

Tomatoes

History

The tomato is native to the Americas and was cultivated as early as 700 A.D. by the Aztecs and Incas. The conquistadors took seed to Europe in the 16th century and the tomato soon became popular in Mediterranean countries. As the tomato gained popularity through Europe, it was given various names. The French called it “The Apple of Love” and the Germans, “The Apple of Paradise.” The British liked its brilliant red color but believed the tomato was poisonous. This same fear existed in the United States until early in the 19th century.

Is the tomato a fruit or a vegetable? By method of cultivation and use it is a vegetable; however, botanically it is a fruit. Specifically, it is a berry because it is pulpy and contains one or more seeds that are not stones.

Buying & Storage Tips

- Arkansas tomatoes are available from May to October.
- Choose tomatoes that are firm and plump. Avoid those that are very soft, bruised, cracked or otherwise damaged.
- Ripe tomatoes are completely red or reddish-orange (depending on the variety) and give slightly to gentle palm pressure.
- Mature-green tomatoes have quality similar to vine-ripened, if given proper conditions to ripen.

Preparation Tips

- Fresh tomatoes can be served uncooked in salads or stewed, baked, broiled or microwaved.
- When peeling ripe tomatoes, drop in boiling water for 30 to 60 seconds, then dip into cold water. The skins will slide off.
- When freezing tomatoes, the skins should be removed because they become tough.
- When canning, only use firm and ripe tomatoes. Overripe, soft tomatoes or tomatoes picked from frost- or disease-killed plants have less acid and may be unsafe to can.

- Select unpackaged tomatoes or those packaged in perforated wraps. This allows for good air circulation, which is needed to ripen tomatoes.
- One pound has 3 medium or 4 small tomatoes that yield about 1½ cups of pulp.

