

Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick

Q. Dear Twig: Why do some tomatoes splat more when I throw them at my brother?

A. Everything else being equal — the ripeness of the tomato, how hard you throw it, what you throw it at — the type of tomato is the main thing: **fresh market vs. processing.**

"Your average ripe fresh-market tomato splats better than your average ripe processing type," says David Francis, a tomato breeder and geneticist at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center who seems to have something in his hand there, behind his back.

"Processing tomatoes don't splat well because they're high in **dry matter** and **soluble** ["soll-you-bull"] **solids,**" he explains while offering me some sort of visual aid that flies past my head very quickly. "What you need for a good splat is **water content.**"

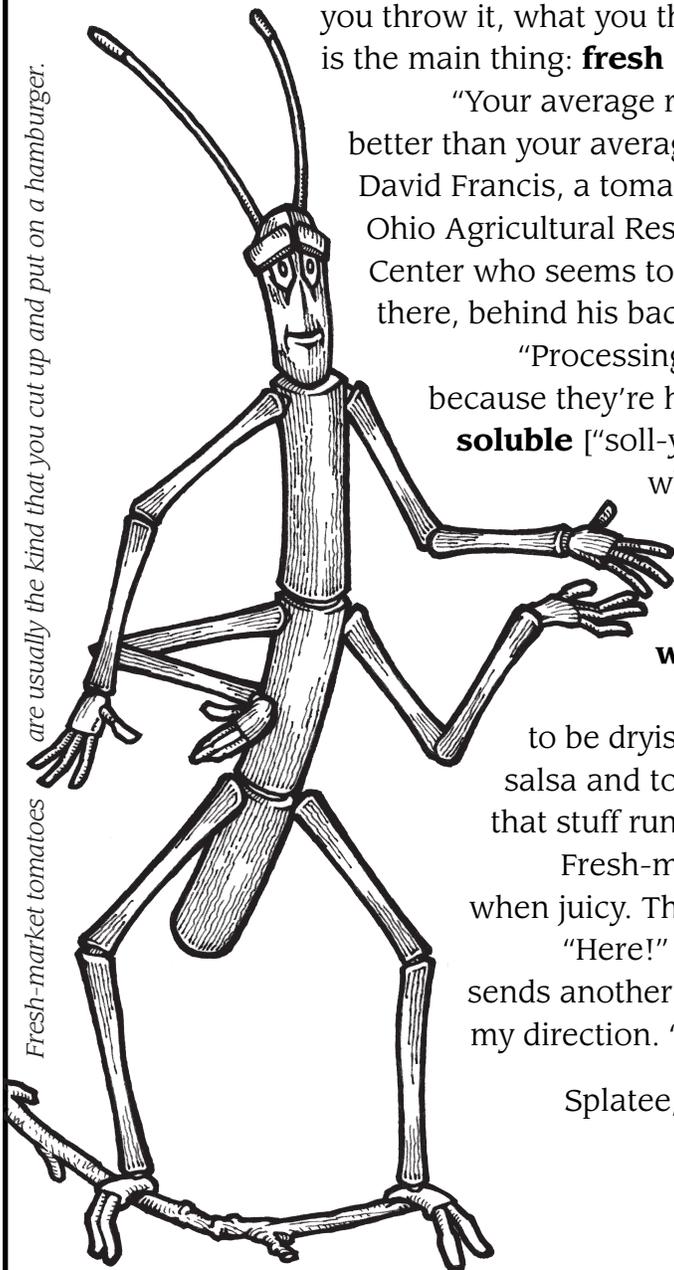
Processing tomatoes need to be dryish. They go to make ketchup, salsa and tomato sauce. You don't want that stuff runny.

Fresh-market types, though, are better when juicy. They go into salads, for instance. "Here!" Professor Francis says as he sends another visual aid (he's very helpful) in my direction. "See for yourself!"

Splatee,

Twig

Fresh-market tomatoes are usually the kind that you cut up and put on a hamburger.



From your scientific friends at The Ohio State University — specifically, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (www.oardc.ohio-state.edu) and OSU Extension (extension.osu.edu).



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Notes: Common fresh-market tomato varieties include Beefsteak and Better Boy. A common processing variety is Roma, though tomato breeders such as Professor Francis continue to develop new and better varieties based on flavor, soluble solids (more soluble solids and less water makes it easier and cheaper to process a processing tomato) and how well the plants resist diseases (greater resistance can mean less or even no need to spray fungicides). Read about the work he does at <http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu/tomato/personnel.htm>. Soluble solids are materials (from tomatoes, in this case) that can be dissolved by or mixed into water — important if you're making, say, tomato juice and want it smooth.

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