

TOMATO FACTS & FANCIES

The Truth About California Tomatoes

(NAPSA)—Tomatoes are sometimes a little misunderstood. There are many myths floating around about this popular produce item, and many of them are far from true.

For starters, tomatoes are a fruit, not a vegetable as many believe. The seeds in the tomato are what classify it as a fruit.

Here's another truth about tomatoes—you don't need to refrigerate them. Many people put tomatoes in the refrigerator when they get home, but the cold temperatures stop them from ripening and cause them to lose their flavor. The best thing you can do for your tomato is to leave it on the counter and allow it to fully ripen.

Another myth surrounding this popular fruit is that tomatoes are genetically altered. Ask any California farmer and he or she will tell you that this is simply not true. Commercially grown tomatoes are bred using the same techniques used for tomatoes you can grow in your backyard. In fact, the popular Celebrity variety, grown in backyards everywhere, was, until recently, a popular commercial variety grown in California.

For all the misconceptions that tomatoes sometimes suffer, they are still one of the most popular fruits available. Maybe that's because they are so versatile and so many dishes would be lost without them. From salads to sandwiches and sauces to salsas, tomatoes are an integral ingredient.

The health benefits surrounding tomatoes may be so good that they sound mythical, but they're not. Tomatoes help prevent prostate cancer because they contain a nutrient called lycopene. Scientists found a link between the consumption of tomatoes and a reduced risk for developing prostate cancer.

In addition, Scotland scientists have recently discovered that tomatoes may help in reducing circulatory problems in the heart, brain and elsewhere. The new study found that tomatoes may contain a powerful sub-



You say tomato—and you get a better pizza.

stance that prevents blood clots from forming.

In addition to helping ward off certain cancers, one regular tomato contains 20 percent of your daily vitamin A requirements. With only 35 calories for one medium size tomato (148g), they pack a lot of nutritional punch.

Now that you're armed with all this accurate information about tomatoes, you may want to incorporate more of them into your meals. Below is a wonderful pizza recipe using fresh tomatoes, garlic and goat cheese that should please the whole family. Or, if you're ordering pizza for delivery, try placing thinly sliced fresh tomatoes on your pizza, it adds a little something special to an everyday meal.

For more information about tomatoes, and to enter a recipe contest, log onto www.tomato.org and find out how to receive a free tomato magnet.

Bucci's Insalata Pizza

Pizza Crust:

- 4 cups all purpose flour, divided
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 tsp. sugar
- 1 Tbsp. instant dry yeast
- 1½ cups very warm water
- 1 Tbsp. corn meal

Toppings:

- 9-10 California roma tomatoes, sliced
- 3 Tbsp. olive oil, divided
- 1 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. black pepper

- 2 heads of garlic, roasted, peeled and chopped
- ½ cup crumbled goat cheese
- 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh mint
- 2 Tbsp. chopped arugula

Directions:

Marinate tomatoes and roasted garlic while preparing dough.

To roast garlic: Slice top of garlic just enough to expose garlic cloves. Place on a square of foil, drizzle with 1 Tbsp. of olive oil and wrap up tightly in foil. Place in a 400°F oven for 30 minutes until golden and soft. Cool. To remove garlic cloves, gently press skins and cloves will pop out. Slice thinly.

Place sliced tomatoes in a non metallic bowl with 1 Tbsp. olive oil, vinegar, salt and pepper for at least 30 minutes at room temperature.

In a large mixing bowl combine 3 cups flour with salt, sugar and yeast. Add warm water (warmest temperature from the faucet), and stir vigorously with a wooden spoon, until dough is combined and sticky. Gradually add only as much remaining flour as necessary to make a soft dough. Remove to a clean counter and knead for 10 minutes until smooth and elastic, more flour may be necessary for a soft, yet firm dough. Place in an oiled bowl until double in bulk, about 20 minutes.

Roll out dough, or using hands, push out into a 16 inch circle. Place on a pizza stone or large round baking sheet which has been sprinkled with corn meal, this prevents sticking. Brush dough with remaining olive oil.

Arrange marinated tomatoes over surface, dot with roasted garlic and goat cheese. Bake in a 450°F oven for 15 minutes until crust is golden and tomatoes are bubbly. Sprinkle with mint and arugula and slice. Serve hot or at room temperature.

Makes 6-8 servings.