



PACIFIC COAST
FARMERS' MARKET
ASSOCIATION

HARVEST HEADLINE - PEPPERS



Peppers and chilies are a sure sign that summer is here. From the mildest bell pepper to the hottest habanero, you'll find a wide range of peppers at your local farmers' market.

The season looks good for peppers this year, after all the rain we received this past winter. Our farmers are reporting what looks to be a better than average crop than in previous years.

Ron Borba, of Borba Farms in Aromas, grows a wide variety of organic peppers like bells, Italian long, Fresno, jalapeño, Padron, poblano, and so many more. They've been farming for four generations and grow more than just peppers. But right now, Ron is looking forward to this season's pepper crop which he says, "seems to be robust and prolific." "The rain really came at the right time and has benefited everything we grow," he says. "The different varieties should arrive on time or a week later than normal (end of June)."

Further south in the fertile Fresno area, Chong Thao of FT Fresh, whose family grows chili peppers like cayenne, habanero, jalapeño, and says, "The hot pepper crop looks very good this year. The chili peppers are doing well and are already being harvested. We have bell peppers and chili peppers already at the market."

The terms peppers and chilies are sometimes used interchangeably. Bell or sweet peppers and chili peppers are actually from the same family of plants, but taste them and you can tell the difference immediately! Many botanists believe both are just variants of *Capsicum annuum*, though others say they are two different species. Sweet peppers, as the name suggests, are mild and sweet, while chili (or hot) peppers can range from mildly hot to five-alarm hot.

So why are hot peppers called chili peppers? The term 'pepper' is a globalized term used by explorers to explain the hotness that, to them, seemed similar to the spice, black pepper. Chiles originated in South America and when Europeans arrived, they combined the two words, chile and pepper.

Actually, the correct way to spell chili peppers is chile peppers, but common usage is chili, even though it has nothing to do with the Tex-Mex dish 'chili.'

This month visit your local farmers' market and fill your shopping bag with some fantastic peppers. These versatile and tasty veggies are the perfect addition to your summer repertoire of recipes and should be available through early fall.

TAGS