

Tomatoes are member of the nightshade family, related to potatoes, bell peppers, and eggplant. They can be red, pink, orange, or yellow, round to oblong, and from one to six inches in diameter. The flavor ranges from sweet to bland to tart, depending on variety.

## Facts

The tomato is the world's most popular fruit with more than 60 million tons produced worldwide.

There are more than 4,000 varieties of tomatoes ranging in size, shape and color.

According to the USDA, Americans eat more than 22 pounds of tomatoes each year, more than half of this amount in the form of ketchup and/or tomato sauce.

Botanically speaking, the tomato you eat is a fruit. A "fruit" is any fleshy material covering a seed or seeds. Horticulturally speaking, the tomato is a vegetable plant. The plant is an annual and nonwoody.

Because of a tariff dispute, the U.S. Supreme Court officially declared the tomato a vegetable in 1893.

The work "tomato" is derived from the Mexican Nahuatl Indian word "tomatl."

George Washington Carver believed tomatoes had "medicinal virtues." After World War I, he issued "115 Ways to Prepare It [Tomatoes] For the Table" thus marking the introduction of the tomato into popular culture.

## History

The first tomatoes can be traced back to the Andes in Peru, where they grew wild as cherry-sized berries. As early as 700 A.D., the Incas and Aztecs began cultivating tomato plants.

Spanish explorers to Mexico brought tomatoes back to Europe in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

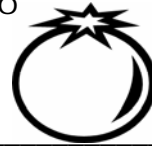
Europeans initially regarded tomatoes with suspicion, because most plants of the nightshade family were known to be poisonous. The tomato was not widely accepted as a food until early 19th century. Raw tomatoes were not consumed until the late 19th century.

### Sources:

Encyclopedia of Foods: A Guide to Healthy Nutrition. Dole Food Company: 2002.

5 A Day, Fruit and Vegetable of the Month: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/5ADay/month/index.htm>  
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## Where Grown

Tomatoes are grown in every state in the United States except Alaska.

## Types

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, really wonderful to eat alone or in a salad.

## Nutrients

- High in vitamin C
- A good source of vitamin A (carotenes)
- Contains the antioxidant lycopene

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