

Tomatoes



Fun Facts: Tomatoes, one of the top five favorite vegetables, used to be called love apples. In 1893, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that tomatoes are a vegetable. Ripe tomatoes can be red, yellow or orange, and can be full-, cherry- or grape size.

Selecting Fresh Tomatoes: Look for tomatoes with bright, shiny skins and firm flesh. Tomatoes are best when ripened on the vine at temperatures below 90°F. Avoid those with blemishes, cracks or soft spots, or that are lacking in color. Roma & plum tomatoes are fleshy, with less juice and fewer seeds than other kinds of tomatoes.

Measuring Fresh Ripe Tomatoes:

1 pound = 2 or 3 medium full-sized = 2 1/4 cups raw diced

1/2 cup raw chopped = about 3 ounces by weight = about 90 grams



Handling, Ripening and Preserving: Handle gently. Store unwashed ripe tomatoes on a counter between 60-80°F., away from direct sunlight, for up to 3 days. Refrigerate tomatoes, uncovered, only if you want to keep them from ripening further. When temperatures are above 90°F, pick tomatoes while still pink. **To ripen tomatoes,** place tomatoes, stem end up, in a paper bag with several holes in it, fold the top over, store at 60-80°F., and check them daily. **To freeze tomatoes for use in cooked dishes:** Wash tomatoes and drop a few into 1 gallon boiling water for only 30 seconds, or longer if using firm tomatoes. Remove immediately and cool in a bowl of ice water. Skin will pull away easily if they were in the boiling water long enough. Core and cut into pieces. Cook on a stovetop or in a microwave oven until tender. Pour into a shallow container and place in ice water until tomatoes are cool. Pack cooked tomatoes into freezer containers and leave 1 inch of air space before sealing.

Preparation and Serving: Rinse tomatoes under cold running water to remove dirt. Cut out the core and any damaged areas. Cut lengthwise from stem to blossom end to retain more juice in each slice. Enjoy tomatoes fresh (served at room temperature) or grilled, stewed, baked, steamed, microwaved, boiled, pan-fried or stir-fried. Tomatoes cook in less than 15 minutes. Use as directed in a recipe.

Nutrition Facts for one serving, or 1/2 cup raw chopped red or green tomatoes, not peeled: Calories about 20; Protein 1 gram; Carbohydrates 4 grams; Fat 0 grams. Tomatoes are high in vitamin C and provide fiber and healthful pigments and antioxidants, such as the carotenoids beta-carotene and lycopene, to the diet.



References: ESHA Food Processor; www.aboutproduce.com; www.urbanext.uiuc.edu; Food for Fifty, 11th edition, 2001, by M. Molt, Prentice Hall; www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/FNTR2/MF1185.PDF; www.fda.gov/fdac/special/foodlabel/raw.html

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