

# Nutrition News - August 2021



## Tomatoes: Tasty, Refreshing and Nutritious

Tomatoes are the second most widely eaten vegetable in United States today, behind only potatoes. Tomatoes of all varieties are practically bursting with healthy nutrients, vitamins, and minerals.

Some of the better known tomato varieties include: Grape, Beefsteak (green or red), Cherry, Cocktail, Roma, Heirloom, and tomatoes on the vine of many kinds. If you grow tomatoes at home, no matter what their color, all varieties have the same needs — lots of sun, fertile soil, and water.

Homegrown tomatoes offer benefits of being pesticide-free; but if that's not an option for you, or you enjoy tomatoes year-round, then here are some helpful tips to selecting the best and healthiest tomatoes in your local supermarket or farmers market:

- Choose tomatoes that don't have dark spots, mushy spots, or blemishes as this can indicate rotting inside.
- Holding a tomato in your hand, choose one that feels firm, but soft enough to respond to pressure from squeezing.
- Note how heavy the tomato feels in your hand, as it should have a solid weight for its size that indicates its juiciness.
- Take a whiff of it! A good tomato will have a strong, woody tomato scent particularly when you smell it where it was removed from its stem.

### How to Store Tomatoes - Not In The Fridge?

As a rule, you shouldn't store tomatoes in the refrigerator until they're cut open, as this actually

dries them out and reduces their natural flavor. On your countertop, store tomatoes stem-side down to protect this sensitive area from exposure to moisture and bacteria that can lead to faster degradation.

### Known Benefits of Tomatoes

Tomatoes are known to be a great source of Potassium, Vitamin C, and are considered a hydrating food due to their high moisture levels. In addition to these vitamins and minerals, tomatoes are also packed with health-promoting antioxidants and phytochemicals, including several beneficial forms of Vitamin A such as lutein, zeaxanthin, and lycopene.

Lycopene is an important phytochemical that helps reduce inflammation and is beneficial for conditions related to oxidative stress, by absorbing free radicals in the body. Lycopene also appears to have strong anti-cancer properties, particularly in studies with men diagnosed with prostate cancer. Lycopene may be the most well-known antioxidant in tomatoes, but it appears in other red plant foods as well. Lycopene helps keep your skin looking younger by preventing sun damage.

### Tomatoes: Full of Health Benefits

A study cited by the National Institute on Aging found that green tomatoes contain a compound called tomatidine, which may improve the efficacy and strength of your cellular signaling, and even extend lifespan. In your kitchen garden if you have some green tomatoes, you can pick them early and maybe live longer.

The amount, or concentration, of lycopene found in any given tomato is directly correlated to ripeness and increased pH (lower acidity). To enhance your absorption of lycopene from

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## Tomatoes (continued)

tomatoes, cook and eat them with some healthy fat. Lycopene is a carotenoid, which is a fat-soluble compound. As such, eating it alongside some fat can help boost its bioavailability for your body. Tomatoes cooked with olive oil or avocados have been known to exhibit this property.

Heating tomatoes can increase the amount of lycopene that the body will absorb. The best ways to cook tomatoes and retain as much lycopene as possible are either by using the microwave or the stovetop. In their most natural form, tomatoes may offer additional benefits to your health, like anticancer properties, cardioprotective benefits, anti-aging benefits, maintaining eye health, and protection against respiratory disorders.

### Preparing And Serving Tomato-based Dishes

There are plenty of ways to prepare and enjoy them. Start with delicious grape or cherry tomatoes roasted with balsamic vinegar and basil for a spring snack or topped on whole-grain bread for an appetizer. Try a fresh and flavorful red sauce by making the Basic Red Tomato Sauce. Or, create delicious burgers using tomato paste and sun-dried tomatoes, along with almonds and tamari for a complete umami experience.

- Raw tomatoes work well on salads, cut into wedges alongside a dip, chopped and made into a decadent salsa, or sliced thinly for wraps and sandwiches.
- Cooked tomatoes add a nice flare to soups and stews, can be made into rich sauces, can be roasted and blistered for use in pasta dishes, work well in casseroles and ratatouille, lend well to savory pies, and can even be grilled on skewers along with bell peppers, baby tomatoes, mushrooms, and pineapple.
- Dehydrated or sun-dried tomatoes can add a sweet-tartness to homemade burgers, grain and legume bowls, mixed green salads, and on top of crackers and flatbreads.

# SAVE THE DATE

## SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2

### 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM

## DRIVE-THRU SENIOR GOLDEN "GATHERING"

### HOSTED BY SENATOR SUE SERINO AND DUTCHESS COUNTY OFFICE FOR THE AGING

**ARLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL  
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**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL SENATOR SERINO'S  
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**845-229-0106**

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