

TOMATOES

Tomato Basil Soup

Ingredients:

1 medium chopped onion
1 Tablespoon olive oil
2 crushed garlic cloves
1 lb. fresh tomatoes seeded and chopped OR one 5½ oz. can chopped tomatoes, drained
1 pinch ground red pepper
1 teaspoon fresh or dried basil
2 cups milk
Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. In a medium saucepan, cook onion in oil over medium heat, stirring frequently until golden brown, about 4 minutes.
2. Add garlic and cook 1 minute longer. Add chopped tomatoes.
3. Cook uncovered over medium heat for 10 minutes.
4. Spoon ¾ of mixture into food processor or blender container; puree until smooth. Return to saucepan.
5. Add red pepper, basil, and milk to the soup. Heat until hot but do not boil. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve immediately.

Makes 4 servings.

Source: USDA Recipe Finder

Tomatoes are an excellent source of vitamin C and a good source of vitamin A, potassium, fiber, and lycopene. Choose tomatoes that have deep, rich colors. This indicates that the tomato is rich in lycopene—which is what gives tomatoes their red pigment. Lycopene is also thought to have cancer-fighting abilities. According to the National Cancer Institute, tomatoes have proven to be helpful in reducing the risk of certain cancers, especially prostate cancer.

A native to the Americas, the tomato can be traced back to the early Aztecs. It was not until the 19th century, however, that the tomato became a kitchen favorite in both the United States and Europe. The creation of pizza, with its tomato sauce, contributed to its popularity.

This delicious vegetable is low in calories: 1 cup of chopped ripe, red, raw tomatoes has only 32 calories! Although tomatoes are available year-round, they are best during the summer months. Availability varies State to State. Tomatoes come in many varieties and colors to include red, orange, yellow, green, and even purple. Each type has a unique taste, consistency, and purpose. Try as many different types as you can.

Cold temperatures can damage tomatoes. Thus avoid buying tomatoes that have been kept cold, and only store them in the refrigerator if you must keep them for an extended period.

Try your fresh farmers' market tomatoes, and prepare them in a variety of ways –

- ❖ Slice them and sprinkle with salt and pepper to have them as a wonderful, light side.
- ❖ Enjoy a tomato sandwich with fresh mozzarella cheese and basil.
- ❖ Fill a tomato with cheese and bread crumbs and roast in the oven.
- ❖ Use your tomatoes in a soup, such as tomato basil soup.

Is it a fruit or a vegetable?

Tomatoes are botanically a fruit, but in 1893 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled it a vegetable. The import tax placed on vegetables protected U.S. tomato growers from foreign markets.