



FROM THE FILES OF THE DIRT DIVA DIARIES

🍅 Tomato Variety Quick-Reference Card

A companion to *Ripe Rewards: A Beginner's Guide to Growing Epic Tomatoes* · DirtDivaDiaries.com

VARIETY	TYPE	DAYS TO HARVEST	FRUIT SIZE	FLAVOR PROFILE	ACID	BEST CULINARY USES	KEY GROWING NOTES	CLIMATE / ZONES
🍅 HEIRLOOM VARIETIES — Open-pollinated · passed down through generations · save seeds! · exceptional flavor complexity								
Brandywine	INDET	80-100 days	Large · up to 2 lbs	Rich, deeply sweet, classic	🍷 Med	Slicing Salads Sandwiches	Needs staking. Sensitive to heat swings. Worth every day of the wait.	Zones 4-8
Black Krim <i>Acid-sensitive? Try this!</i>	INDET	70-80 days	Med-Large · 10-14 oz	Smoky, sweet, slightly salty	☹ Low	Slicing Roasting Gourmet	Deep color intensifies in heat. Stake required. Excellent for sensitive eaters.	Zones 4-9 · Heat ✓
Cherokee Purple	INDET	70-80 days	Med-Large · 12 oz	Smoky, sweet, earthy	☹ Low-Med	Sandwiches Salads Fresh	Tolerates heat well. Stake required. Beautiful dusty-rose interior.	Zones 4-9
Green Zebra	INDET	75-80 days	Sm-Med · 3-4 oz	Tangy, slightly sweet, bright	🍷 High	Salads Salsas Garnish	Ripe when soft — don't wait for color change! Green/yellow stripes. Cooler climate preferred.	Zones 3-7
Mortgage Lifter	INDET	80-85 days	Very Large · 1-2+ lbs	Rich, sweet, meaty, mild	☹ Low-Med	Slicing Sandwiches Salads	Legendary. Heavy fruits need strong staking. Long season — worth the wait.	Zones 4-8
🍅 HYBRID VARIETIES — Cross-bred for disease resistance & reliability · NOT GMO · Cannot save seeds true-to-type								
Better Boy	INDET	70-75 days	Large · up to 1 lb	Classic balanced sweet-tangy	🍷 Med	All-purpose Slicing Sauces	Excellent disease resistance. Very productive. Adaptable to most climates. Great beginner choice.	Zones 4-9
Early Girl <i>Short-season star!</i>	INDET	50-62 days	Medium · 4-6 oz	Balanced sweet-acidic	🍷 Med	All-purpose Salads Sandwiches	Among the fastest to harvest. Plant alongside slower varieties to extend your season.	Zones 3-8 · Short seasons ✓
Celebrity	DET	70-75 days	Medium · 7-8 oz	Mild, well-balanced	☹ Low-Med	All-purpose Canning Slicing	Hard to go wrong. Compact — no staking needed. Great beginner and container choice.	Zones 4-9 · All climates
Roma VF <i>Ivy's top sauce pick!</i>	DET	73-78 days	Medium · 2-4 oz plum	Mildly sweet, low moisture	☹ Low-Med	Sauce Paste Canning Salsa	Dense, meaty flesh, few seeds. Pair with San Marzano for the ultimate sauce combo.	Zones 4-10 · Heat ✓
🍅 CHERRY TOMATOES — Bite-sized, prolific, beginner-friendly · Excellent for containers & small spaces								
Sun Gold <i>* Kev's favorite!</i>	INDET	55-65 days	Small · 1-2 oz	Exceptionally sweet, candy-like	☹ Very Low	Snacking Salads Skewers	Bright orange. Tastes like fruit, not tomato. Perfect for acid-sensitive eaters. Rarely makes it inside!	Zones 4-10 · Heat ✓
Sweet Million	INDET	65-70 days	Small · ¾-1 oz	Very sweet, classic cherry	🍷 Low-Med	Snacking Salads Roasting	Enormous bright red clusters. Disease resistant. Be ready to share with the neighbors!	Zones 4-9
Yellow Pear	INDET	70-80 days	Small · 1-2 oz	Mild, sweet, low acid	☹ Low	Salads Pickling Garnish	Pear-shaped yellow fruits. Very vigorous — give plenty of space. Kids love them.	Zones 4-9
🍅 BEEFSTEAK & ROMA/SAUCE — Large meaty slicers + dense sauce workhorses · Ivy's top picks for canning season								
Big Beef	INDET	70-75 days	Large · 10-16 oz	Classic sweet-tangy, very juicy	🍷 Med	Slicing Burgers Grilling	Deep red, very juicy, strong disease resistance. Summer cookout MVP. Needs staking.	Zones 4-9
San Marzano <i>* Ivy's #1 sauce pick</i>	INDET	80-90 days	Medium · 4-6 oz plum	Low acid, sweet, rich umami	☹ Low	Sauce Paste Canning Pizza	Italian heirloom gold standard. Pair with Roma VF for the ultimate sauce blend. Long elegant fruits.	Zones 5-9 · Warm
+ Ivy's Sauce Combo Secret Plant Roma VF + San Marzano together. The combination creates a flavor symphony that'll make your taste buds do a happy dance. Process them together for the richest tomato sauce you've ever made.			⚠ Acid-Sensitive? Go Low! Choose varieties marked ☹ — especially Black Krim , Sun Gold , Yellow Pear and San Marzano . Black tomatoes are naturally lowest in acid. Kev's living proof — Sun Gold and Black Krim are the only fresh tomatoes he can eat!			+ Short Season Strategy Plant Early Girl (50-62 days) alongside your main varieties. You'll be eating fresh tomatoes weeks before your neighbors even see flowers. Pair with a late-season beefsteak for fresh eating all summer.		



