



Did You Know?

- Tomatoes come from the Solanaceae family. They are cousins with peppers, eggplants, potatoes, and tomatillos; These plants are often called “nightshades.” Nightshades protect themselves from insects and predators by producing tiny amounts of substances called alkaloids.
- Botanically, tomatoes are considered fruits because they contain seeds. But in 1893, the Supreme Court ruled that a tomato was a vegetable because it was eaten as such in everyday life. So now it’s officially a vegetable!
- Heirloom tomatoes have genetic characteristics passed down through many generations, up to hundreds of years! Over all those years, the plants develop ways to resist certain pests and diseases.
- Tomatoes are high in vitamin C, which is a nutrient that acts as an antioxidant. Antioxidants protect us against “free radicals,” which can cause diseases.



Recipe Corner

Scissor Salsa

Ingredients:

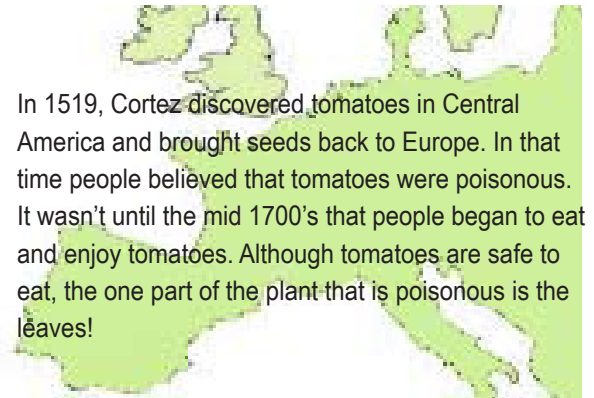
3 large tomatoes sliced
4 green onions
1 bunch cilantro
1 lime
Salt to taste
Optional: minced jalapeno or other pepper

Directions:

1. Give each child a slice or two of tomato, one section of a green onion, and a few sprigs of cilantro to cut with scissors into their cup or plate.
2. Combine all the childrens’ cut materials into a bowl and squeeze in lime and season to taste!

Where It’s From

In 1519, Cortez discovered tomatoes in Central America and brought seeds back to Europe. In that time people believed that tomatoes were poisonous. It wasn’t until the mid 1700’s that people began to eat and enjoy tomatoes. Although tomatoes are safe to eat, the one part of the plant that is poisonous is the leaves!

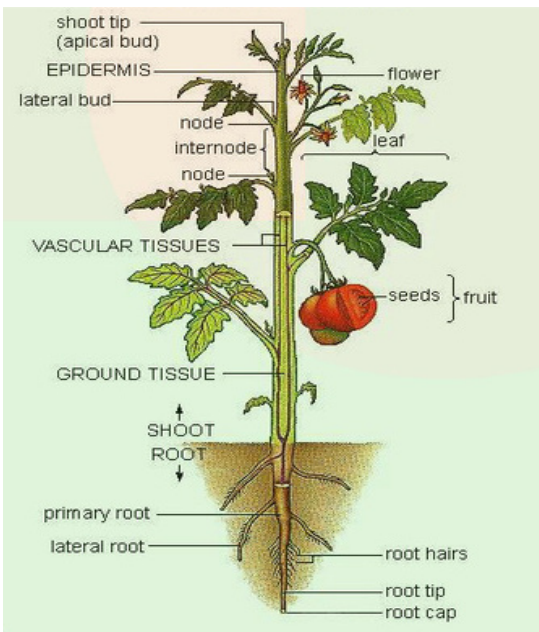


Tomatoes/Tomates

Suggested Literature

I will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato by Lauren Child

Laughing Tomatoes: And Other Spring Poems/ Jitomates Risuenos y Otros Poemas de Primavera by Francisco Alarcon and Maya Christina Gonzalez



Handling Tips

- Tomatoes should be stored at room temperature. Storing in the refrigerator causes tomatoes to lose flavor. Overripe tomatoes that are very soft can be stored in the fridge to prolong shelf life.
- Storing tomatoes, especially heirloom varieties, stem-side down can also help keep tomatoes from spoiling too quickly.
- Tomatoes are most often washed at the farm before they are distributed. However a second wash is recommended right before serving. Rinse tomatoes under cold water and dry off with a towel.

Jokes

Why did the tomatoes have to leave the factory?


Because they got canned!



Student Sluths

1. Why do you think tomatoes grow so well in California?
2. Describe what Vitamin C does for your body and why it's important to eat lots of it.
3. Draw a tomato plant using the example above, research and label all the different parts of the plant.
4. How are heirloom tomatoes different from normal tomatoes?
5. Think of as many varieties (names) of tomatoes as you can. Then research online to find your favorite named tomato variety!

California Grown

- 
- California produces 96% of the tomatoes processed in the U.S. These are the tomatoes used in ketchup and tomato sauce. Florida is the number one producer of fresh market tomatoes, but California follows a close second.
 - California produces 2,000,000,000 pounds of tomatoes a week!
 - California has a long growing season - from May to November.
 - Tomatoes are such a big crop in California that in the town of Carmel, CA, there is an annual Tomato Fest!