

Tomato

Choosing, Storing, Preparing, and Enjoying

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Tomatoes are nutritious and delicious. They are available fresh, jarred, and canned, meeting budget, preference, and accessibility needs. Tomatoes also support health in many ways. Consider the points below when choosing, storing, and preparing tomatoes to enjoy them in a variety of ways.

Choosing Tomatoes

When selecting tomatoes, look for:

- Firm feel, well-shaped, give slightly to pressure.
- Rich color, bright and shiny.
- Feels heavy for its size.
- Free from blemishes, cracks, and bruises.

Storing Tomatoes

To extend the life of tomatoes, save food dollars, and enjoy the best flavor and texture, consider these storage tips:

- Ripe tomatoes should be stored at room temperature, such as on the kitchen counter.
- Green tomatoes can be ripened by placing them in a paper bag kept at room temperature for several days. If you have multiple tomatoes, line a rack in newspaper, place tomatoes on top of newspaper, and then cover the tomatoes in another layer of newspaper. The paper bag and newspaper help to retain moisture. These methods work because tomatoes naturally produce the gas ethylene, which encourages ripening when trapped.
- Use ripe tomatoes within three days. Tomatoes that are light pink in color should be ripe in three to five days.
- They should be kept out of direct sunlight. Direct sunlight can give tomatoes a bitter taste.
- Avoid refrigerating tomatoes as low temperatures can change the texture and flavor.
- Tomatoes can be preserved now to be enjoyed later. Check out [FCS3-580: Home Canning Tomatoes and Tomato Products](#) to learn how.

Preparing Tomatoes

Always wash fresh tomatoes under cool running water, wiping off visible signs of dirt. Remove the core and peel if you like. Tomato seeds contain nutrients, so avoid seeding, unless the recipe calls for it.

Enjoying Tomatoes

Tomatoes are available fresh and can be enjoyed raw or used in recipes. They are also available jarred or canned, often in peeled, whole, diced, chopped and in sauce and paste options. Jarred and canned tomatoes provide the nutrients of fresh tomatoes but may be more convenient, accessible and a budget-friendly option for recipes. Choose “low sodium” or “no salt added” versions and consider added liquid when using in recipes. Be mindful of added sugar content of some jarred tomato products.

Tomatoes work together with other foods to support our health in a variety of ways



Table 1. Ways to prepare tomatoes.

Method	Steps to Take
Peel	Submerge the tomatoes in a pan of boiling water for about 30 seconds. Transfer the tomatoes to cold water, and the skins will slip off.
Seed	Scrape seeds away from the flesh of the tomato with a pointed utensil, such as a grapefruit spoon. Avoid puncturing the skin of the tomato.
Slice	To retain the juice, cut the tomato vertically from top to bottom. A serrated knife works best.
Broil	Cut horizontally in half. Drizzle lightly with vegetable oil, like olive or canola, and sprinkle with an herb mixture. Broil until tomatoes are tender and the topping is lightly browned.
Bake	Cut horizontally in half. Drizzle lightly with vegetable oil, like olive or canola, and season as desired. Bake at 425°F for 10 to 15 minutes.
Roast	Slice horizontally, 1/2- to 3/4-inch thick. Line baking sheets with aluminum foil and generously rub foil with vegetable oil of choice. Place tomatoes on foil and season as desired. Roast at 325°F until the tomatoes shrivel, the edges start to turn brown, and most of the liquid around the tomatoes has caramelized— about one hour. Store in the refrigerator for up to three days.

(continued)

Table 1. Ways to prepare tomatoes. (continued)

Method	Steps to Take
Microwave	Cut horizontally in half. Drizzle lightly with vegetable oil, like olive or canola, and season as desired. Microwave on high power (100%) 3 to 4 minutes for four halves or 5 to 6 minutes for six to eight halves.
Stew	Place peeled tomatoes (whole or cut up) in a small pan without water. Season with a pinch of salt, pepper, and sugar; add diced onion or green pepper if desired. Tightly cover and simmer on low until done, about 10 to 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.
Stuff	Cut off the stem end of the tomato and scoop out seeds and pulp. Sprinkle the cavity lightly with salt and turn upside down on a paper towel to drain. Stuff with your favorite salad of seafood, meat, or pasta.

