

SEPTEMBER: TOMATOES

Tomatoes are one of the most popular “vegetables” eaten by Americans. Tomatoes, however, are members of the **fruit** family that are served and prepared as vegetables - this is why most people consider them vegetables and not fruits. They are high in vitamins C, A, and K. Tomatoes contain large amounts of an antioxidant called lycopene, which may help guard against certain cancers. Tomato paste and sauces, which contain highly-concentrated cooked tomatoes, have lots of healthy lycopene!

CHECK OUT SOME GREAT INFORMATION ABOUT HEALTHY TOMATOES BELOW!

	<p>Varieties- Did you know there are <i>thousands</i> of types of tomatoes?! The most popular kinds are classified into three groups: cherry, plum, and slicing tomatoes. Grape and cherry tomatoes are fun, sweet, and really delicious to eat alone or in a salad!</p>
	<p>Selection- Cold temperatures can damage tomatoes, so avoid buying tomatoes that are stored in a cold area, and try not to put them in your refrigerator unless you cannot eat them soon. Pick plump tomatoes that have smooth skin with no bruises, cracks or blemishes. Slightly soft tomatoes usually have more flavor than hard ones.</p>
	<p>Storage- Store tomatoes at room temperature (above 55 degrees) until they are fully ripened. This will allow them to ripen properly so they taste and smell <i>delicious</i>. 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 (but remember they may lose some flavor!). Serve tomatoes at room temperature.</p>

Tomato Tips

- Use healthy tomato-based **salsa** (which has little or no added sugars) instead of ketchup (which typically has lots of added sugars and/or corn syrup) on hamburgers, hotdogs, and with other foods typically served with ketchup!!!
- Chop up **tomatoes** and place on top of your salads to add color and a healthy addition of vitamins C, A, and K!
- Combine raw **tomato** wedges with other raw vegetables such as carrots and celery to make a tasty side dish or snack! Dip the vegetables in low-fat ranch dressing for added flavor.
- **Tomatoes** add wonderful color, flavor, and texture to your favorite sandwich, salad, or omelet.
- Cherry and grape **tomatoes** make a healthy, *portable* snack – just throw them in a baggie and then in your backpack for nutritious food on the go!

Tomato Recipe!

Fresh, Home-made Tomato Sauce – for pasta, pizzas!

Ingredients

2 Tbsp. olive oil
 2-3 cloves garlic, chopped (2-3 tsp minced garlic)
 2-3 (15oz) cans chopped **tomatoes**, drained
 1 pinch red pepper flakes
 2 tsp Italian seasoning
 Salt and pepper to taste
 Fresh Italian parsley, or basil to taste

Heat oil in skillet over medium-high heat. Add garlic, sauté till fragrant (don't let it brown!). Carefully add chopped tomatoes, and rest of the ingredients, stir till combined. Add ¼ cup water (or white wine), bring to slight boil, then reduce to a simmer. Simmer till sauce thickens, stirring occasionally (about 15 minutes). Stir in fresh herbs before serving. Serve over pasta, squash noodles, or use as pizza sauce.

Tomato Recipes!

SIMPLE CORN SALSA –ACCOMPANIMENT TO GRILLED MEAT!

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients

2 chopped **tomatoes** or 1 can chopped tomatoes, drained
 2 tsp. extra virgin olive oil
 1 cup fresh corn kernels (or 1 small can, drained)
 1/8 tsp. sugar
 Salt and pepper to taste
 4 tsp. balsamic vinegar
 ¼ cup finely chopped red onion
 ¼ cup chopped cilantro leaves
 1 jalapeño pepper, or to taste

Heat the oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add corn and cook for 2 minutes. Add sugar, salt and pepper and cook for another minute. Add vinegar and cook for 1 more minute. Transfer the corn into a small bowl and cool slightly. Stir in the **tomatoes**, onion, cilantro and jalapeño pepper. Serve with grilled chicken, beef or pork. Salsa can be made in advance and stored in the refrigerator for up to 2 days.

Adapted from:

<http://www.foodfit.com/recipes/recipe.asp?rid=1641>

TOMATO & VIDALIA ONION SALAD – VERY EASY & HEALTHY!

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients

3 large ripe **tomatoes**, sliced
 2 Vidalia or other sweet onions, thinly sliced
 Vinegar or vinaigrette to taste

Place tomato slices on large platter, then put onion slices on top of tomatoes, Drizzle with your favorite vinaigrette.

Adapted from: Beyond Gumbo: Creole Fusion Food from the Atlantic Rim. 2003. Harris. Simon & Schuster.