

Better Boys, Early Girls

by Gita M. Smith

While I work in the garden, I think about Marlon Brando playing an elderly Vito Corleone lumbering through the tomato vines on a summer afternoon. He is playing a game with his grandson, and the simple staked tomatoes -- a holdover from his roots in Sicily -- come crashing down when the huge man falls to his death.

Nothing signifies summer as perfectly as home grown tomatoes swelling and turning pink from green and red from pink as June turns into July.

On a hot afternoon, your hands soak up the tomato attar when you touch the vines, when you move among the cages and stakes to find that one, perfect fruit for your supper sandwich.

In the cool of the evening, you slice and salt it, then lay each slice just so on soft white bread slathered in cold mayonnaise.

Best of all is eating the sandwich outside, barefoot on the porch overlooking the garden, so that you can sing the praises of Better Boys and Early Girls -- and heirloom brandywines, don't forget -- between long, slow swallows.

