

St. Charles Cancer Treatment Center
DEFEAT Cancer's July, 2008

HARVEST for HEALTH



It's TOMATO!

Tomato Facts

- There are more than 4,000 varieties of tomatoes ranging in size, shape and color.
- In 1781, Thomas Jefferson became one of the first Americans to grow tomatoes.
- The tomato has been called "love apple," "golden apple," and "apple of paradise."
- In 1896, The *New York Tribune* declared ketchup the national condiment.
- The largest tomato on record was a seven pound monster grown in Oklahoma.
- Tomatoes are the vegetable of choice for 85% of the 30 million home gardeners in the U.S.
- Americans eat more than 22 pounds of tomatoes each year, more than half of this amount in the form of ketchup and/or tomato sauce.

Did You Know?

Although tomatoes are considered to be a vegetable, botanically they are classified as a fruit. How did this happen? In the 1800's fruits and vegetables were charged different tariff rates and tomatoes became the center of the controversy. In 1893, the issue went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court when Mother Nature was overruled and tomatoes were officially declared a vegetable.

Nutritional Value

Tomatoes are an excellent source of Vitamins C & A and a good source of potassium. They are also extremely rich in antioxidants such as lutein, zeaxanthin and lycopene. Lycopene in particular has been shown to help protect cells and DNA from the oxygen damage that plays a big role in aging and many degenerative diseases, including some cancers (especially prostate), cardio-

vascular disease and blindness. Research now shows that it is the whole array of health-promoting nutrients in tomatoes, not just lycopene, which provides optimal cancer protection benefits. (Note: cooked tomato products, sauces and juices contain higher amounts of lycopene than raw tomatoes because they have been concentrated during preparation.)

Selection

The best tasting tomatoes will be deeply and evenly colored as well as firm and heavy for their size. Ripe tomatoes will yield to slight pressure and have a noticeably sweet smell. Tomatoes from local farmers (or your own backyard) will usually have better flavor and more nutrients, because they are allowed to remain on the vine until ripe.

Storage

Tomatoes will continue to ripen after they are harvested. Store them at room temperature and out of direct exposure to sunlight. They will keep for up to 10 days depending upon the variety and how ripe they are when purchased.

Since it is impossible to ship fully ripened tomatoes without damaging them, commercial growers will pick the tomatoes while still green and then expose them to ethylene gas to make them red after they have reached their destination. To do the same thing at home, place unripe tomatoes stem side down in a paper bag with a banana or apple. The ethylene gas emitted by these fruits will help speed up the ripening process.

Tomatoes are sensitive to cold. They will stop ripening, may get spongy and begin to lose some flavor, if stored in the refrigerator. However, if you end up with too many ripe tomatoes, place them in the warmest part of your refrigerator – the butter compartment – where they'll keep for another couple days. Remove them from the fridge about 30 minutes before eating so that they can regain their maximum flavor and juiciness.



Add More Tomatoes to Your Life

- Snack on cherry tomatoes anytime. Try yellow pear, grape or orange Sun Gold varieties.
- Combine fresh chopped tomatoes, crushed garlic, minced basil, scallions and olive oil with salt and pepper. Serve with Italian bread for dipping, or pour over hot pasta for a delicious fresh pasta sauce.
- Add canned tomatoes to veggie or bean soup for added nutrition.
- Alternate tomato and fresh low-fat mozzarella slices in a circular pattern on a plate. Garnish with fresh basil leaves. Drizzle with a little olive oil and balsamic vinegar.
- For an afternoon pick-me-up, try a glass of cold tomato juice.
- Jazz up a pizza with an array of tomato types and colors. Add fresh basil, red onion, mushrooms and black olives. Include sun-dried tomatoes for extra zing.
- Cut a ¼" slice off the top of a tomato and a sliver off the bottom so the tomato sits flat. Scoop out the seeds and membrane inside. Stuff with tuna or chicken salad or low-fat cottage cheese. Garnish with fresh herbs.



Fresh Salsa

- 2 medium tomatoes, diced
- 1/2 medium chopped onion
- 3 cloves chopped garlic
- 1 medium deseeded minced jalapeno pepper
- 1 TBL. fresh lime juice
- 3 TBL. fresh chopped cilantro
- salt and pepper to taste

Mix all ingredients in a bowl. Chill. Serve with baked tortilla chips. Recipe from: "The World's Healthiest Foods"

Baked Greek Tomatoes

- 2 large, ripe tomatoes, halved
- 1 slice whole wheat bread, crusts removed
- 2 TBL. grated parmesan cheese
- 1 clove garlic, finely minced
- 1 tsp. olive oil
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 1/2 tsp. dried basil
- 1/2 tsp. dried thyme

salt and pepper to taste
Gently squeeze tomatoes or use a spoon to remove seeds. In blender or food processor, crumb the bread. Mix bread crumbs, cheese, garlic, and spices together. Spoon into each halved tomato. Place tomatoes in casserole dish and bake uncovered at 350 degrees for 25-30 minutes, until tomatoes are soft but not mushy and topping is golden brown. Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 62 Calories, 3 g Total Fat, 8 g Carbs, 3 g Protein, 2 g Dietary Fiber, 103 mg Sodium. Recipe from: www.aicr.org

Cannellini Beans & Sun-Dried Tomatoes

- 1 lb. cannellini beans
- 1 lb. turkey sausage, sliced
- 2 oz. sun-dried tomatoes, diced
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- chicken broth
- bay leaf
- parsley and thyme to taste

Rinse beans and cover with chicken broth. Add remaining ingredients and bring to a boil. Lower heat and simmer for 2 hours. Serve over brown rice or polenta. Recipe from: www.sun-dried-tomatoes.com

Resources

Remember to look for low-fat recipes, or substitute high-fat ingredients with low-fat options.

Tomato Recipes & Tips

- www.cookinglight.com
- www.allrecipes.com
- www.eatingwell.com

Cancer/Nutrition Websites

- www.cancerproject.org
- www.aicr.org
- www.cancer.net

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www.bendcancer.org & www.defeatcancer.info

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