

It's Tomato Time! Those big red berries growing on leafy green vines are ripe for picking! Home gardens and farmers' markets offer a variety of tasty tomatoes from June to September.



This TRY DAY Friday food brought to you by Dietician Anne Marie de Jong.



Did you know...

- Most American home gardeners grow tomatoes.
- Tomatoes are grown in all states, but Alaska.
- There are over 4,000 varieties of tomatoes.
- Tomatoes come in all shapes, sizes, and colors.
- The tomato is a berry of the nightshade family.

The first tomato can be traced back to the Andes Mountains where they grew wild as cherry-sized berries. In 700 AD, the Incas and Aztecs began cultivating tomatoes.

The popularity of the "tomatle" or "tomati" spread north into Mexico. The Spanish conquistadors carried the tomato seeds back to Europe. Tomatoes grew well in the Mediterranean climate and became a staple food in Spain, Italy, and Portugal.

Thomas Jefferson was one of the first Americans to grow tomatoes on his Virginia plantation in 1781. In the 1800's, tomatoes began to gain popularity in the United States.

Is the tomato a fruit or a vegetable?

Botanically, the tomato is a fruit, although it is similar to a vegetable in flavor and nutrient content. Adding to the confusion, in 1893 the United States government classified the tomato a vegetable for trade purposes.

Why should I eat tomatoes?

Tomatoes provide Vitamin A, which helps keep your eyes healthy, and Vitamin C, which helps keep you from getting sick. Tomatoes also contain special phyto-nutrients, like lycopene, helping to protect your body from diseases. And...fresh tomatoes taste delicious!

What's the best way to store tomatoes?

Fresh tomatoes should be stored at room temperature --not in the refrigerator. The cold temperature of a refrigerator stops the ripening process and affects the flavor.



Fresh Tomato Salsa

- 3 cups diced fresh tomatoes (3-4 tomatoes)
- ¼ cup finely chopped red onion
- ¼ cup finely chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 jalapeno pepper seeded and finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- salt
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- In a medium bowl, gently combine tomatoes, red onion, cilantro, jalapeno, and lime juice. Add a dash of salt.