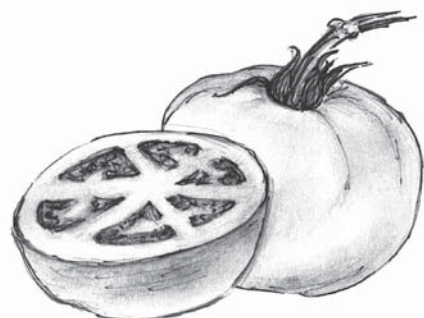


# TOMATO



**TOMATO** is native to the Americas and was initially cultivated by the Aztecs and Incas as early as 700 A.D. Tomato seeds were taken back to Europe in the 16th century where they found favor in the Mediterranean countries of Spain, Portugal, and Italy. There are many varieties of tomatoes, from the familiar round red ones, to ones with more unusual shapes and colors, like yellow pear tomatoes (shaped like pears), Zebra tomatoes, which are green when ripe, and many others. Due to the high popularity of tomatoes, producing tomatoes that will store for a long time has become an important goal of the food industry. Really tasty tomatoes require vine ripening and hand-picking—like those you get from your local farmer! In the Northeast tomatoes are available in the summer months.

## STORAGE

- ◆ **Do not refrigerate tomatoes.** Cold temperatures cause tomatoes to lose their flavor and texture.
- ◆ Store unwashed tomatoes out of direct sunlight.
- ◆ **Use ripe tomatoes right away** to avoid spoilage.
- ◆ Tomatoes can also be **canned** (see canning tip sheet for procedure).

## PREPARATION

- ◆ Ripe **tomatoes are delicious raw.** Slice, wedge, or dice; sprinkle with chopped fresh herbs, drizzle with olive oil, and serve.
- ◆ Add raw tomatoes to **salads, fresh salsas,** or use to **garnish sandwiches.**
- ◆ If you plan on cooking tomatoes, you may want to **de-skin and de-seed** them. Cut a small x on the bottom of the tomato and drop into boiling water. When the skin around the x begins to roll back (1-2 minutes) remove and drop in ice water. When cooled enough to handle you can easily peel the skin away.
- ◆ To de-seed, cut the tomato in half around the middle. Gently squeeze while pulling out the seed mass with your fingers. You can do this over a bowl and reserve the juices to add to your dish.

### ***Nutritional Information***

Tomatoes contain the carotenoid beta-carotene, a substance that is converted to Vitamin A in the body. They also contain the antioxidant lycopene and vitamin C. Vitamin A is important in vision, growth and development, skin health, immune function and reproduction. Antioxidants, such as lycopene, help prevent cell and tissue damage that could cause disease. Cooking tomatoes increases the amount of lycopene available to the body. Vitamin C is important in immune response. Vitamin C also helps with iron absorption.

# Tomato Recipes

## Basil-Stuffed Tomatoes

- 5-8 fresh tomatoes
- 1 1/2 cups bread crumbs
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1/4 cup fresh basil leaves, minced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced



Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cut off about a 1/4 inch of the top of each tomato. Using a spoon, scoop out seeds and flesh, reserve in a small bowl. In another medium bowl combine remaining ingredients. Add enough reserved tomato pulp to moisten the filling. Stuff the mixture into the center of the tomatoes and. Place tomatoes in a baking dish. Bake for 4 minutes or until tomatoes are lightly browned and insides are bubbling.

Recipe from a Hudson-Mohawk CSA newsletter, found in [FoodBook for a Sustainable Harvest](#), by Elizabeth Henderson and David Stern, copyright 1994 by Elizabeth Henderson and David Stern.

## Easy Tomato Salad

- Sliced tomatoes, about 1/2 large tomato per person
- Sliced or chopped onion, green onion or chives
- Fresh parsley or basil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Favorite vinaigrette or Italian dressing



Wash the ripe tomatoes and cut out the stem ends. Slice the tomatoes using a sharp knife. (A serrated knife works best for slicing tomatoes.) Layer the tomatoes, onions and herbs in a shallow bowl. Pour the salad dressing over. Serve plain or on fresh lettuce leaves.

Recipe reprinted with permission from Linda Drake from [From the Farm to the Table](#), by Linda Drake, the UConn Cooperative Extension System EFNEP and the Hispanic Health Council, Inc., 1996.

## Zucchini and Tomato Casserole

- 3 medium zucchini, sliced into 1/4 inch rounds
- 2 large tomatoes, sliced into 1/4 inch slices
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2 Tablespoons chopped onion
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 1 teaspoon basil
- 1/3 cup Parmesan cheese
- 1/2 teaspoon salt and pepper
- 1 cup grated cheddar cheese
- 1/2 cup dry bread crumbs



Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Grease an 8 inch pan. Cover the bottom of the pan with one layer of zucchini rounds. Create a second layer with tomatoes. Drizzle half the olive oil and sprinkle half the onion, garlic, oregano, basil, Parmesan cheese, salt and pepper on top. Make another layer of zucchini and tomatoes and put the rest of the oil, onion, garlic, oregano and basil on the top. You may have to make a couple more layers, depending on how much zucchini and tomato you have. Top with the rest of the salt and pepper, the cheddar cheese and the bread crumbs. Cover with aluminum foil and bake for 30 minutes. Uncover and bake for another 20-25 minutes until the bread crumbs turn golden brown.

Recipe contributed by Kirsten Sauer, Just Food volunteer, 2001.