Recipes

One-pot Pasta with Fresh Tomato Sauce

Yield: 6 servings

- 12 ounces tri-colored pasta
 - 8 medium tomatoes, diced (or 2 14-ounce cans low sodium, diced tomatoes)
 - 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
 - 1 small yellow onion, sliced
 - 4 garlic cloves, minced or 2 tablespoons garlic powder
 - 1 teaspoon dried oregano
 - 1 tablespoon fresh basil, chopped or 1 teaspoon dried
 - 1 teaspoon salt
 - 6 ounces baby spinach with stems removed
 - Parmesan cheese to top
 - Fresh basil for garnish (optional)
 - Place all the ingredients except the spinach, parmesan, and additional fresh basil in a large pot. Cover pot with lid and bring to boil over medium-high heat.
 - Reduce the heat to medium-low and let simmer for 6 minutes or until pasta is slightly al dente, stir occasionally.
 - Remove from heat. Stir in spinach; cover and let stand for 5 minutes.
 - Top with parmesan cheese and basil just before serving.
- Per serving: 260 calories; 2 grams fat; 0 milligrams cholesterol; 460 milligrams sodium; 51 grams carbohydrate; 12 grams protein

Easy Summer Salad

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 cucumber, peeled and cubed
- 1 red onion, diced
- 2 tomatoes, diced
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
 - Mix cucumbers, onions, tomato, and garlic in a large bowl.
 - Stir in lemon juice, oil, salt, and pepper until well mixed.
 - Serve at room temperature or chill in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour before serving.

Per serving: 45 calories; 2.5 grams fat; 0 milligrams cholesterol; 100 milligrams sodium; 6 grams carbohydrate; 1 gram protein

Sun-dried Tomato Hummus

Yield: 14 servings

- 2 (15 ounces) cans of garbanzo beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 (7 ounces) jar oil packed sun-dried tomatoes, undrained
- 2/3 cup water
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
 - Add all ingredients to a food processor, cover, and process on low until smooth. Place in a serving bowl and garnish as desired.
 - Serve with pita bread, crackers, or vegetable dippers. It can also be used as a sandwich spread and in wraps.

Per serving: 130 calories; 7 grams fat; 0 milligrams cholesterol; 170 milligrams sodium; 13 grams carbohydrate; 3 grams protein

Oven Baked Tomatoes

Yield: 6 servings

- 3 large tomatoes, cut crosswise into halves or cut into thick slices
- 6 tablespoons dry whole wheat breadcrumbs
- 1/2 teaspoon dry basil or oregano
- 4 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon onion or garlic powder
 - Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.
 - Place tomatoes cut sides up on a baking sheet or slightly layer them in a baking dish. Mix other ingredients and use to cover tomatoes.
 - Bake for 12 minutes or until lightly browned. Enjoy.

Per serving: 70 calories; 3.5 grams fat; 0 milligrams cholesterol; 55 milligrams sodium; 9 grams carbohydrate; 2 grams protein

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Resources

For information about growing produce, check out NEP's Growing Your Own Garden series at <https://www.planeatmove.com/get-moving/growing-your-own-garden/>. Tomatoes can be found [here](#).

For more information on using fresh tomatoes, consider Plate It Up! Kentucky Proud recipes: <https://fcs-hes.ca.uky.edu/content/plate-it-kentucky-proud>.

The recipes listed can be found at [Plan.Eat.Move.com](https://www.planeatmove.com), where you can find additional recipes using a variety of tomato products.

For more information on preserving food, check with your local county Extension office.

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