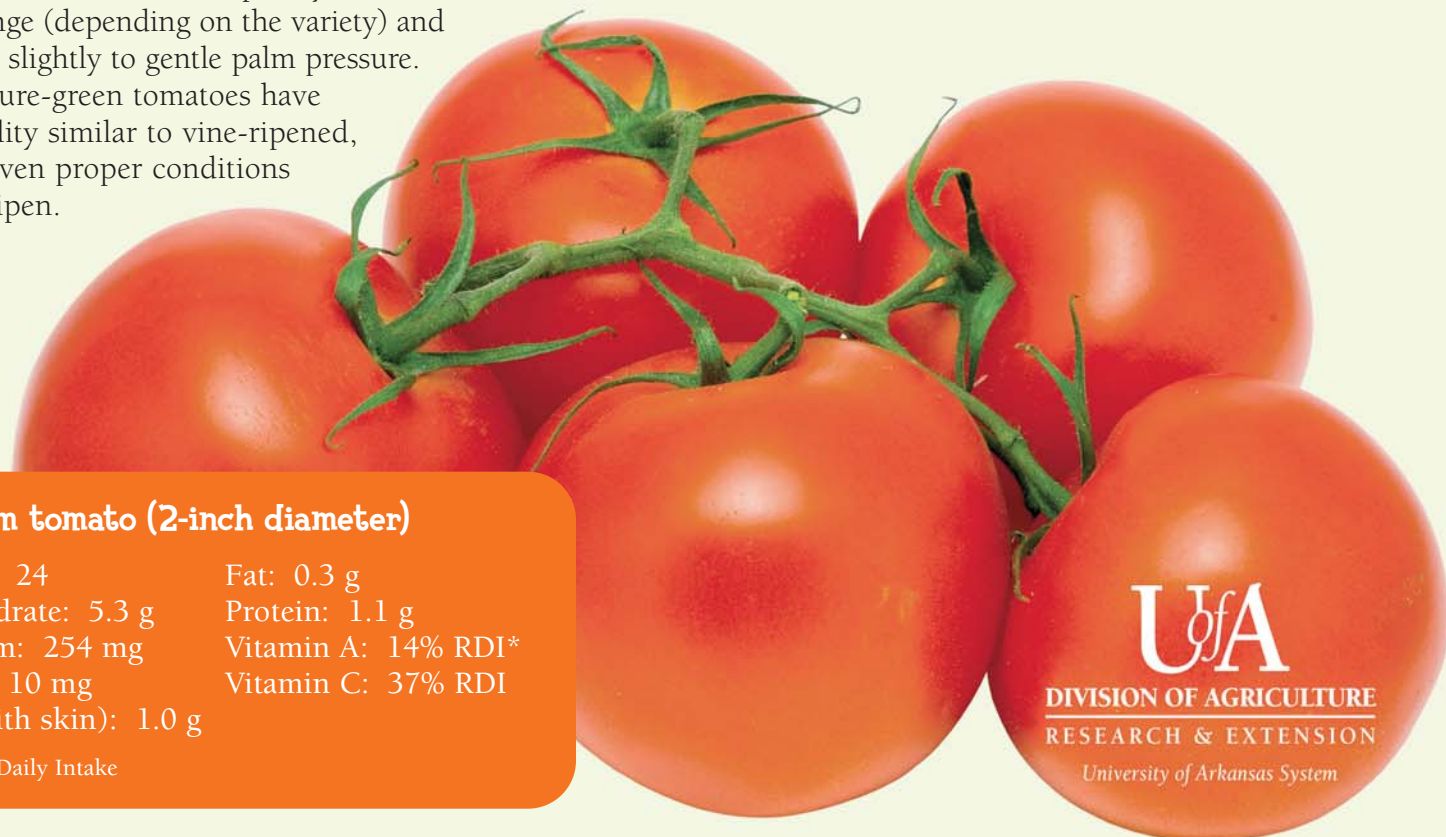
Nutrition Information

Vegetables are an important source of fiber and many nutrients. Although the actual amount of some of the nutrients present may seem small, their contribution is significant if two to three servings of vegetables are eaten daily. Below left are the nutrients which supply 5% or greater of the Reference Daily Intake (RDI) per serving.

1 medium tomato (2-inch diameter)

Calories: 24	Fat: 0.3 g
Carbohydrate: 5.3 g	Protein: 1.1 g
Potassium: 254 mg	Vitamin A: 14% RDI*
Sodium: 10 mg	Vitamin C: 37% RDI
Fiber (with skin): 1.0 g	

*Reference Daily Intake



Tomatoes are high in potassium, vitamin C and other antioxidants and low in sodium, fat and calories.

Recipes

Quick Caprese Salad

Prep Time: 10 minutes

6 medium-ripe tomatoes
4 ounces fresh mozzarella cheese
6 large basil leaves
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon balsamic or red wine vinegar
Salt and pepper to taste

- Cut tomatoes and mozzarella into bite-sized pieces.
- Stack basil leaves and roll into a cylinder. Cut into thin ribbons with kitchen shears or sharp knife. Sprinkle ribbons over the salad.
- Whisk together olive oil and vinegar. Drizzle dressing over the salad and sprinkle with salt and fresh ground pepper. Serve immediately. *Makes 6 servings.*

Nutrition Information Per Serving:

Calories: 112	Protein: 6 g
Fat: 8 g	Carbohydrates: 6 g
Saturated fat: 3 g	Fiber: 1g
Cholesterol: 12 mg	Sodium: 124 mg

Fresh Tomato Sauce

Prep Time: 2 hours (includes 1 hour drain time)

3 pounds firm, ripe tomatoes, chopped
 $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt
1 red onion, thinly sliced
2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
6-8 fresh basil leaves, finely chopped
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
 $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon sugar

- Place tomatoes in covered saucepan with $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt. Cook over medium heat for 5 minutes. Transfer to colander and let drain for one hour.
- Return drained tomatoes to the saucepan and add the onion, garlic, basil, olive oil, sugar and a dash of salt. Cover and bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce heat and simmer for about 40 minutes or until the sauce has thickened.
- Remove from heat and process in a food processor or blender until smooth.
- Serve over pasta, rice or baked potato. *Makes 6 servings.*

Nutrition Information Per Serving:

Calories: 84	Protein: 2 g
Fat: 5 g	Carbohydrates: 10 g
Saturated fat: 1 g	Fiber: 3 g
Cholesterol: 0 mg	Sodium: 60 mg

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Enjoy Arkansas' Fresh Tomatoes