



Information

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TOO MANY TOMATOES

Whether at the farmer's market or your own backyard, tomatoes are at their peak. Tomato sandwiches, tomato salsa, sliced tomatoes, fried green tomatoes, even tomato dressing. They are at their prime right now and a tomato sandwich is just not the same any other time of the year! If your garden overflows, with this jewel of the summer then can or freeze them to capture the good taste *and* nutrition.

For only 35 calories, a medium tomato offers about one-third the daily recommended intake for vitamin C and 20% of vitamin A. Tomatoes are a good source of potassium and fiber while free of sodium, fat and are cholesterol.

Not only are tomatoes packed with flavor, they contain an anti-oxidant, the carotenoid lycopene. Lycopene is a red pigment that occurs naturally in certain plants - watermelon, pink grapefruit, guava, apricots, papaya and tomatoes. Lycopene in the diet correlates with reduced incidence of certain types of cancer, esophagus, lungs, prostate, and stomach.

The body absorbs lycopene more readily from cooked, rather than raw, tomatoes. For example, more lycopene can be used from spaghetti sauce, tomato soup, and canned tomatoes than from fresh tomato slices in a salad or sandwich. Since lycopene, is fat-soluble, cooking tomatoes in a little oil can increase lycopene's absorption.

Choose tomatoes with brilliant color whether it be red, orange or yellow, depending on the variety. Ripe tomatoes should yield to gentle pressure and be free of cracks, bruises or mold. The ripening process is quickened if the tomatoes are enclosed in a brown paper bag or fruit-ripening bowl. As it ripens, the tomato gives off ethylene, a natural gas, which speeds up ripening when confined around the fruit.

Do not refrigerate tomatoes until fully ripe since proper ripening cannot occur below 55°. If you must refrigerate do for only a few days; longer storage results in a loss of flavor.

University of Maryland Extension offers a fact sheet on preserving tomatoes and includes recipes for making your own tomato juice, tomato sauce, chili sauce, salsa, no-meat spaghetti sauce, barbeque sauce and ketchup at <http://extension.umd.edu/publications/PDFs/FS526.pdf>

For county residents who do not have computer access, contact our office at 301-600-1599 to receive a copy by mail.

Tomatoes can be broiled, baked, stewed, stuffed or enjoyed out of hand. Here are a few ways to enjoy tomatoes in their prime. While you're cooking entertain young eaters, ages 3-6, with the delightful pop-up book, *I Will Never NOT Ever Eat a Tomato*, by Lauren Child.

FRESH TOMATO DRESSING

- 1 medium ripe tomato
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons sliced green onion
- 1 tablespoon red wine or cider vinegar
- 3/4 teaspoon thyme leaves
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper

Core and quarter the tomato. Place tomato in a blender or food processor fitted with a steel blade. Add all other ingredients to tomato. Blend or process until smooth. Serve over mixed greens, chilled cooked or raw vegetables, etc. Cover and refrigerate any leftovers. Makes 1 cup.

FRIED GREEN TOMATOES

- 4 firm green tomatoes
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 3/4 cup yellow cornmeal
- 1/2 cups sifted all purpose flour
- 1/4 cup cooking oil

Wash tomatoes, remove stems, and slice each one into four thick slices. Beat egg, milk, salt, and pepper until well blended. In another bowl combine flour and cornmeal. Dip tomatoes in egg mixture coating both sides evenly. Dip into the cornmeal mixture and fry in oil turning only once. Fry for 3-5 minutes until the coating is crisp and golden brown.

BRUSCHETTA

- 1 pound ripe tomatoes, chopped and drained
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon minced scallions
- 1/4 cup olive oil

1 cup chopped fresh basil
2 French baguettes or 1 loaf Italian bread, sliced diagonally ½-inch thick

In a medium sized bowl, place tomatoes, garlic, scallions, and olive oil. Stir gently to combine. Allow to stand 30 minutes to allow flavors to blend. Place bread slices on a baking sheet and broil until lightly toasted. Arrange toasted bread slices on a serving platter. Stir basil into tomato mixture just before serving time. Evenly divide the tomato-basil mixture atop the bread slices and serve immediately. Makes an excellent appetizer or first course. Serves 6 to 8 people.

BAKED TOMATOES STUFFED WITH BREAD CRUMBS, PARMESAN & HERBS

4 large, ripe but firm tomatoes
2 slices whole wheat bread, crumbled
1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
4 tablespoons minced fresh parsley leaves
4 tablespoons minced fresh basil leaves
2 medium garlic cloves, minced
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
Freshly ground black pepper

Preheat oven to 375°F. Cut off and discard a 1/2-inch-thick slice from the top of each tomato. Use a small spoon to scoop out and discard any remaining parts of the core as well as the seeds. Reach down into the tomatoes to pull up as much liquid matter as possible. Be careful not to puncture the skin as you work. Set aside.

Combine the breadcrumbs, cheese, parsley, basil, garlic, 1-tablespoon oil and pepper to taste in a small bowl. Use your fingers or a small spoon to stuff the tomatoes with this mixture, making sure the filling reaches into all the hollowed out areas. Mound the filling a little above the top of each tomato and pat the filling gently to compact it.

Use vegetable spray to grease a baking dish just large enough to hold tomatoes in a single layer, place tomatoes in dish. Drizzle remaining 1-tablespoon oil over the tomatoes. Bake until stuffing turns golden brown and tomatoes are soft but not falling apart, 25 to 30 minutes. Allow tomatoes to cool for at least 15 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature. Makes 4 servings.

Deborah Rhoades, MA, RD, LDN, is a licensed Registered Dietitian and Extension Educator in Family and Consumer Sciences. For more information about the Frederick County Extension Office check out our website <http://www.Frederick.umd.edu/>

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