental health hospital in the United States opens in Philadelphia, PA
- 1885 *Good Housekeeping* magazine is first published
- 1903 The first automobile trip across the US begins in San Francisco, CA and ends in New York, NY
- 1919 The first US air passenger service starts
- 1994 *Pulp Fiction* wins the award for best film at the 47th Cannes Film Festival
- 2005 The Pontiac Grand Am ceases production at the 100 year-old Lansing car assembly plant

Health Advice: Preventing Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes – the result of the body’s resistance to insulin, the hormone that helps regulate blood sugar – affects more than 20 million Americans, and another 57 million have pre-diabetes. More than one third of people don’t even know that they have the disease until they experience severe symptoms such as extreme thirst, frequent urination, weakness and fatigue, numbness in the hands or feet, blurred vision, or cuts/sores/bruises that won’t heal. Diabetes can raise your risk of heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, blindness, and nerve damage, gum infection, and even limb amputation if left untreated.

The really scary part? It’s highly preventable. Americans today are eating way too many processed foods and refined carbohydrates such as white flour and sugar, which raise blood sugar and lead to insulin resistance. Our choice of beverages is also a problem. Research suggests that consuming the artificial sweeteners in diet and regular soda is linked to weight gain, a risk factor for diabetes.

Fortunately, **you can reduce your chance of diabetes by 93%** by making four key positive lifestyle changes:

1. **Don’t smoke.** This is one healthy change that will make a huge difference on many fronts. Smoking causes cancer, triggers clotting, raises blood pressure, and decreases HDL, the “good” cholesterol in your blood. It raises your risk for heart attack and stroke and makes it harder to control your diabetes.
2. **Exercise regularly.** A regular exercise routine is essential to help you maintain a healthy weight and a healthy body. A simple test to tell if you need to lose weight is to measure your waistline. A waistline of more than 35 inches for women and more than 40 inches for men is a signal that you need to hit the gym. Aim for at least 30-45 minutes of moderate aerobic activity 3-5 times a week or more if possible. Start by chatting with your doctor about what level of physical activity might be right for you.
3. **Eat a healthy diet full of fruit and vegetables, whole grains, and less red meat.** Avoid foods like breads, cereals, pastas, and white rice. Although it should go without saying, just about anything off the drive-thru menu is off limits, too. Choose lean proteins like turkey, chicken, and fish. A healthy serving, by the way, is just 3 oz or about the size of a deck of cards. If that makes your plate look empty and your tummy rumble, load up on vegetables such as broccoli, green beans, peppers, carrots, zucchini... and make sure to skip the French fries and butter-soaked mashed potatoes.
4. **Get plenty of sleep.** In one study, people who got eight and a half hours of shut-eye every night for two weeks were less prone to insulin resistance and impaired glucose tolerance than those who got just five and a half hours. Sleep may make cells more sensitive to insulin, while fewer Zs may raise levels of stress hormones linked to high blood sugar.

Talk to your doctor about diabetes and pre-diabetes at your next physical. A simple test can help diagnose high blood sugar before it causes symptoms or complications.

Kid Corner: Preparing Your Child for Summer Camp

For many kids, the highlight of the summer is going away to camp. Playing outdoors, sleeping in a tent or cabin, swimming, doing arts and crafts, and making new friends are just a few of the reasons why camp is such an awesome place. For some children (and parents), that first trip to camp is the first time they’ve been away from home for an extended period of time, so it can be intimidating and scary. Here are some tips to help you and your child have a great time and make the most of the camp experience:

1. **Think of camp as a learning experience.** Camp offers a wonderful opportunity for both you and your children to practice “letting go.” Learning to let go allows children to develop stronger sense of self, make new friends, develop new social skills, learn about teamwork, and be creative. Think back to your own experiences at summer camp: singing songs around the campfire, eating s’mores, and telling ghost stories. Think about how much you treasure those memories and how much you want your own child to have his or her own set of fond camp memories.
2. **Don’t buy a whole new wardrobe.** Camp is more rugged than life at home. Plus, having well-worn clothes and familiar possessions will help ease the transition. You can, however, buy one or two items (such as a sleeping bag or flashlight) that are just for use at camp to help your child feel prepared and excited about the trip.
3. **Listen to and talk about concerns.** Communicate your confidence in your child’s ability to handle being away from home and remind them about other successes they have experienced. Did your child recently go to a sleepover? Did he complete a difficult assignment at school or score points in a sporting event? Reminding a nervous child about his accomplishments can help him feel confident about trying new things at camp.
4. **Have realistic expectations.** Camp, like the rest of life, has high points and low ones. Encourage your child to have a reasonable and realistic view of camp. Not everything will be fun, and not all of the other kids may be nice. But the majority of his or her experience is going to be an incredible adventure.
5. **Go with a friend.** Coordinate with the parents of your child’s close friend(s) to see about sending your kids to camp together. This will help ease the transition, alleviate homesickness, and hopefully make the camp experience even more fun.
6. **Start out small.** If your child isn’t ready for an overnight camp, see if the local park district offers a day camp program. You’ll be able to drop your child off in the morning and pick him up in the afternoon. He’ll be able to participate in fun activities, make new friends, and have the comfort of sleeping in his own bed at night.

