



Growing Healthy Food, People
and Communities

Healthy Eating Workshop

Spotlight on Tomatoes August 28, 2009

Tomatoes – Are They Fruits or Vegetables?

Currently, tomatoes are one of the most popular vegetables eaten by Americans. Oh wait... aren't tomatoes fruits? Yes, tomatoes are members of the fruit family – so are cucumbers, peppers, avocados, eggplants, and many others. But because these foods are typically served and prepared as vegetables, USDA (and most people) considers them to be vegetables. You can call tomatoes anything you like as long as you eat them! They are great sources of vitamin C, vitamin A, and like all plant products, they have healthy dietary fiber. Tomatoes and all plant products are always cholesterol free, are very low in fat, and have little or no salt (sodium).

Varieties of Tomatoes

There are thousands of tomato varieties. The most widely available varieties are classified in three groups: cherry, plum, and slicing tomatoes. A new sweet variety like the cherry tomato is the grape tomato which is really wonderful to eat alone or in a salad.

How to Select Tomatoes

- Cold temperatures damage tomatoes, so do not buy tomatoes that are stored in a cold area.
- Choose plump tomatoes with smooth skins that are free from bruises, cracks, or blemishes.
- Depending on the variety, ripe tomatoes should be completely red or reddish-orange.

How to Store Tomatoes

- Store tomatoes at room temperature (above 55 °F) until they have fully ripened. This will allow them to ripen properly and develop good flavor and aroma.
- Try to store tomatoes out of direct sunlight, because sunlight will cause them to ripen unevenly. If you must store them for a longer period of time, place them in the refrigerator.
- Serve tomatoes at room temperature. Chopped tomatoes can be frozen for use in sauces or other cooked dishes.

Tomato	
Serving Size 1/2 cup, cubed (90g)	
	% Daily Value
Amounts Per Serving	
Calories 20	
Calories from Fat 5	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 10mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 4g	1%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugars 3g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A	10%
Vitamin C	40%
Calcium	0%
Iron	2%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.	

Fruits and Vegetables and Weight Management

Fruits and vegetables are part of a well-balanced and healthy eating plan. There are many different ways to lose or maintain a healthy weight – using more fruits and vegetables along with whole grains and lean meats, nuts, and beans is a safe and healthy one. Helping control your weight is not the only benefit of eating more fruits and vegetables. Diets rich in fruits and vegetables can reduce the risk of some types of cancer and other chronic diseases. Fruits and vegetables also provide essential vitamins and minerals, fiber, and other substances that are important for good health.

- **Remember: Substitution is key:** It's true that fruits and vegetables are lower in calories than many other foods, but they do contain some calories. If you start eating fruits and vegetables in addition to what you usually eat, you are adding calories and might gain weight. The key is substitution. Eat fruits and vegetables instead of some other higher-calorie food.
- **Eat fruits and vegetables the way nature provided – or with fat-free or low-fat cooking techniques:** Try steaming your vegetables, use low-calorie or low-fat dressings, and use herbs and spices to add flavor. Some cooking techniques, such as breading and frying, or using high-fat dressings or sauces will greatly increase the calories and fat in the dish. And eat your fruit raw to enjoy its natural sweetness.
- **Canned or frozen fruits and vegetables are good options when fresh produce is not available:** However, be careful to choose those without added sugar, syrup, cream sauces, or other ingredients that will add calories.
- **Choose whole fruit over fruit drinks and juices – fruit juices have lost fiber from the fruit:** It is better to eat the whole fruit because it contains the added fiber that helps you feel full. One 6-ounce serving of orange juice has 85 calories, compared to just 65 calories in a medium orange.
- **Whole fruit gives you a bigger size snack than the same fruit dried—for the same number of calories:** A small box of raisins (1/4 cup) is about 100 calories. For the same number of calories, you can eat 1 cup of grapes.

More Information:

Health benefits associated with tomatoes – and fruits and vegetables in general – www.MyPyramid.gov and www.FruitsandVeggiesMoreMatters.gov.

