



# ROMANITA™



The Modesto Bee  
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## What's Ripe?

Sweet baby tomatoes, baby

If the new Romanita tomato were an actress, it would have won the best-actress Oscar. It is a fantastic new tomato -- a "baby-size" Roma variety specifically hybrid to have the meatiness of a Roma but the sweet flavor of a grape tomato. The seed varieties used to produce it were imported from Italy. All of the plants are trellised on pole stakes. This lifts the plant, allowing more sunlight to reach most of the plant and allowing more airflow during blossom pollination, which means better fruit set. Second, growers go through the fields trimming the leaf structure of the plants. As much as a third of the leaf canopy may be cut away. This means that more food is sent to the tomatoes, not to the leaves or stems. At harvest time, growers don't wait only for color on the fruit; they wait for the right sugar. They first will use the "bite test." If it has the right flavor, the growers then do a refractometer test to determine the brix (or sugar) levels in the fruit. This way, you will get a full-flavored sweet tomato every time you buy. Roma tomatoes have about 3.5 percent sugar content. But this tiny Romanita has around 7 percent. It is sweet. It is about the size of a large cherry tomato, but has the meat of a roma, except its skin is not as thick as a Roma. The Romanita is great halved or quartered into a salad. Halve them, then blister them in a saute pan with a little olive oil. Now add this to your pasta. The Romanita also is the near-perfect tomato for chili.