



NUTRITION &
FOOD SERVICES
NOBLESVILLE SCHOOLS

TAKE A TASTE

At Home

Tomatoes

Tomato Nutrition:

- Tomatoes are packed with Vitamin C, which strengthens your immune system to help fight off diseases, and also helps with the absorption of Iron (a mineral that helps transport oxygen).
- Tomatoes are bursting with antioxidants, which help your cells stay healthy. Some antioxidants impart pigments to give foods different colors: lycopene (red), beta-carotene (yellow/orange), and chlorophyll (green).
 - Lycopene is a powerful antioxidant that may help reduce the risk of certain diseases, including heart disease, neurodegenerative diseases, and certain cancers. It can also protect against sun damage caused by UV rays and helps protect the skin from aging and photodamage, making it an extensively used ingredient in cosmetic products.
 - Lutein & Zeaxanthin are also antioxidants found in tomatoes that are important for eye health. Think of these compounds as sunglasses for your eyes, protecting them from blue-light damage from the sun, and also preventing harmful molecules from damaging the internal structure of your eye.
- Tomatoes are considered both fruits and vegetables, depending on who you are. In 1893, the "Great Tomato Debate" made its way to the U.S. Supreme Court., who ruled the tomato as a vegetable for tariff purposes. Botanists and farmers consider them a fruit, because they are grown from the flower of the plant, but chefs consider them to be vegetables because of the way they are typically eaten. (You probably wouldn't want cherry tomatoes in your fruit cocktail!). Nutritionally, they are also considered vegetables - in the red vegetable subgroup - due to the nutrients they contribute to the diet.

Q: How do you fix a broken tomato?
A: Tomato Paste!



Fun Facts about Tomatoes:

- DYK: Indiana is the 2nd largest grower of tomatoes in the US?! There are more than 10,000 varieties of tomatoes available in a rainbow of colors: from red, orange, green, black, purple, and white.
- Breaking a Guinness World Record in July 2025, the heaviest tomato grown weighed in at 16.89 lbs, heavier than most bowling balls!
- The name "tomato" is thought to have originated from the Aztec word "tomatl." When Spanish explorers discovered these luscious delights in the 16th century, they brought them back to Europe, where the name adapted into "tomato."
- Tomatoes rely on buzz pollination, a technique where they release pollen when certain native bee species, like bumblebees, vibrate their wings. These bees play a vital role in the tomatoes' reproductive process.
- Tomatoes in Space: In 1984, the U.S. space shuttle Challenger carried tomato seeds into space. These seeds later sprouted and produced ripe tomatoes back on Earth, making them the first space-grown vegetable.



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Pico de Gallo

This simple pico de gallo recipe transforms staple vegetables into a fiesta of flavor! Serve with whole grain tortilla chips for a nutritious snack!

Ingredients

- 1 cup finely chopped white onion (about 1 small onion)
- 1 medium jalapeño or serrano pepper, ribs and seeds removed, finely chopped (decrease or omit if sensitive to spice, or add another if you love heat)
- ¼ cup lime juice
- ¾ teaspoon fine sea salt, more to taste
- 1 ½ pounds ripe red tomatoes (about 8 small or 4 large), chopped
- ½ cup finely chopped fresh cilantro (about 1 bunch)

Directions

1. In a medium serving bowl, combine the chopped onion, jalapeño, lime juice and salt. Let it marinate for about 5 minutes while you chop the tomatoes and cilantro.
2. Add the chopped tomatoes and cilantro to the bowl and stir to combine. Taste, and add more salt if the flavors don't quite sing.
3. For the best flavor, let the mixture marinate for 15 minutes or several hours in the refrigerator. Serve as a dip, or with a slotted spoon or large serving fork to avoid transferring too much watery tomato juice with your pico. Pico de gallo keeps well in the refrigerator, covered, for up to 4 days.



Recipe adapted from: <https://cookieandkate.com/classic-pico-de-gallo-recipe/>

Tomato Seed STEAM Activity.

This STEAM activity takes an inside look at how plants use seeds to reproduce and grow into a new plant! Scan the QR Code to try at home!



How do plants Reproduce?

When fruits and other seeding plants reproduce (make more of themselves), a tiny new plant embryo forms inside the seeds. The seed protects the embryo and stores food for it. Seeds are released by the parent plant and dispersed (sent to new places) by wind, water, or animal activity. If the seed lands where the conditions are right, the embryo germinates and grows into a new plant.

Why so many Seeds?

Seeds are dispersed by water, wind, and animals. However, there are many things that can happen to a seed to prevent it from growing into a mature plant. A seed in the wild could be crushed, eaten, land on a surface with no soil to put down roots, or settle in a location without enough water, sunlight, or nutrients to grow. Plants, such as Cherry Tomatoes produce a large number of seeds as a way of making sure that at least some of the seeds live on to become full-grown tomato plants!

