



## Harvest of the Month | Fact Sheet

# Tomatoes



**T**omatoes were discovered in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador. Until the early 1800's, tomatoes were thought to be poisonous.

### Did you know?



Some tomato varieties that grow best in Pennsylvania are: Mister Stripy, Brandywine Red, Sunbeam, and Gold Nugget.



Tomato plants grow two different ways. Plants can grow to an exact height and produce flowers and fruit all at once. Plants can also grow and produce flowers and fruit all season long.



Even though tomatoes are a type of fruit, the US Supreme Court ruled that tomatoes are vegetables in 1893.

### Selection

Ripe tomatoes should have bright, shiny, red skin, that is free of bruises. Tomatoes should be soft, heavy, and firm. A fresh smell is the best way to tell if your tomato is ripe. A larger tomato does not mean it has better flavor. Tomatoes are placed into categories based on shape, use, and size. They are:

- Cherry or Grape: small and sweet; usually eaten in salads.
- Plum: Pear-shaped, meaty flesh, great for making into sauce or salsas.
- Slicing: round shaped. Can be used for making into sauces, used on sandwiches, or made into salsa.
- Beefsteak: Larger, round, juicy. They can be used for sandwiches.

### Storage

- Fresh, whole tomatoes should be kept in a cool, dry place out of sunlight.
- If you store tomatoes on top of each other, they could become bruised or damaged.
- You can place unripe tomatoes in a bag with a banana or apple for one to two days. The gas given off by the banana or apple will help the tomatoes ripen faster.
- Fresh, whole tomatoes kept in the refrigerator will lose flavor.
- You should store unused cut and sliced tomatoes in the refrigerator for up to four days.

### Handling

Wash fresh tomatoes in cold water to remove any dirt. Use a tomato corer to remove the stem. Or, use a sharp knife to slice your tomato in half. Make a diagonal cut on both sides of the stem and remove core. Slice or dice your tomato per your standard recipe directions.

### Finding Fresh Tomatoes

Child Nutrition Program operators may be able to find local tomatoes in a variety of ways. Check with your produce distributor to learn what they have available. You can search for products through the [PA Preferred](https://papreferred.com/) website (<https://papreferred.com/>) or connect with local producers through produce auctions or farmer's markets. The Food Trust has also developed a [Guide to Local Produce in Keystone Schools](#) which identifies producers who are interested in selling to schools.



## Nutrition

Tomatoes are a good source of vitamin C. This vitamin could help boost your immune system. Tomatoes are fat free, low in sodium, and high in potassium. Potassium helps maintain your cell growth and normal water levels in the body. Tomatoes are red in color because of lycopene. Lycopene is an antioxidant that can help protect against some types of cancer.

## School Meal Connection

Tomatoes credit as a red/orange vegetable for the National School Lunch Program meal pattern.

## Harvest Season

Pennsylvania farmers grow tomatoes in early June to the end of October.

## Preparation



**Grilled:** Wash and remove stem/core. Using a sharp knife, cut tomatoes in half, brush with olive oil, and place in a pre-heated, medium to high heat grill. Cook about 6-8 minutes, until soft, turning once.



**Raw:** Rinse, dry and eat on top of salads or in sandwiches. To enjoy by itself, slice into ¼” slices.



**Roasted:** Place small, grape tomatoes or cut tomatoes in a bowl. Toss with olive oil, salt, pepper, and other desired seasonings. Spread in an even layer on a prepared baking sheet pan. Roast at 425° until soft and caramelized, for about 5-8 minutes.



*Basil, celery seed, chili powder, cumin, garlic, rosemary, tarragon, oregano, or thyme will enhance the natural flavor of tomatoes.*



## Recipe | Oodles of Noodles

Servings: 50 (1 cup)

**Crediting:** 1 cup (8 fl oz ladle) provides ⅛ cup red/orange vegetable, ⅛ cup other vegetable, and 2 oz equivalent grains.

**PrimeroEdge Recipe Code:** SR109949

Ingredients	50 Servings		Directions Process #2: Same Day Service
	Weight	Measure	
Water		4 gal	1. Heat water to a rolling boil.
Penne pasta, whole-wheat, dry	5 lb 8 oz	1 gal 3 qt	2. Slowly add pasta. Stir constantly until water boils again. Cook about 8 minutes or until al dente. Stir occasionally. DO NOT OVERCOOK. Drain well.
Extra virgin olive oil		⅓ cup	3. Heat oil. In a roasting pan/square head pan (20 Y" x 17 W" x 7") on top of stove, sauté half of tomatoes over medium heat for 2 minutes until skins soften. DO NOT OVERCOOK. Tomatoes should maintain their shape. Reserve remaining tomatoes for step 6.
*Fresh grape tomatoes, halved	6 lb	1 gal	
Dried basil		¼ cup	4. Add basil, salt, pepper, and garlic.
Sea salt		2 Tbsp	
Ground black pepper		1 Tbsp	
Fresh garlic, minced	4 oz	½ cup	
Whole-wheat flour	7 oz	1 ½ cups	5. Sprinkle flour over tomatoes. Sauté over medium heat for an additional 1-2 minutes. When mixture begins to thicken add broth. Bring to a boil uncovered. Reduce heat to low.
Low-sodium vegetable broth		1 gal ½ cup	
*Fresh Swiss chard, stems removed, chopped	2 lb 8 oz	3 qt 1 cup	6. Add Swiss chard and the remaining tomatoes. Simmer over low heat, uncovered, for 2 minutes or until Swiss chard is wilted. Critical Control Point: Heat to 135 °F or higher for at least 15 seconds. 7. Pour over pasta and serve. 8. Critical Control Point: Hold for hot service at 135 °F or higher. 9. Portion with 8 fl oz ladle (1 cup).

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/OodlesofNoodles.pdf>



Check out the PA Harvest of the Month website ([www.paharvestofthemonth.org](http://www.paharvestofthemonth.org)) for sources, additional resources, and recipes.

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