



Harvest of the Month | Family Newsletter

Tomatoes

Tomatoes were discovered in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador. Until the early 1800's, tomatoes were thought to be poisonous. Summertime farmers markets are a great way to find many types of locally grown tomatoes.



Did you know?



Some tomato varieties that grow best in Pennsylvania are: Mister Stripy, Brandywine Red, Sunbeam, and Gold Nugget.



Tomato plants grow two different ways. Plants can grow to a specific height and produce flowers and fruit all at once. Plants can also grow and produce flowers and fruit all season long.



Even though tomatoes are a type of fruit, the US Supreme Court ruled that tomatoes are vegetables in 1893.

Selection

Ripe tomatoes should have bright, shiny, red skin, that is free of bruises. Tomatoes should be soft, heavy, and firm. A fresh smell is the best way to tell if your tomato is ripe. A larger tomato does not mean it has better flavor. Tomatoes are placed into categories based on shape, use, and size. They are:

- Cherry or Grape: small and sweet; usually eaten in salads.
- Plum: Pear-shaped, meaty flesh, great for making into sauce or salsas.
- Slicing: round shaped. Can be used for making into sauces, used on sandwiches, or made into salsa.
- Beefsteak: Larger, round, juicy. They can be used for sandwiches.

Storage

- Fresh, whole tomatoes should be kept in a cool, dry place out of sunlight.
- If you store tomatoes on top of each other, they could become bruised or damaged.
- You can place unripe tomatoes in a bag with a banana or apple for one to two days. The gas given off by the banana or apple will help the tomatoes ripen faster.
- Fresh, whole tomatoes kept in the refrigerator will lose flavor.
- You should store unused cut and sliced tomatoes in the refrigerator for up to four days.

Handling

Wash your tomatoes under cold water to remove any dirt. Use a sharp knife to slice your tomato in half. Make a diagonal cut on both sides of the stem and remove core.



Nutrition

Tomatoes are a good source of vitamin C. This vitamin could help boost your immune system. Tomatoes are fat free, low in sodium, and high in potassium. Potassium helps maintain cell growth and normal water levels in the body. Tomatoes are classified into the red and orange subgroup of vegetables. Tomatoes are red in color because of lycopene. Lycopene is an antioxidant that can help protect against some types of cancer. According to the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, a healthy adult diet consisting of 2,000 calories per day should include 5.5 cups of red & orange vegetables per week.

Harvest Season

Pennsylvania farmers grow tomatoes in early June to the end of October.

Preparation

You can serve tomatoes many ways. Some common ways are:



Grilled: Wash your tomatoes and remove the stem and core. Using a sharp knife, cut your tomatoes in half, brush with olive oil, and place on a pre-heated, medium to high heat grill. Cook about 6-8 minutes, until soft, turning once.



Raw: Rinse, dry and remove your tomato core. Slice and dice your tomatoes to enjoy in salads or on sandwiches. To enjoy by itself, slice your tomato into 1/4" slices, and sprinkle with salt. Allow your tomato slices to sit for about 15 minutes. The salt will draw excess water from the tomato. This will help deepen the natural flavor of your tomato.



Roasted: Place small, grape tomatoes or cut tomatoes in a bowl. Toss your tomatoes with olive oil, salt, pepper, and other desired seasonings. Spread the tomatoes in an even layer on a prepared baking sheet pan. Roast at 425° until soft and caramelized, for about 5-8 minutes..



Basil, celery seed, chili powder, cumin, garlic, rosemary, tarragon, oregano, or thyme will enhance the natural flavor of tomatoes.



Summer Cucumber Tomato Salad

Yield 4 Servings, Time 10 Minutes

Found on the web at: www.spendwithpennies.com

Recipe

Ingredients

1 large cucumber, sliced
2-3 large, ripe tomatoes, core removed, and diced
1/2 red onion, skin removed, thinly sliced
1 tablespoon each fresh, chopped Italian parsley, basil, and/or dill
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
Salt and Pepper to taste

Directions

1. Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and toss well.
2. Refrigerate for at least 20 minutes before serving.



Check out the PA Harvest of the Month website (www.paharvestofthemonth.org) for sources, additional resources, and recipes.

Developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and Penn State University (Project PA).

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organization imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.