

PEP RALLY



Growing and Marketing Peppers ~ PFI Annual Conference 2024



Root to Rise Farm

Kate Solko

Owner-Lead Farmer

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- 5.5ac on the property of Alluvial Brewing in Ames, IA
- 100 CSA Members
- Farmer's Market
- Limited Wholesale
- Following NOP guidelines (self regulated)
- 5th yr of production





We specialize in beautiful food, sustainably grown, and artfully presented.

- Focusing on human scale ag and biological diversification
- Providing a hands-on educational experience for beginning farmers
- Growing community and connection centered on farm







Varieties

Sweet

- Carmen
- Escamillo
- Cubo
- California Wonder Bell or Sprinter*
- Islander-Dragonfly-Iko Iko
- Flavorburst
- Lunch box mix
- Olly* Milena* Oranos*

Hot

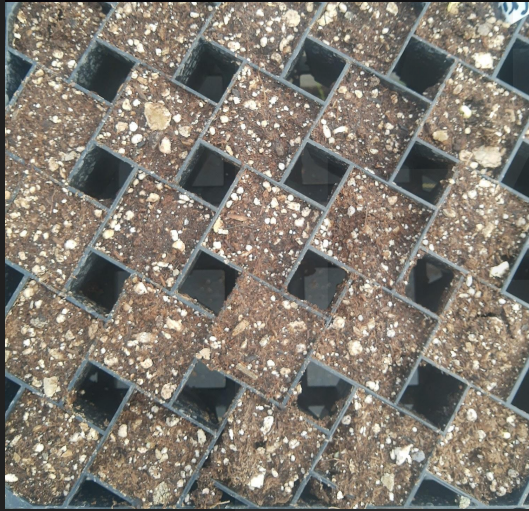
- El Jefe or Jalafuego
- Megatron
- Hungarian Hot Wax
- Capperino
- Baron
- Shishito
- Serrano (Hot Rod*)
- Aurora
- Ring of Fire
- Aji Rico

of Iowa

Seed Starting



High Density - Open flats - Cowsmo Red - Heat mats 85°F - Grow room
Hots, Last week of March - Sweets, 2nd wk of April



Potting up and greenhouse

- Pot-up to 72 cell 10x20 flats before 1st true leaf
- indoors until greenhouse temps increase to 55°F min
- Checking moisture 2x/day





Hardening off

- 3rd or 4th wk of May
- 30% shade
- Calm, Cloudy, and Warm
- Back into gh if temps drop
- ~1wk
- Fish emulsion prior to transplant

Field Prep

Fall rye or spring oat cover crop - till -
fertilizer - woven ground cover - straw in paths





Field Transplanted

- last wk of May or 1st wk of June
- 18" in row, 12" between rows, staggered
- Drip irrigated but often overhead to water in
- No stakes or trellising





Picture Courtesy of PFI

Cat Tunnel Project

- Proposed in 2021 by intern Lucas Bleyle
- Peppers, tomatoes, seedless cucumbers, ginger, lemongrass, and greens





We choose colored bell pepper varieties, as well as “insurance” Carmen and Escamillo varieties for the tunnel.



Insect and Disease Pressure

- Very little disease
 - 5yr field rotation
 - 3yr tunnel rotation
- Aphids in the gh
 - Insecticidal soap
 - Beneficial insect release
- 3-lined potato beetle larvae in the field
 - Pyganic
 - Monterey Garden Spray



Harvest, Wash, and Pack

- Harvest into buckets or totes
- Sorted
- Packed for outlet
 - Flap totes for bulk orders, wholesale, counted CSA, or market
 - Mixed color sweet pepper bags net bags for CSA
 - 10lb processing lots



How We Market Our Peppers...





CSA Shares





Tomatillos
Everyone
Jalapenos
Everyone

2
DURO

Wholesale



2023

Market and Wholesale Pricing

- Sweets and Jalapenos \$5/lb
- Hots \$10/lb
- Super Hots 5/\$1
- Wholesale
 - Hots \$6/lb
 - Sweets \$2.50/lb
- Bulk processing
 - Sweet and Jalapenos \$25/10lb
 - Hot \$50/10lb



Helpful strategies for marketing peppers via CSA and Farmers' Markets











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Facebook and Instagram
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Picture Courtesy of PFI