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- ½ cup chopped onion
- ½ cup chopped red bell pepper
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 6 peeled tomatoes
- 1 (6-oz) can tomato paste
- 1 cup shredded basil leaves
- 1 large carrot, grated
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ¾ teaspoon salt (or to taste)

Directions:

1. Heat the olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Sauté the onion and red bell pepper until soft, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and sauté, stirring constantly for 1 minute more.
2. Add the tomatoes, tomato paste, basil, carrot, parsley, oregano, and thyme. Break the tomatoes apart with a wooden spoon and stir until everything is well blended. When the mixture begins to bubble, lower the heat and cook on low, stirring occasionally for about 1 hour.
3. Let cool slightly. Transfer to a blender, working in batches if necessary. Blend until smooth, then transfer to a clean saucepan and stir over low heat until warm. Add the sugar, pepper, and salt.

This sauce freezes well.

How to Peel a Tomato

1. With a sharp paring knife, score an X into the bottom (not the stem end) of the tomato.
2. Using a long-handled slotted spoon, place the tomato in a pot of boiling water for 20-30 seconds.
3. Transfer the tomato immediately to a bowl of ice water for about 20 seconds to stop the cooking.
4. Peel the tomato with the paring knife, starting at the marked X.

Eight Steps to Create a Budget

Can't figure out where your paycheck goes each month? It's time to set up a household budget and figure out exactly how much you've got coming in and how much is going out. The following eight-step plan will help you do just that so you can stop spending and start saving!

Step 1: Write down your total take-home monthly income. This is the easiest part – figuring out how much you have to spend.

Step 2: Write down your essential expenses. Start with fixed bills like rent/mortgage, car payment, insurance, credit card debt, etc. Then factor in other monthly bills that are always around the same amount such as the cell phone and cable bill, and utilities such as electricity, water, gas, etc.

Step 3: List your variable essential expenses. This includes items like groceries, household expenses (such as cleaning and paper products), gasoline, medication, pet expenses, clothing, etc. Assign an estimated amount to each based on past experience, rounding to the nearest \$10.

Step 4: List reasonable amounts for nonessential expenses. This includes entertainment expenses such as: eating out, hobbies, trips to the bowling alley or arcade, movie rentals, etc.

Step 5: Find the extras. Go to your current method of tracking your spending (your checkbook register, credit card statements, Quicken® reports) to see what expenses you've left out. You'll likely see items for car maintenance and repair, gifts, and vacations. For items that do not occur monthly, determine the annual cost and divide by 12 to determine how much you should set aside each month.

Step 6: Figure out your totals. Add up your expenses, and then subtract that amount from your income.

Step 7: If you came up short, see where you can cut back. Look first to your nonessential expenses. What if you only ate out once a week or just twice a month? What if you gave up your hobby expenses for a few months?

Step 8: Follow your spending plan as closely as possible. Track your spending each day by posting it on a piece of paper. Add everything up at the end of the month and compare it with what you planned. Use this information to create next month's budget and work on improving your habits.

The Importance of Upholstery Cleaning

It's funny how fastidious some of us are about cleanliness in our homes. We work hard to scrub the bathroom, we keep the kitchen clean, we vacuum the floors every week and call Guarantee System to schedule a cleaning every six-months. But for some reason, we always forget about cleaning the upholstery in our homes.

Think about it – when is the last time you had your couch professionally cleaned? Last year? Five years ago? Never? Most families spend a great deal of time on the couch, eating, watching TV, playing, sleeping, reading... just how much dirt and grime have you left behind? Is your yellow couch supposed to be white?

Though it's not nice to think about, it's a fact that our favorite couches and chairs accumulate a great deal of dirt, body oils, sweat, food spills, dust mites, pet dander and who knows what else. What's worse, the sweat and body oil that is left behind on your couch cushions acts like a glue that binds dirt to the fabric, making it difficult to remove.

Upholstery requires special methods to clean both because it attracts different types of dirt than your carpet, and because it is made from different materials. Some fabrics can be easily damaged (resulting in color loss or frayed fibers) if not cared for properly.

Don't worry! Guarantee System has the products and tools necessary to clean your favorite pieces of furniture. We've got what it takes to break down the worst dirt and grime and make your furniture look like new. Give us a call today!



PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
GRAND RAPIDS, MI
PERMIT #1254

1518 Steele Ave SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49507

This issue of Neighborhood News brought to you by:



Phone: 616-451-0787

Fax: 616-451-8303

www.guaranteesystem.com

Inside this issue you'll find:

- The Tomato Sauce Garden
- Cleaning Corner: 60-Second Quick Fixes
- Health Advice: Preventing Diabetes!
- Kid Corner: Preparing Your Child for Summer Camp
- Recipe: Garden Fresh Tomato Sauce
- Eight Steps to Create a Budget
- Carpet Talk: The Importance of Professional Cleanings
- May Money-Saving Special

Money Saving Coupon

Spring Cleaning
4 rooms of carpet
cleaned for \$85

If you can't use this coupon, give it to a friend!

As always, you have my Personal Satisfaction Guarantee. If it's not cleaned to your standards, we'll clean it again for FREE.

This coupon expires May 31, 2010
Guarantee System