

GROWERTALKS

Guest Column

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Love Gourmansun Sunrise

Lowell Halvorson



I always shop the competition, especially for varieties I don't know. In late May, I found this tomato among the 4-in. vegetables at Home Depot. Although I already had my R&D garden planted out, I squinted at the tag. This was a yellow oxheart, so I bought it.

I probably pulled over 50 large tomatoes off a single plant over the season. The final haul in this photo occurred November 1 due to impending frost.

Photos tell the story. Love Gourmansun Sunrise (LGS) is a French-bred tomato, one of three related varieties. In Europe, Buffalosun is the golden version, Gourmandia is the red and Gourmansun has the stripes. Those last two were brought over as the Love series for their North American launch at CAST 2023. Sunrise puts reds and golds into the title and that's how the formal name of this tomato came to be.

Green -> Yellow -> Striped -> Red

I can't stress the marquee feature enough: red and gold striping in a large oxheart shape. When you cut the tomato in half, you get a heart with dancing flames inside, like a clever dancer waiting inside a music box. "Awww!" is typically the first reaction when someone sees it, especially sliced on a plate. Nothing else like it exists.

Other tomatoes have swirling colors, like Big Rainbow and Pineapple. Only LGS grows a large heart-shaped pendant to put over your chicken salad. Any gardener who's a charcuterie board fan will want this cultivar. It captures attention.

Hang time is unusual, too. The tomato is ripe once it moves away from green, but the colors develop slowly from green to yellow to striped to red as it ripens over two to three weeks. Because it likes to cluster loosely in sprays, the plant itself displays different colors at any given time from July onward. It displays well on the plant before you pick it and it displays well on the table when you serve it.

The neighborhood taste test

I was the Tomato King of the Neighborhood this year. In fact, it inspired an impromptu tomato testing luncheon, hosted by Betty and Marc. I had plenty of LGS samples to contribute.

Slices were sandwich-sized because the largest tomatoes can reach nearly half a pound. Most fall into the large slicer category, but a few will get big. All colors taste very similar to a beefsteak, square down the middle. It's not super sweet like Sungold or tangy like Lemon Boy; it edges closer to low-acid Carolina Gold.

Inside, the red starts at the tip and bubbles up, first towards the stem then along the skin. When the tomato turns red and gold, slice vertically to get the dancing flames.



My curious taste-testers did find the yellow a little sweeter (Ethel and Maureen) or milder (Marc and Ellen), but overall the peak flavor profile progressed from lightly sweet to mildly tangy as the tomato matured to flaming red-and-gold stripes (Betty).

A surprising plus is its meaty texture (Jason). LGS has very little gel, which means a sandwich doesn't squirt out the back when you bite into it. By comparison, Mortgage Lifter carries a lot of gel. It's a wet tomato and the juice can sog down a sandwich.

High-volume results

LGS is a prolific indeterminate. Give good soil and adequate water, it will generate a dense and bushy planting. Most beefsteaks produce a blossom or two per cluster, but LGS sends out flower sprays more reminiscent of Bumble Bee or other cherries. I think I pulled over 50+ large fruits during the course of a season.

A big factor in the abundance is the disease resistance. Two off-shore hurricanes blew late season blight onto my garden in September. Garden favorites like San Marzano and Mr. Stripey died off, but the F1s hung on as a group. LGS itself was the champion. It lost some lower leaves, but the middle stayed bushy and the tops continued to grow and bloom uninterrupted. At one point, half of my harvest came from this one plant. It approaches Mountain Magic in the strength of its armor.

How to deploy

Early spring: My local Home Depot set out \$25 tomatoes, caged in gallon pots, a week before Easter. It had frosted the night before my visit, but that cart was shopped. I roll my eyes at \$25 Easter tomatoes, but people buy them routinely. The pot and cage make it possible to avoid cold spells, and the plant could easily live out its life on the deck or patio as a container garden. If you put LSG in those early spring pots, now you get rewarded for buying early and large.

Ornamental vegetable: Deck gardens need to be pretty and productive simultaneously. LGS checks off the key features here—beautifully ornamental with long-lasting production in a popular category. Retail/growers have the edge for the big stuff. The season for retail prime is extraordinarily long—Easter to Independence Day. Pulse the crop so you don't have too many at one time; maybe a peak in mid-May. When the fruit ripens, it could pull top dollar in the vegetable program.

Premium 4-in. program: Some 4-in. tomato programs want to be better than their mass-market versions. They often dip into the heritage varieties like Brandywine, Cherokee Purple, or this year's Internet rage, Ananas Noire. LGS fits well into these programs as a headliner.

Who to contact: In the United States, LGS is a Burpee Home Gardens product sold through Ball Seed. If you're serious about growing the crop, contact burpeeadmin@ballseed.com. The web site is

burpeehomegardensbrand.com. Notice the “brand” bit. That takes you to the wholesale website, not the consumer version. **GT**

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