

Tomatoes a Super Summer Vegetables

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A real summer vegetable, tomatoes are very versatile and play a big role in the Mediterranean cuisine where the average consumption is 6-8 ripe tomatoes a day. Great in summer salads, tomato sauces and of course just by themselves, put a small handful of cherry tomatoes into the lunch-box to contribute to your 5-a-day.

Tomatoes are full of goodness. Most striking is their high antioxidant content, in particular carotenoids such as beta-carotene and lycopene, but also vitamin C. Antioxidants help protect us from cancer and cardiovascular disease. Lycopene in particular has received a lot of attention as an anti-cancer nutrient. Interestingly, the lycopene content of tomatoes increases with processing. So tinned tomatoes, tomato sauce, tomato juice and sun-dried tomatoes are not just a good stand-by to store in the cupboard but also highly nutritious.



Recipes

Greek salad (serves 3-4)

This salad is the perfect lunch on a hot summer's day.

250g cherry tomatoes, halved
½ cucumber, quartered lengthways and sliced into triangular chunks
½ green pepper, sliced
½ red pepper, sliced
1 red onion, cut into thin slices
100g olives
Juice of half a lemon
1 tbsp olive oil
200g feta cheese, cut into cubes

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl, apart from the feta cheese. Then gently mix in the feta cheese taking care that it does not start to crumble and disintegrate.

Tomato sauce (serves 4)

This simple homemade tomato sauce goes well with pasta, grilled chicken, fish-cakes and lots of other foods. It keeps well in the fridge and can easily be frozen, so make double the portion.

1 tbsp of olive oil
1 large onion, finely chopped
1 clove of garlic, crushed
2 x 400g cans of chopped tomatoes or same weight in fresh tomatoes
2 tbsp tomato puree
Freshly ground pepper taste
1 tbsp of freshly chopped basil

If using fresh tomatoes shortly cover them with boiling water (to help remove the skin), then skin and chop them.

Gently fry the onions and garlic in the olive oil until soft but not brown. Add tomatoes, tomato puree and pepper. Bring to the boil, then lower heat and simmer for 35-40 minutes in a partially covered pan to reduce the fluid, stirring occasionally to prevent burning.

Stir in the basil and use the sauce as it is or, for a smoother texture, puree in the food processor or with a hand held blender.

Tomato soup (serves 4-6)

The combination of tomato and orange works really well. This soup is delicious both hot and cold.

2 tbsp olive oil
2 large onions, finely chopped
3 cloves garlic, crushed
1l vegetable stock
2x400g cans of tomatoes or same weight of fresh tomatoes, peeled and chopped
1 tbsp tomato puree
Finely grated rind of ½ orange
Heaped tbsp of freshly chopped dill
Freshly ground black pepper

Gently fry onions and garlic over low heat until soft. Add stock, tomatoes, tomato puree, dill and pepper. Bring to the boil and simmer for 30-40 minutes.

Add orange rind, take soup off the heat and allow to cool slightly. Blend soup until smooth. Adjust seasoning and reheat if serving hot or cool down quickly and store in the fridge until serving.