

TOMATOES

Tomato, whether pronounced Tuh-MAY-toh or Tuh-MAH-to, is a delicious, nutritious fruit, more widely known as a vegetable. Botanically, a tomato is the ovary of a flowering plant; therefore it is a fruit, or more specifically, a berry.

There are many different varieties of tomato plants and most produce red fruit, but there are also tomato plants that produce yellow, orange, pink, purple, green, and white fruit. Tomato plants vary in size, from small cherry tomatoes to elongated plum tomatoes.

TOMATOES HAVE LYCOPENE

Lycopene appears to have the same capabilities as an antioxidant, it neutralizes the free radicals that damage cell tissue. When a tomato ripens, it becomes red in color, which is primarily due to lycopene. According to the USDA, tomatoes, particularly processed tomato products such as sauces, juices and ketchup, account for more than 85 percent of the dietary intake of lycopene for most people. Lycopene content of tomatoes depends on the species and it increases as the fruit ripens.



TOMATOES HAVE ANTIOXIDANTS

Tomatoes contain all three high-powered antioxidants: Beta-carotene (which has vitamin A activity in the body), vitamin E, and vitamin C. Some studies indicate Americans get too little vitamin C and almost half get too little vitamin A.

TOMATO PRODUCTION

More than 125 tons of tomatoes are produced in the world today, with China being the largest producer, followed by the United States and Turkey. Tomato plants are also one of the most common home garden plants found in America.

California is the leading producer of all tomatoes in the U.S., accounting for 96 percent of U.S. processing tomato output and one-third of the fresh crop. Fresh-market tomatoes are produced across the state in each season except winter.



SELECTING THE BEST TOMATO

- Be sure to pick tomatoes with the brightest shade of red, which means the tomato contains the highest amounts of lycopene
- Ripened tomatoes should be firm to the touch, not soft.

3 IMPORTANT HEALTH PROPERTIES OF TOMATOES

1. A diet rich in tomato-based products may help reduce the risk of a variety of cancers (e.g. pancreatic, colorectal, stomach, and lung cancer). Researchers from the University of Montreal found that lycopene was linked to a 31 percent reduction in pancreatic cancer risk between men with the highest and lowest intakes of lycopene.
2. Tomatoes are rich in potassium, a mineral in which many people tend to lack in their diet. A cup of tomato juice contains 534 milligrams of potassium, and 1/2 cup of tomato sauce has 454 milligrams. The USDA suggests 3500 milligrams daily.
3. Lycopene-rich tomatoes may also benefit heart health by lowering the risk of cardiovascular disease.



PRACTICE SAFE HANDLING WITH PRODUCE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has this advice:

- Consider using paper towels to clean kitchen surfaces. If you use cloth towels, wash them often in the hot cycle of your washing machine
- Separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from other foods in your grocery shopping cart and in your refrigerator
- If possible, use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry, and seafood
- Always wash cutting boards, dishes, countertops, and utensils with hot soapy water after they come in contact with raw meat, poultry, and seafood



RESOURCES

www.er.usda.gov

www.webmd.com

www.tomato.org

For more information visit
www.WellnessCoachesUSA.com