

CHILI SUNGOLD TOMATO TOAST

Adapted from justinesnacks.com

¼ c olive oil, plus more as needed	2 tsp chili oil
2 large slices of sourdough	5-6 large basil leaves
2 garlic cloves, one sliced, one halved	½ c ricotta
1 pint sungold tomatoes, halved (can use other favorite varieties as well)	2 sprigs fresh dill for serving
	salt and pepper to taste

1. Place large pan over medium heat. Add 2 Tbsp olive oil and grill the bread for 2 minutes on each side or until golden and toasted. Set aside.
2. Add remaining 2 Tbsp of olive oil to the pan and add one clove of sliced garlic. Swirl and cook for a minute, or until the garlic begins to lightly brown on the edges.
3. Add in the tomatoes and let them simmer to break down, about 4-5 minutes. Season with salt and stir occasionally.
4. Mix in the chili oil and basil and let the tomatoes continue to reduce another 4-5 minutes or until the tomatoes are rich and jammy.
5. Rub the bread with the halved garlic clove, then spread ricotta on top of the bread. Top each slice with the tomato mixture, then top with dill and black pepper. Serve.

KOREAN CUCUMBER SALAD

Adapted from temeculablogs.com

2-3 cucumbers	2-3 tsp chili oil
1 tsp salt	3 tsp honey
1 ½ tsp soy sauce	1 tsp sesame oil
1 tsp minced garlic	2 tsp sesame seeds
3 Tbsp rice vinegar	3 Tbsp green onions, diced

1. In a small bowl, mix the soy sauce, minced garlic, honey, sesame seeds, and green onions. Add rice vinegar and all of the oils. Mix together to coat.
2. Slice cucumbers thinly. Salt and leave for 8-12 minutes to sit.
3. Rinse cucumber slices with water. Lay on paper towels to absorb a bit of the excess water. Put into a bowl. Pour rice vinegar marinade over cucumbers and toss to coat. Serve with sesame seeds and green onions on top.



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Tomatoes: Store tomatoes stem side down on a plate or cutting board at room temperature. Try not to refrigerate tomatoes as cold temperatures deplete their flavor and texture.

Cabbage: They have remarkable storage capacity. Keep dry and unwashed in the veggie bin of your fridge. If the outer leaves lose firmness, remove and discard. Once cut, wrap in sealed plastic bag and continue to refrigerate; it should keep for several weeks more.

Red & Candy Onions: These fresh onions are not yet cured, so you can store on the counter or put in the fridge! Both are sweet varieties.

Yellow Onions: These yellow onions have been cured; store in pantry!

Peppers: Wrap unwashed in a paper towel to absorb any moisture, and keep it in the veggie drawer of your refrigerator. In order from mild to spicy, we expect to see red bell peppers, green bell peppers, jalapenos, serrano peppers, and cayenne peppers.

Eggplant: Wrap unwashed eggplant in a paper towel (not plastic) to absorb any moisture, and keep it in the veggie drawer of your refrigerator. Use within a week.

Counting Calories

A few years back, we were fortunate to host a small farm tour for participants of the Ecological Society of America Annual Meeting. Ecologically speaking, our farm is considered a low-input system of food production. A prominent researcher from the University of Kentucky (UK) College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment invited them out to highlight her research conducted over several seasons on our farm. The group was impressed by our numbers and wanted to see the farm for themselves.

The story of any farm's ecology can be told with three data points around how many calories of energy it takes to produce a calorie of food. At every step of their operation, a conventional corn or soy operation can either produce energy or consume energy. They usually grow on bazillions of acres at a time, then load their harvest on trucks, then the trucks haul it to a beef cattle feedlot on bare ground, or to dairy cows on concrete pads, or to huge indoor facilities full of poultry or pigs. At each step, much more energy is consumed than produced. Effectively, carbon is being mined from the soil and hauled away as grain. Instead of a cycle, it's a one-way flow of energy, which means the land lies bare most of the year without any nutrients going back into the soil. The machinery, gas and diesel along with electric and LP contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. When you consider the transportation involved may be a cross-country or transatlantic trip, the energy expended increases all the more.

To look at calories spent versus produced for our farm, we kept copious volumes of data over two years measuring energy use of all kinds: human labor, machinery, gas and diesel, electric and LP, poultry feed, plastic, packaging, and water. We learned that small acreage intensive organic farmers are running in the low 50s for calories of energy to produce one calorie of food, which is considered good; conventional industrial operations come in well north of that. Elmwood Stock Farm is a cool 7.7. That data point speaks volumes on our impact on the environment.

It's true, we know cattle contribute to greenhouse emissions, but we also know that isn't the whole story. Cattle, or ruminants, release methane as part of the cud chewing and digestion processes. When you cram a bunch of them together in feed lots, there are measurable amounts of methane released. However, when they graze standing forage and move from field to field, pooping and tromping their poop into the ground with their sharp hooves, they are putting carbonaceous plant material back into the soil. In other words, they are feeding soil microbes, sequestering carbon, and, ultimately, building soil organic matter. One source

estimates that one beef sequesters three tons of carbon in its lifetime, equal to three times the methane equivalent from rumination. That data point is a pretty good number and an even better story.

Frankly, we would have cows just for their benefit to the soil, even if they didn't offer healthy, delicious meat. Every single step put in to producing a calorie of feedlot beef increases greenhouse gases and burns carbon, whereas every single calorie of grass-fed beef reduces greenhouse gases and sequesters carbon. Our cattle are far and away the most efficient product we sell. Most of the energy spent to produce beef comes from each plant's photosynthetic conversion of solar energy into cellulose, and the cattle do all the work of harvesting it. All we do is run some electric fencing, escort them to and from the abattoir and, finally, deliver them to you.

Simultaneous to measuring the data points associated with vegetable production and meat production, the scientists from UK were monitoring the microbial activity in our soils as a measure of soil health and our greater ecological impact. We wanted to know if our eight year cropping rotation was replenishing the soil, or if we were slowly mining the carbon, slowly depleting its fertility. Interestingly, to evaluate soil health, they track greenhouse gas emissions. The good news is that they found that after three years of vegetable production and five years of beef cattle grazing a field, the soil is fully replenished to permanent, healthy pasture levels.

I will paraphrase the findings this way. We remove nutrients from the soil in the form of fruits and vegetables. That's what farming is, encouraging the soil to provide sustenance for people. Stewardship is taking the bounty in a respectful manner. With our system, the five years of cattle grazing puts back everything we borrowed for you. A fully regenerative system of growing food while sequestering carbon for the common good is possible.

You are a character in the story of our farm's ecology, too. The story tells you how your food choices directly impact the ecosystem—your ecosystem. As a society, we conveniently ignore all the deferred costs of our nationally accepted cheap food policy. Mass producing food, as happens on the feedlots I described earlier, burns carbon at alarming rates. The consequences for the soil, water, and air we depend on are staggering. But by consuming grass-fed meats and organic veggies and eggs, you are doing your part to save the planet. When you eat locally grown food raised in a regenerative farming system, you are a giver, not a taker, from the generations to come. Thank you for partnering with us. —Mac Stone