



# COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

# TOMATOES



Tomatoes are a tropical vegetable that grow on tall bushes or vines. They are a part of the Solanaceae family, which includes potatoes and peppers.

The first tomatoes grew wild in the mountains of Peru. Spanish explorers introduced the tomato to Europe in the early 16th century and from then on they have been planted worldwide. Tomatoes have a mild sweet taste and can be eaten fresh or cooked. Tomatoes can be prepared in a variety of ways such as boiled, broiled, dried, grilled, juiced, roasted, sautéed, steamed, stewed, stuffed, and more. In Michigan, tomatoes grown outside are harvested from July through October.

Tomatoes grown in greenhouses and hoop houses are harvested from May through November.



## TOMATOES ARE

- Tomatoes are a good source of vitamin C\*. Vitamin C is important to the body's tissues and supports a healthy immune system.
- Tomatoes are a source of potassium. Potassium helps maintain healthy blood pressure.

*\*Foods that are high in vitamin C, calcium and/or iron can help protect you from lead absorption.*

## MICHIGAN MADE

Michigan is the seventh largest grower of fresh tomatoes in the country. Each year, Michigan farmers produce over 60 million pounds of fresh tomatoes and 132,600 tons of tomatoes for processing (juices, sauces, canned goods, condiments, salsas, soups, etc.). The majority of tomatoes grown for processing come from St. Joseph, Monroe, and Lenawee counties, while the majority of fresh market tomatoes are grown in Bay, Berrien, and St. Joseph counties.



## FUN FACTS

- The name tomato comes from the Nahuatl word *tomatl*, which is from the language of the Aztec and Toltec civilizations of Mexico.
- Tomatoes can be red, pink, orange, yellow, green, purple, black, or white.
- There are over ten thousand varieties of tomatoes.
- In the late 1800s, the United States Supreme Court changed the classification of the tomato from fruit to vegetable.
- Tomatoes used to be called "golden apples" or "love apples."
- Over 600,000 tomato seeds grown in Canadian classrooms were sent to the International Space Station for the Tomatosphere experiments to learn how tomatoes grow in outer space.

## BUYING AND STORING

- Select tomatoes that are firm and give slightly to gentle pressure.
- Store fresh tomatoes at room temperature, stem side down, out of direct sunlight.
- To speed ripening, place tomatoes in a brown paper bag at room temperature.
- Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables before using. Wash tomatoes in cold water.
- Blanch before freezing to help tomatoes keep their color and flavor. To prepare, remove core and cut a cross in the bottom of each tomato (if removing skin) or quarter tomatoes. To blanch, bring a large pot of water to boil. While waiting for the water to boil, fill a large bowl with ice water. Once water is boiling, carefully place tomatoes into the pot. Boil for two minutes, drain, and plunge the tomatoes into ice water to stop the cooking process. After they have cooled, drain, pat dry, remove skins (optional), place in freezer bags, label, date, and freeze for up to twelve months.





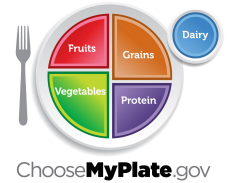
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## MORE THAN FRESH

In addition to fresh, tomatoes are available frozen, dried, canned, and juiced. When buying packaged tomatoes, be sure to read labels and choose items that are reduced or low sodium (salt), or no salt added, low in saturated fat, with no added sugar, and juices that are pasteurized, unsweetened, and 100% juice. Unpasteurized juices may contain harmful bacteria that can make you sick.

## EAT WITH MYPLATE

MyPlate focuses on whole grains, lean protein, low-fat dairy, and half the plate being fruits and vegetables. Tomatoes are a part of the Vegetable Group. Most people need 2–3 cups of vegetables per day. For more information visit: [myplate.gov](https://myplate.gov).



## IT ALL COUNTS

Fresh, frozen, canned, dried, and 100% vegetable and fruit juices count toward your daily MyPlate goals.

## PASTA WITH FRESH TOMATOES, GARLIC, AND BASIL

Time: 20 minutes | Makes: 6 servings | Serving Size: About 1 cup

Nutrition Information Per Serving: Calories 303, Carbohydrate 45g, Dietary Fiber 7g, Protein 9g, Total Fat 11g, Saturated Fat 1g, Cholesterol 0mg, Sodium 109mg

### INGREDIENTS

4 large tomatoes or 30 grape or cherry tomatoes

¼ teaspoon kosher salt

¼ teaspoon black pepper

4 cloves fresh garlic, minced

¼ cup olive oil

10–15 basil leaves, torn, plus extra for garnish

12 ounces whole-grain pasta

¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese (optional)

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Slice tomatoes into bite-sized pieces.
2. In a large bowl, add tomatoes, salt, pepper, garlic, olive oil, and basil. Mix gently to combine.
3. Cook pasta according to package directions.
4. Drain pasta and add to tomatoes. Mix gently.
5. Garnish with basil and Parmesan cheese (optional). Serve.

### TRY THIS

- Add sliced tomatoes to grilled cheese sandwiches or on toast with smashed avocado.
- Add diced tomatoes to any egg dishes.
- Make Pico de Gallo with diced fresh tomatoes, onions, and ½ jalapeño mixed with a dash of cumin, salt and a little lime juice.

Always wash hands before preparing food. Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables before using.