FROM THE FILES OF THE DIRT DIVA DIARIES

🍅 Tomato Variety Reference · Page 2 — Choosing, Timing & Growing

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🍅 WHICH VARIETY IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

📅 DAYS TO MATURITY & SEASON TIMING

🍷 I Want to Make Sauce

Go Determinate for big-batch processing:

- **San Marzano** — Gold standard, low acid, naturally sweet
- **Roma VF** — Dense, meaty, perfect sauce texture
- **Rutgers** — Classic canning flavor, prolific
- **Celebrity** — Reliable, mild, great for beginners

👉 Ivy's tip: Mix San Marzano + Roma VF in your sauce for maximum flavor depth!

🍅 I Want Fresh Eating All Season

Go Indeterminate for continuous harvest:

- **Early Girl** — First tomatoes of the season
- **Better Boy** — Reliable, disease resistant
- **Brandywine** — Best flavor of any slicing tomato
- **Big Beef** — Thick slices perfect for burgers

👉 Stagger planting times to extend your fresh harvest all summer long!

🍷 I Have Limited Space / Containers

Compact plants that thrive in pots:

- **Sun Gold** — Ultra-sweet, container-friendly
- **Celebrity** — Determinate, stays tidy, no staking
- **Cherry Bomb** — Compact, prolific cherry fruits
- **Sweet Million** — Vertical growth, easy to cage

👉 Use 5-gallon+ containers. Cherry varieties love pot warmth!

🍷 I'm a First-Time Grower

Most forgiving varieties to start with:

- **Better Boy** — Disease resistant, consistent, hard to fail
- **Celebrity** — Compact, no staking, great for beginners
- **Sun Gold** — Nearly fool-proof, incredibly rewarding
- **Early Girl** — Fast results keep you motivated!

👉 Start with just 2-3 plants your first year. You'll be amazed at the harvest!

🍷 ACID LEVEL GUIDE

🍷 Higher Acid

Great for traditional tomato flavor lovers.

- **Green Zebra** — Bright & tangy
- **Early Girl** — Classic tomato punch
- **Better Boy** — Classic medium acid
- **Rutgers** — Traditional canning

😊 Lower Acid

Gentler on sensitive stomachs. Naturally sweeter.

- **Sun Gold** — Near candy-sweet
- **Black Krim** — Naturally very low acid
- **Yellow Pear** — Mild & kid-friendly
- **San Marzano** — Rich without sharpness

🍷 DETERMINATE VS. INDETERMINATE

🍷 Determinate — "The Batch Baker"

Grows to fixed size → all fruit ripens together → plant rests. **Perfect for canning & sauce making.** Little to no staking needed. Examples: Roma, Celebrity, Rutgers.

🍷 Indeterminate — "Cookie-a-Day Crew"

Keeps growing & fruiting until frost. **Perfect for fresh eating, salads & sandwiches.** Must stake or cage. Examples: Early Girl, Sun Gold, Brandywine.

VARIETY	DAYS	SEASON	GROWTH	BEST COMPANION PLANTING STRATEGY
Early Girl	50-62	EARLY	Indet.	Pair with Brandywine — Early Girl harvests weeks before it's ready
Sun Gold	55-65	EARLY	Indet.	Plant beside Roma VF & San Marzano for snacking while you wait for sauce season
Celebrity	70-75	MID	Det.	Plant with Early Girl for staggered harvest; Celebrity handles heat well
Better Boy	70-75	MID	Indet.	Any cherry variety alongside keeps fresh snacks going between slicers
Big Beef	70-75	MID	Indet.	Plant with Early Girl for early-summer burgers while Big Beef matures
Roma VF	73-78	MID	Det.	Always plant with San Marzano — harvest together for sauce processing days
Sweet Million	65-70	MID	Indet.	Any sauce variety nearby — cherries snack-ready while you wait for sauce crop
Cherokee Purple	70-80	MID	Indet.	Plant Early Girl alongside for early-season fresh tomatoes
Black Krim	70-80	MID	Indet.	Pair with Sun Gold — both low acid, great for sensitive stomachs
Mortgage Lifter	80-85	LATE	Indet.	Plant a cherry variety for early-summer eating while the big fruits develop
San Marzano	80-90	LATE	Indet.	Always with Roma VF — start both at same time, process sauce together
Brandywine	80-100	LATE	Indet.	Must plant with Early Girl — Brandywine won't be ready until Early Girl is nearly done!

🍷 SEED SAVING QUICK NOTES

Only save seeds from Heirloom varieties — they breed true! Hybrid seeds won't reliably reproduce the parent. Heirloom seeds stay viable for years (Ivy has seeds a decade old!). Process: **Ferment → Rinse → Dry → Store** in a cool, dark place. Seed packets often have expiration dates by law — but heirlooms can last far longer. Always plant a few extra just in case.

🍷 MY GARDEN NOTES

Varieties I'm growing this year:	
Seed start date:	
Transplant date:	
Last frost date:	
Notes / results:	

🍷 **Ivy & Kev's Starter Combo:** **Early Girl** (first harvest!) + **Sun Gold** (snacking!) + **San Marzano & Roma VF** (sauce season!) = a complete tomato garden in just 4 plants.

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Grow Your Own Way!