

Tomatoes

Tomatoes Fun Facts

Fruit or Vegetable?

- Botanists/horticulturists classify tomatoes as a fruit
- Nutritionists classify tomatoes as a vegetable
- The U.S. Supreme Court officially proclaimed it a vegetable in 1893 according to customs regulations

Tomatoes come in all colors, shapes, and sizes!

- Colors: pink to dark red/purple, yellow, green, orange & striped
- Slicing varieties – juicy, small to very large in size
- Plum or paste tomatoes – more pulp and less juice
- Cherry & grape tomatoes

Storage

- Tomatoes will continue to ripen after they are picked from the vine
- Ripen stem side up at room temperature (70°F) & out of direct sunlight
- Store uncut tomatoes at room temperature for best flavor
- Store very ripe & cut tomatoes in refrigerator



Nutrition & Health Benefits

- Good source of Vitamins C, A, & K; potassium, manganese & fiber
- Contain smaller amounts of Vitamin E, the B vitamins (especially thiamin, niacin, vitamin B6 & folate) & minerals including chromium, copper & magnesium
- Contain 15 to 20 calories per ½ cup serving (1/2 of 3-inch, fresh tomato)
- High in lycopene, a fat soluble carotenoid plant pigment (see next page)

Harvest & Purchases

- **Garden:** Pick tomatoes when fully ripe, but still a bit firm to the touch. If frost is a risk near the end of the season, pick when under ripe & allow to ripen inside. Green tomatoes can be picked and ripened in
- **Buying:** Choose firm, glossy, smooth & plump tomatoes. Avoid tomatoes that are soft, bruised, badly cracked or otherwise damaged.
- **Approximate yields:**
 - * 1 pound tomatoes = about 3 medium tomatoes



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Home Preservation of Tomatoes:

Tomatoes may be frozen, dehydrated, or canned in jars. Check out these resources:

- NJAES home food preservation, <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/food-safety/home-food-preservation/>
- Preserving Food: Canning Tomatoes and Tomato Products; University of Georgia Cooperative Extension; https://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/uga/uga_can_tom.pdf
- Preserving Food: Sensational Salsas, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension, https://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/uga/Sensational_Salsas_2011.pdf



Lycopene

- Tomatoes are high in lycopene
- A beneficial phytochemical with antioxidant properties
- Research says it may reduce the risk of:
 - * Some cancers, including prostate, cervix, skin, bladder, breast, lung & digestive tract
 - * Coronary artery disease
- Lycopene is fat soluble & is better absorbed with the addition of a small amount of fat in the same meal (such as adding a little olive oil or cheese)
- Processed (heated) tomato products have 2-8 times as much available lycopene as raw tomatoes.
Lycopene in foods:
 - *One medium fresh tomato (4oz.)4 mg
 - *Tomato puree(1/2 cup) 8 mg
 - *Tomato sauce (1/2 cup) 17 mg
 - *Tomato paste (2 tablespoons) 8 mg
 - *Tomato juice (1 cup)20 mg
 - *Tomatoes, canned (1/2 cup)11 mg

Meal & Snack Ideas

Tomatoes are versatile & may be eaten alone or added to many fresh or cooked dishes.

- Enjoy fresh or top with a little seasoning. Flavor is best at room temperature, so slice just before serving
- Roasting tomatoes brings out a deep, rich flavor
- Meal & snack ideas:
 - ♦ Breakfast – omelets, egg & tomato sandwiches, tomato juice
 - ♦ Lunch – sliced, stuffed, or grilled on bread with cheese, salads, tabbouleh, tomato soup
 - ♦ Dinner – gazpacho (chilled soup), tomato-basil-mozzarella salad, grilled, frittatas, quiches or tomato tarts, tomato-based sauce
- ♦ Snacks – salsa, dips, toast toppings (bruschetta)



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