

## Reader Recipes

### Apple Hash Browns

1 tbsp olive oil  
1 sausage patty  
1/2 small onion, minced  
1/2 tsp dried thyme  
1 potato, peeled and cubed  
1 apple, cored and cubed  
1 tbsp shredded cheddar cheese  
1 tbsp snipped parsley  
Salt & pepper to taste

Heat olive oil and cook sausage patty, browning both sides. Remove from pan and cut into small pieces. Saute onion in skillet with thyme until softened and slightly browned. Add potato and saute another 5 to 10 min., until potato is softened. Add apple and continue to saute, about 3 to 5 min. Return sausage pieces to pan, sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. Add cheese and parsley before serving.

### Pizza Soup

1 lb. ground beef  
1 small yellow onion, chopped  
1 cup sliced mushrooms  
1 green pepper, cut into strips  
1 28-oz. can diced tomatoes, with liquid  
1 cup beef broth  
1 cup sliced or mini pepperoni  
1 tsp basil  
Shredded mozzarella cheese

In a large saucepan, cook beef, onion, mushrooms, and green pepper until meat is browned and vegetables are tender. Stir in tomatoes, broth, pepperoni and basil. Simmer until heated through. Top individual servings with mozzarella and microwave until cheese is melted and bubbly.

### Egg Cheese

1 cup whole milk  
3 eggs  
1/2 tbsp honey  
Salt, pepper  
1/8 tsp vanilla (optional)

Combine ingredients and cook in a double boiler for 20 to 30 min. until it separates into curd. The curd will look like scrambled eggs. Add salt and pepper. The water in the double boiler should not touch the inner pan but be just below it. After it is cooked, put in a cheesecloth or scrap of old sheet, squeeze, and let drain in a colander. Cool in refrigerator.

## Tree Trunk Backyard Shed

"Our new backyard shed is handcrafted from high density polyurethane and molded from living trees to look like the real thing. It's a great way to store stuff in your back yard," says Andrew Lyke, Nature Innovations, Kerrville, Texas.



Nature Shed is molded from actual living trees to look like the real thing.

The Nature Shed is outfitted with internal studs, integrated drainage, tool hooks, and a locking door. It's available in 2 sizes. The large model is 87 in. tall by 84 in. wide and weighs 300 lbs. The small model is 83 1/2 in. tall by 57 in. wide and weighs 200 lbs.

"Nature Sheds look so real that most people can't tell if they're real or fake," says Lyke. "They're waterproof and have a UV-stabilized hardened surface that should last a lifetime. They come with integrated 2 by 4 studs for hanging hooks and shelves, and with 4 stake-down points to keep the shed from moving or tipping over."

The large model retails for \$3,999 plus S&H; the small model for \$2,999 plus S&H.

The company also offers polyurethane tree planters, 500-gal. tree water tanks, rock planters, log speakers, and log coolers.

"We make molds from real logs. They're so lightweight you can easily move them around even when they're full of soil," says Luke. "The planters don't absorb water, so the right amount stays in the soil and the rest drains out the bottom."

Suggested retail prices for the tree planters range from \$19.99 to \$89.99, depending on size.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Nature Innovations, 2800 Blacksmith Lane, Kerrville, Texas 78028 (ph 877 431-4433; sales@natureinnovations.com; www.natureinnovations.com).



Lightweight planters are molded from real logs.

## World's Biggest Tomato

The world's largest tomato was as big around as its plant was tall. The 8.41-lb., 30-in. circumference tomato grew on a Big Zac variety plant only 30 in. tall. Soon to be added to Guinness World Records, the tomato broke the previous world record of 7.75 lbs. that had lasted 28 years.

"I think the biggest thing I did different was pruning the plant," says Dan MacCoy, the backyard gardener who grew the tomato.

"I followed pretty much the same nutrient mix as other growers. However, most try to grow a vine at least 6 or 7 ft. tall. I pruned mine at 30 in."

MacCoy of Ely, Minn., was careful about what he pruned and when. With an average last frost near the end of May, the plant was started in the house on April 15. He moved it to his homemade greenhouse in early May.

"I kept it to a single vine by pruning any suckers and then looked for a good looking mega-blossom as low on the vine as possible," says MacCoy. "Big Zacs are known for mega-blossoms that produce a fruit that looks like a bunch of tomatoes fused together."

