TOMATO ROSES

Starting at the base of the tomato, peel a strip all the way around the tomato, finishing at the stem end. The strip must be peeled thinly so it will roll evenly. Make sure your knife is sharp and the tomato is ripe but firm.

Place the strip of skin, flesh-side down, on a board. Beginning with the stem end of the strip, start rolling up the tomato skin to form a coil.

When almost all the skin has been soiled, sit the tomato flower on its base and curl the last piece of the tomato skin around to form the more open petals of the rose.
Tomato Rose

INGREDIENTS: A round, firm tomato. TOOLS & SUPPLIES: A 6-inch knife.

TIPS & TIMING: Use a gentle sawing motion. Peeling a tomato can be quite messy if you push too hard with your knife. Roses can be made with cherry tomatoes and citrus fruits, but start with regular tomatoes first. Citrus-peel roses must be cut paper thin. The roses can be made up a day in advance. It's convenient to lay them on cucumber slices and then handle them by lifting slices rather than roses.

USES: Place a single rose, or a bouquet of 3 or more, on any flat serving dish, tray or board as a centerpiece or corner accent. Surround roses with fresh green herbs. Place 1 in center of a cucumber spiral for a double design-very striking! Cherry tomato roses are lovely garnishes for individual plate. Do not place tomato roses on top of bowls of salad for they will unravel as salad is being served and your tomato rose will become a tomato snake.
1. Begin by cutting a 1/2-inch wide strip of skin from around stem depression, using a gentle sawing motion. Leave a little flesh attached to skin but stay well out of seed area. The knife doesn't advance very much. Rather, tomato should be rotated into sawing blade. Don't rush, but do keep a light and steady pressure behind your sawing motion.

2. Just as you are about to complete cutting this strip from around stem depression, dip angle of knife so second turn around tomato will be just under first. The rest of the process is to peel a continuous strip of skin from entire tomato. Generally, 3 to 4 full revolutions can be made before finishing. As ribbon of skin lengthens, work so it can rest on your cutting board. If ribbon breaks somewhere near its middle, don't fret. Overlapping pieces during final roll-up will correct that problem.

3. As you near very end of cutting, finish by slicing a slightly wider swatch of skin through last inch or so.

4. Lay ribbon out flat, skin side down. It will form an elongated "S." Begin rolling it up in reverse; that is, begin at flower end. It's easiest to leave it on cutting board rather than holding it up in your hands. Pretend you're rolling up some leftover ribbon. As you near stem end, follow curving peel all way around. No special twisting should occur. You are now finished. If your rose looks odd, you have probably done what at least half of all cooks do--you've managed to turn it upside down while rolling peel onto stem end. Just turn it over.

5. If you'd like a rose that looks more like a rosebud, lay peel skin side up before rolling it.