

# Different Peppers Have Proud Pedigrees

Black pepper is not just the ground-up dried seeds of bell peppers that grow in your garden.

Actually, black pepper the spice comes from a totally different plant than pepper the vegetable. Black pepper starts out as tiny red berries of a tropical vine, grown mostly in Indonesia and other parts of the East Indies.

The berries grow in clusters, like grapes, not in bell — or pod-shaped crispy, edible shells. The berries are picked just before reaching full maturity. Then they're dried, resulting in black peppercorns that are sold whole or ground-up.

White pepper is made from the same berries, but the black outer hull is removed. Inside, the pepper has a whitish core. Its flavor is a bit different than regular black pepper.

The other kind of pepper, the vegetable, is produced by plants in the large nightshade family, which includes 2,400 species, such as potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant and tobacco.

Unlike the spice, these peppers are native to Mexico and Central America. In fact, peppers were a

staple food for the Inca in Peru.

Mild bell peppers are a great way to help you get your "five a day" of fruits and vegetables. They're low in calories — one small green pepper, about a half-cup chopped, has only about 20 calories. And it also contains nearly 1.5 grams of fiber — between five percent and 10 percent of the fiber you should get in a day. Bell peppers also are an excellent source of vitamin C, and red, orange and yellow peppers contain some vitamin A, too.

Hot peppers, such as jalapeno, poblano or serrano, are similarly low in calories, but they're not usually eaten in amounts large enough to count as a vegetable. When working with hot peppers, be sure to wear plastic gloves or cover your hands with plastic bags to prevent your fingertips from coming into contact with oils from the pepper that can burn your eyes, lips and skin. Even with that protection, wash your hands thoroughly before touching your eyes or face after working with hot peppers.

**On Being a Farm Wife (and other hazards)**

Joyce Bupp



Every country fair should have a rock festival.

No, no, no. Not one of those ear-damaging, strobe light, electronic, unruly, free-for-all which pass for a modern day "music" concert. And calling that cacophony "music" may or may not be considered being overly kind, depending on your personal opinion.

The kind of rock festival to which I refer is one hosted this week at a Canadian country fair. And it was conceived and carried out by farm women.

This Canadian farm women's rock festival was a much quieter one than, say, the Woodstock type. And it had a way-different thrust. Farm women attending the fair were asked to bring a rock to contribute toward the

building of a monument honoring the efforts and contributions of farm women to the Canadian agriculture industry.

What a rock'in great idea.

Rocks are a natural part of farm life in this geographical part of the world, though our rocks are nowhere near the volume and density of those on farms closer to the mountains, or the flintstone ridges of say, near-by Franklin and Cumberland counties. But we still have our share of rocks, some turning up naturally, others relocated for various purposes. I took a quick inventory around here, pondering which of various rocks on the place would be suitable to donate to such a tribute to my sister farm women.

Premier Rock of the farm is Fred. But I'd hate to give up Fred.

Fred is a flintstone, a decades-long resident of our front porch. He's been part of our family since the kids were small, when one day The Farmer dragged him out of the field with a tractor, then deposited him on the porch. I realized what a prize he was while tripping over his bulk.

A pretty white color, Fred weighs...waaaay too much for me to lift. It's Fred's responsibility to keep the front door from blowing off its hinges during windy spells. And he's very good at it. In fact, he turned up on the porch after a particularly windy winter, when The Farmer tired of repairing the door when winds repeatedly whipped it past the "stop" zone.

Our Fred is one dependable door stop that never rots, breaks, or blows away. Sorry. Fred stays.

But we have numerous rocks in the garden from which to select. Or, more realistically, medium-sized stones.

Our garden, blessedly, does not have a lot of natural, large rocks, being fairly rich, loamy soil to which a lot of organic matter has been added. Protective mulch is used every year, including stretches of black plastic, cardboard and paper materials, with a weighting layer of grass clippings or straw put down to keep the paper stuff from blowing over the neighborhood. Strategically-placed stones hold the paper material in place until the clippings settle.

The mulch-weight stones are relocated each year, pitched to the side of the garden during late-winter clean off, then re-signified as the rows and mulch are laid out. We could easily spare one or two of the more symmetrical of those toward our Canadian farm sisters' rock monument.

We no longer plow anything, having switched years ago to strict, no-tillage cropping. Nevertheless, large rocks still manage to work their way up through the soil each year. So there are always a few piles of field stones, along the pasture edges or on deposit on a pile toward some future use as fill. Surely we could find a few select contributions there.

There are rocks outside the weaned-heifer pens, retrieved from inside hay bales. Rocks strategically placed to help fill the holes in the blacktop left by the daily departures of the milk truck lugging up the grade from the milkhouse. Rocks carefully packed into mudholes to level the field roads. Rocks kept handy to prop gates and block hay wagons and keep the squirrels from rooting in the geranium planters.

Come to think of it, we probably don't need to lug any rocks to another country for a monument to our farm sisters. We have more than enough to build one right here.

Maybe we could replicate this idea at one of our own local fairs. I'll contribute the cornerstone.

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