

# TOMATOES

## Recipe

Fresh Tomato Bruschetta

## Nutrition

One cup of tomatoes is:

- 32 calories
- An excellent source of vitamins C and A
- A good source of potassium and dietary fiber.
- A source of carotenoids that give them their red color
- A source of polyphenols that are antioxidants

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Tomatoes have a carotenoid called lycopene. Lycopene acts as a powerful antioxidant to protect our cells. It also may reduce the risk of certain types of cancer, such as prostate cancer.

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## History

Cultivated tomatoes originated from wild forms in the Andes of South America. Because of the highly perishable nature of the fruit, it is likely that the tomato was among the last of the native American species to be adopted as a cultivated food plant by Native Americans and that it remained of little importance until after the arrival of the white man.

Italians first grew the tomato about 1550 and apparently were the first Europeans to eat it. About 25 years later it was grown in English, Spanish, and mid-European gardens as a curiosity, with little or no interest in it then as food. The English and early Americans called tomatoes the "love apple." We do not find any record of the tomato grown by white men in this country until after the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson, a progressive Virginia farmer grew tomatoes in 1781.

## Publications

[Tomatoes for the Home Garden, SP 291-K](#)

[Canning Foods, PB724](#)

[Freezing Foods, PB1483](#)

[Let's Preserve Tomatoes, Penn State Extension](#)



## Growing Season in Tennessee

June-November

### Selection

Choose tomatoes that have:

- Skin that is not shriveled, bruised, or punctured. It should not wrinkle when you slide your thumb from blossom to stem end with slight pressure.
- Skin that is well colored for the type of tomato.
- Firm or slightly firm texture that yields slightly (depending on your preference) when applying slight pressure.
- Tomatoes that feel heavy for their size.
- A pleasant tomato smell.



### Quantity



There are about 3 large tomatoes in a pound. One pound of fresh tomatoes is about 2 ½ cups chopped, 3 cups sliced or 2 cups puréed.

One medium tomato yields about ¾ cup chopped and a large tomato yields about 1 cup chopped.

For canning and freezing: one bushel (53 pounds) makes 15 to 20 quart jars. It takes 2 ½ to 3 ½ pounds to fill a quart jar.

## Storage

- Tomatoes should be stored in a cool, dry place. Do not store in a plastic bag.
- For best flavor, do not refrigerate. If refrigerated, eat within 3 days to avoid flavor loss. Once you refrigerate tomatoes, they will not finish ripening.
- Store ripe tomatoes away from direct sunlight with stem end facing up to reduce softening and darkening. Use within 2 to 3 days for best quality.
- Store under-ripe tomatoes in a paper bag at the coolest room temperature possible.
- Chopped tomatoes should be covered and refrigerated, and used within 1 to 2 days.



## Food Preservation



Tomatoes can be frozen raw, as juice or stewed. Raw tomatoes work best for cooking or as a seasoning since they will not be solid when thawed. For more information on freezing tomatoes, consult [Let's Preserve Tomatoes, Penn State Extension](#).

Tomatoes can be canned whole, halved, crushed or as juice. They can be canned with vegetable mixtures such as okra or zucchini or stewed. Tomatoes can be canned in sauces and salsas. For more canning information, consult [Let's Preserve Tomatoes, Penn State Extension](#).

## Preparation Tips

- To remove a tomato's core, use a sharp paring knife to make several angled cuts through the stem and under the core.
- To remove the seeds from a tomato, cut the tomato in half. Squeeze the tomato gently, or loosen seeds with a spoon and scoop them out.
- To chop or slice a tomato, core and place on its side. Using a sharp serrated knife, cut a very thin slice off both ends and discard. Slice the tomato to desired thickness. To chop, stack 2-3 slices and cut into strips. Line the strips up and turn at a 90 degree angle and cut across the strips into cubes.
- To peel a tomato for cooked dishes, make an x the end opposite the stem and gently lower 2 or 3 tomatoes at a time into enough boiling water to cover. Boil for 15 to 30 seconds. Lift tomatoes with a slotted spoon into a bowl of ice water for 2-5 minutes or until you see the skin begin to split. Peel off and discard skins. (Note: The tomato can be cored first, but it is not necessary.)
- Slicing tomatoes are good choices for making juice and crushed tomatoes. Paste tomatoes are good for making sauce, ketchup and purées.

## Food Safety



It is important to wash produce thoroughly under running water just before eating, cutting or cooking. Washing tomatoes with soap or detergent or using commercial produce washes is not recommended.

Keep tomatoes that will be eaten raw away from other foods such as raw meat, poultry or seafood. This includes using clean utensils so that you do not cross-contaminate.