

Tomatoes



What are Heirloom Tomatoes? An heirloom tomato is not just one kind of tomato, but any tomato variety that has been passed down through the generations, a “family heirloom”. Rich in vitamins and minerals, they can add color, flavor, and texture to a sandwich, soup, salad or sauce. A versatile choice, they can be enjoyed raw, stuffed, baked, stewed, or grilled for sides, snacks or mains.

Selection: To find the best tomato, look for smooth, well-ripened ones that are reasonably free from blemishes and/or bruises. The best way to check for ripeness is to very gently press the tomato with your thumb. If there is no mark, then the tomato is not ripe; but if an indentation does appear it is ripe and ready to eat. Avoid soft, overripe, or bruised tomatoes and those with growth cracks (deep brown cracks around the stem) or soft, depressed areas.

Storage: If a tomato is not yet ripe, keep it in a room temperature or warm (not cold) place. And if you need to speed up the ripening process, then place it in a paper bag with an apple or banana, using the natural ethylene gas that fruits emit to speed up the maturation process. Be careful not to ripen tomatoes in the direct sunlight because even though the skin might be red, the tomatoes will not be ripe or flavorful inside. If a tomato begins to become overripe, store it (or them) in the refrigerator. Store sun-dried tomatoes in an airtight container, with or without olive oil in a cool, dry place.

Nutrients/nutrition: In general, one medium-sized heirloom tomato contains about 35 calories, 1/2 gram of fat, 1 gram of protein and 7 grams of carbohydrates (4 are simple sugars, 1 is fiber and 1 is complex sugars). These values are only 1 to 2% or less, of the recommended total daily intake of calories, fat, protein and carbohydrates. This same medium-sized tomato contains about 20% of the daily recommended intake of vitamin A and about 40% of the daily recommended intake of vitamin C.

Preparation: If you have stored your tomatoes in the refrigerator, removing them 30 minutes prior to use will help them to regain their maximum flavor and juiciness. Remember to wash tomatoes (gently) in cold water to remove dirt and residues. Great in salads, on sandwiches, in soups and sauces, tomatoes can be stuffed, sliced, or pureed. When slicing for sandwiches or salads, hold the tomato vertically to prevent the juice and seeds from spilling out. For stuffed tomatoes, cut them horizontally to remove seeds and juice.

Eat well to be well!