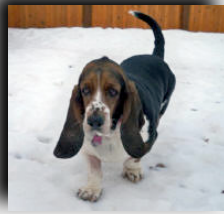


The Rocky Report

From Rocky the Rocket



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The Great Tomato Caper - A Cautionary Tail ...



My master loves home grown tomatoes that ripen on the vine. For my master, there is nothing like a toasted sandwich with

tomatoes and mayo.

When my master lived in Utah, the garden produced an abundance of tomatoes. My master would can 12 to 24 quarts and have more than enough to eat and share with neighbors. Today, my master fondly remembers that time.

For the last ten years, my master has tried to grow tomatoes in Montana. The growing season is short with only 45 frost free days. And, it can snow or frost any time during the growing season as with the great snowfall June of 2001. Thus, it is very difficult to grow vine ripened tomatoes.

No matter what my master has tried, the results are always the same with a few moderate size tomatoes that ripen on the vine. The picked green tomatoes are wrapped with newspaper and left to ripen in the utility room. Although green tomatoes ripened indoors are better than ones you buy in the store, they

are not as good as tomatoes ripened on the vine.

This year my master planted tomato plants in large black plastic pots. My master hoped that doing so would cause the plants to become root bound, and increase plant size as well as the amount of tomatoes produced. It didn't.

Last week my master picked two relatively small red tomatoes. The tomatoes were placed on the kitchen counter to finish ripening, as my master looked forward to a tomato with mayo sandwich. All went well for several days.

One day, while washing the dishes, my master noticed that the tomatoes placed on the counter were gone. Where? My master looked here and there. The tomatoes were nowhere to be found. Thus began *The Great Tomato Caper - A Cautionary Tail* and the search for the culprit.

Of course, my master did not need to search very far as only my master and I live in the house, and tomatoes simply cannot walk away. I promptly owned up to eating the tomatoes on the counter as I like to counter surf as my master knows. Anything within reach is subject for consumption. This includes not only food, but also toothbrushes, plastic bags, freezer wrapper paper that was used to wrap meat to name a few.

My master has become very conscientious about where things are placed on the counter. In addition, the plastic garbage container in the utility room now has a lid, and any objects like plastic bags are stored high enough where I cannot get them. My master also closes the lower cupboard doors less I get into territory I would love to explore. And, my master has learned that when I am out of sight and especially quiet to check to see what I might be into. Sometimes I have gotten into something, sometimes not. During these past few weeks, my counter surfing efforts have proved fruitless. No pun intended! My master has learned the lessons I taught him.

Of course, I did not learn to counter surf on my own. I had help. Little did anyone know that when they left food on the counter that I would naturally follow my nose and learn to counter surf. Food at the edge of the counter became what I call YUMMIES And, as every Basset Hound knows, YUMMIES are always good!

And so ends *The Great Tomato Caper - A Cautionary Tail*. And, as they say, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Only you can prevent counter surfing!

