



The tomato

The fruit of a plant originally from Peru, the tomato, from the solanaceae family, originally resembled the cherry tomato of today.

Imported into Spain in the 16thC, it was considered harmful for a long time and served as an ornamental plant until the 18thC. It entered into Italian cooking in the 17thC where it was named 'pomodoro' or golden apple.

The 600 cultivated varieties are extremely varied in size (the biggest are beef tomatoe), in shape (cone shaped from the Andes, plum tomatoes and 'square' tomatoes), in colour (green tomatoes, black Russia, yellow 'heads of venus'), in flavour (sweet, acidic), with or without pips (grape tomatoes in the USA).

Choice

Choose tomatoes that are intact, without creases or wrinkles, firm but that give when gently pressed with a finger, that have a good colour and a pronounced scent. Tomatoes are at their best towards the end of summer as local ones that have been fully ripened are available.

Consumption

Tomatoes are eaten raw or cooked : in jam, in soups, risottos etc. They form part of many sauces, and can be made into juice, coulis and puree. They are an indispensable ingredient in gazpacho and pizza. They go well with garlic, shallots, aromatic herbs, sweet peppers or aubergine. Tomatoes are as perfect an accompaniment for tuna and sardines as for beef and chicken. Green tomatoes are only eaten when cooked, sauted or in a marinade.

Conservation

Stored at room temperature away from direct sunlight, tomatoes will keep for a week. Very ripe tomatoes will keep for three days in the a refrigerator. To preserve dried tomatoes, cover them with olive oil in a container. Freeze them whole but blanch and skin them first.



It was thought for a long time that the tomato caused illness : its stems, leaves and fruits all contain a toxic alkaline substance when it is unripe.



93% water, the tomato is a good source of vitamin C and of potassium. They contain folic acid and vitamin A.. Tomatoes stimulate the appetite, are energy giving, antiscorbutic, and re-mineralise the body.
21kcal/100g



PREPARATION

Bring tomatoes to room temperature before eating them to enjoy the best flavour.



COOKING

Do not cook tomatoes in aluminium pans : the acidity in the tomatoes has a corroding effect, they will take on a metallic taste. Adding a little sugar when cooking softens their acidity. Cook on a very gentle heat to protect their flavour.



PRESENTATION

You can make a rose out of tomato skin peeled in long ribbons. Play around with their shape : cut tomatoes up into batons, cubes, dice.

RECIPE SUGGESTIONS

