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Tomatoes

Food $ense Guide to Eating Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

Carolyn Washburn, Extension Associate Professor

A tomato is a mildly acid red or yellow pulpy fruit eaten as a vegetable. It is native to South America and is widely cultivated in many varieties.

Utah Local Fresh Season: Tomatoes can be found year round in grocery stores. The season for tomatoes in Utah is July through October.

Availability: Tomatoes are available year round. It is currently Americas most eaten vegetable. You can find all sorts of tomatoes in the store at anytime of the year.

Eating: Tomatoes have a savory almost sweet taste to them. The type you buy determines on how sweet it will be.

Selecting: Cold temperatures damage tomatoes, so never buy tomatoes that are stored in a cold area. Choose plump tomatoes with smooth skins that are free from bruises, cracks, or blemishes. Depending on the variety, ripe tomatoes should be completely red or reddish-orange.

Varieties: There are thousands of tomato varieties. The most widely available varieties are classified in three groups: cherry, plum, and slicing tomatoes. A new sweet variety like the cherry tomato is the grape tomato, really wonderful to eat alone or in a salad.

Cleaning and Preparing: When preparing a tomato it is important to wash it with cool water before slicing it. After it is washed and dried with a clean towel proceed to prepare it how the recipe asks. It is important that when using sliced tomatoes on sandwiches for example, that you use them within 15 minutes. If you wait longer than that, the flavor of the tomato will have decreased dramatically.

Storing: Store tomatoes at room temperature (above 55ºF) until they have fully ripened. This will allow them to ripen properly and develop good flavor and aroma. Try to store tomatoes out of direct sunlight, because sunlight will cause them to ripen unevenly. If you must store them for a longer period of time, place them in the refrigerator. Serve them at room temperature. Chopped tomatoes can be frozen for use in sauces or other cooked dishes.

Cooking: Tomatoes are very versatile. They can be eaten raw on sandwiches, fried, stewed, sautéed; grill them, broil them, stuff them, sauce them, add to salads, and so much more!

Nutrition Highlights: Tomatoes are low fat, saturated fat free, very low in sodium, cholesterol free, low calorie, high in vitamin A and C and a good source of potassium.

Growing Tomatoes: Tomatoes can be grown in Utah. For more information refer to *Tomatoes in the Garden*, by Dan Drost http://extension.usu.edu/juab/files/uploads/Horticulture/vegetable%20garden/tomatof.pdf

Preserving Tomatoes: You can freeze, dry, can, and preserve tomatoes easily. To learn how see: http://www.uga.edu/nchfp.

References:

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Garden Fresh Tomato Soup

4 cups chopped fresh tomatoes
1 slice onion
4 whole cloves
2 cups chicken broth
2 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons white sugar, or to taste

In a stockpot, over medium heat, combine the tomatoes, onion, cloves and chicken broth. Bring to a boil, and gently boil for about 20 minutes to blend all of the flavors. Remove from heat and run the mixture through a food mill into a large bowl, or pan. Discard any stuff left over in the food mill.

In the now empty stockpot, melt the butter over medium heat. Stir in the flour to make a roux, cooking until the roux is a medium brown. Gradually whisk in a bit of the tomato mixture, so that no lumps form, then stir in the rest. Season with sugar and salt, and adjust to taste.

http://allrecipes.com//Recipe/garden-fresh-tomato-soup/Detail.aspx

Broiled Sweet Heart Tomatoes

Small tomatoes
Grated parmesan cheese
Olive oil

Wash and cut tomatoes in half. Place in a baking sheet cut side up. Sprinkle with grated parmesan cheese (kids love to do this!) and drizzle with olive oil. Broil until the cheese starts to brown.

Stuffed Baked Tomatoes

4 plum tomatoes
3 ounces shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
1/4 cup chopped fresh basil
1 clove garlic, minced
salt and pepper
Heat oven to 400°F

Cut tomatoes in half lengthwise. Using a melon baller or spoon, scoop out insides of each tomato, roughly chop pulp. Combine pulp, mozzarella cheese, garlic, basil, and a pinch of salt and pepper. Place tomato shells cut side up on a baking sheet that has been coated with cooking spray. Spoon tomato-pulp mix into shells. Bake 10 minutes or until cheese is melted and lightly browned. Serve warm.

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