After his best-looking mega-blossom set fruit, he removed any others and trimmed the plant off at 2 1/2 ft. with the blossom about a foot off the ground. MacCoy says he fed the plant dehydrated chicken manure, kelp meal, humic acid, 10-10-10 fertilizer and, as he says, "other stuff."

As the plant grew, he staked it and provided support for the single, large fruit. By September 8 it had reached what he estimated to be its full size.

A representative of the Great Pumpkin Commonwealth conducted the weigh in at a local Ely grocery. The Commonwealth is a non-profit dedicated to promoting and recording the growing of giant pumpkins, watermelons, gourds and tomatoes.

Originally, MacCoy set out to grow giant pumpkins, but he didn't have the space in his back yard, much less his 300-sq. ft. greenhouse. He switched his attention to tomatoes and, in particular, the Big Zac.

Big Zac was created by a cross of 2 heirloom beefsteak tomatoes by a New Jersey gardener, Minnie Zaccaria. The Big Zac is known to regularly produce 4 to 6-lb. tomatoes.

Although Big Zacs are reported to be a "good tasting" tomato, MacCoy says he didn't even taste his big one. The seeds are too valuable. He estimates having saved around 500 seeds. Most will be given away to vegetable growing clubs around the country. Seeds will also be auctioned off on the website www.bigpumpkins.com.

"They should sell for at least \$100 for a packet of 3 seeds," says MacCoy, adding that the seeds will be sold for charitable purposes. He is also giving away packets to people who send him an email request.

MacCoy is already planning for his next record tomato. He has composted the non-seed remains of the record tomato on the ground where he will plant next year. He has also planted a cover crop of rye.

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Dan MacCoy grew this 8.41-lb., 30-in. circumference tomato, the world's largest.

# FARM SHOW

## New Products For The Farm, Ranch Home

## First-Of-Its-Kind Unit Makes Freeze-Dried Food

"Freeze drying has been around for years but it has never been affordable for individuals until now," says Dan Neville, owner and CEO of Harvest Right. The company began selling in-home freeze dryers about a year ago for \$3,900. While not cheap, they're a deal compared to \$30,000 for commercial units - and they're easier to operate and more convenient.

Neville says the benefits of freeze-dried food is that

it preserves taste, color, shape and nutritional value of all types of food. It also reduces waste by preserving leftovers and eliminates the need for preservatives. Freeze-dried foods can last up to 25 years.

The dryer is easy to use. Place cut-up fruits, vegetables, meats, and even leftover chili on the four stainless steel trays. Close the door, press the button and the appliance automatically senses moisture and operates until the food is completely dried.

Most food takes about a day, Neville says. The condenser freezes food to -40 to -60 degrees Fahrenheit followed by a powerful vacuum from a pump that takes all of the air out of the chamber. While in a vacuum the food is warmed slightly and the frozen water sublimates out of the food as a gas.

When the process is finished, Neville recommends putting the food in a Mylar pouch with an oxygen absorber or in mason jars or metal cans with oxygen absorbers. With water and oxygen removed the food won't spoil when stored at room temperature.

To rehydrate the food, just add water. Even foods like yogurt can be freeze dried. When water is added it regains its original texture and taste. Freeze-dried ice cream sandwiches are cookie-like, the same that are sold as "Astronaut ice cream."

While some customers use the freeze dryers for businesses, such as freeze-drying peppers to make salsa or herbs for restaurants, most are homeowners.

Some have gardens and orchards and want to preserve produce. The 30 by 20 by 25-in. unit holds 8 to 10 lbs. of sliced apples, for example, yielding 2 full gal. of freeze-dried apples.

"You can put in different things at the same time," Neville says, except for green peppers or onions, which have strong flavors that can penetrate into other foods.

Some of Harvest Right's customers are those who are concerned about the future and food security. Instead of buying freeze-dried foods to stockpile, they prefer to make their own.

The cost to operate the freeze dryer 4 to 5 days a week is similar to the cost of operating a home freezer, Neville says.

Made in the U.S. with U.S. components, Neville notes the freeze dryers have a similar life span as refrigerators. The pump uses 3 cups of oil and requires periodic oil changes. In addition to the black unit for \$3,900, Harvest Right sells a stainless steel unit for \$4,300. Both are available direct from the company on its website.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Harvest Right, 3070 W. California Ave, #A, Salt Lake City, Utah 84104 (ph 801 386-8960; www.harvestright.com).



In-home freeze dryer automatically senses moisture of items you put inside it and operates until food is completely dried.