Greetings Fresh Food Fans,

Last week I was comparing gardening notes with my step-son Ben, who has a community garden plot in his Los Angeles neighborhood. He was raving about a pepper variety called Carmen. I informed him, with Mainer pride, that Carmen, a Corno di Toro pepper variety, was actually developed here in Maine by the dedicated breeding team at Johnny's Selected Seeds. Their growers do the painstaking work of making natural crosses between plants in hopes of coming up with a "better" vegetable which usually means improved flavor, color, shelf life or disease resistance. In the case of Carmen, it turns red earlier, sweeter faster and is more productive than other Corno di Toros.



That discussion with Ben made me think about another one of my early fall favorites, the Delicata Squash. I don't remember eating it in my youth and only became aware of this delicious squash a few years ago. I wondered if I was just late to discover this squash's charms, or if it was a farmers market newcomer. Well, the answer is both.

Delicatas are native to North America and were introduced to European immigrants by Native Americians, but because of its delicate skin and susceptibility to diseases, it wasn't broadly cultivated. That all changed in the early 2000s when plant breeders at Cornell addressed these issues and developed Cornell's Bush Delicata which is now prized by farmers, chefs and consumers.

If you've never had one, pick a few up this week! I cut one in half and baked it the other night with a drizzle of butter and olive oil flavored with fresh rosemary, salt and pepper.

It was so good, I ate the other half for breakfast :)

See ya Thursday!
A.