

Tomatoes!



Tomatoes from [UCANR Repository](#)

Tomatoes can come in a wide range of colors, sizes, and flavors and there is a huge selection of varieties to choose from. You want to choose plants that fit in your space, give you a great harvest, and the fruits match how you want to use them..

There are thought to be over 1,000 tomato varieties around the world and they can be classified into groups according to fruit size, such as cherry, plum, beefsteak, grape, or heirlooms. Tomato plants can also be indeterminate or determinate and that dictates the growth habit of the plants. Choosing the wrong variety to grow is a common mistake. The habit of the plant, together with the fruit shape, size, and color, are all important to consider when trying to decide which tomato variety to plant.

Here are several tomatoes varieties that are popular to grow for eating or cooking and preserving:

Sungold Cherry

Growth habit: Indeterminate

Height: 3-4 feet

Fruit size: Small

Fruit color: Yellow-orange

Sungold can be successfully grown either in a garden or in containers.

San Marzano

Type: Plum

Growth habit: Indeterminate

Height: 4-5 feet

Fruit size: Medium

Fruit color: Red

An Italian tomato that is great for sauces because of the meaty flesh.

Brandywine

Type: Heirloom
Growth habit: Indeterminate
Height: 8-9 feet
Fruit size: Large
Fruit color: Red

Brandywine is an heirloom beefsteak. It produces large and ribbed tomatoes up to one pound in size.

Veranda Red

Type: Cherry
Growth habit: Determinate
Height: 1.5-2 feet
Fruit size: Small
Fruit color: Red

A perfect variety for growing in pots or hanging baskets. Veranda Red is a dwarf patio tomato.

Baby Boomer and Gardeners Delight - other cherry tomato varieties Green Zebra

Type: Round
Growth habit: Indeterminate
Height: 8-9 feet
Fruit size: Medium
Fruit color: Green

A very unique tomato, this produces 2-3 inch green fruits with darker green stripes. The color transitions to a yellow tinge when ripe. Very good for sauces and salsa.

You will now have a bumper crop of tomatoes and if you are planning to preserve them by using a water bath or a pressure canner, there are several important facts to know before you start.

Recipes

The recipes you choose must be from a Master Food Preserver site (ucanr.edu), the USDA or a certified cookbook. Please do not use any recipe that has not been tested because it is not safe. If you have a favorite family recipe, look for one that is similar and has been tested and is safe.

Acidification

Homemade tomato products must have acid added to them before canning. The acid can be a citric acid powder or bottled lemon juice. Do not use fresh lemon juice as fresh lemons vary in their natural acidity.

Preparing Tomatoes

Use only stainless steel pots and utensils to cook the tomatoes. The acid in tomatoes can react with aluminum, copper, brass, iron and galvanized metal. These can cause bitterness and discoloration in your tomatoes.

Removing Tomato Skins

The skins can be separated from the tomatoes using a food mill or electric strainer or by blanching. To blanch your tomatoes heat water to a boil in a stainless steel pot. Cut a small x on the bottom of each tomato. Work in small batches and put your tomatoes in the boiling water for 30 to 60 seconds. Remove carefully and put into an ice bath. The skins will slip right off. (You can dry the tomato skins and then grind them into a powder. The powder adds extra tomato flavor to your recipes.

Prevent Separated Tomato Products

Tomatoes have a natural enzyme, that when exposed to air, causes the liquids and solids to separate. Heating tomatoes after they are cut inactivates this enzyme. That is why many recipes suggest using the hot pack method to avoid the separation of liquid and solids that can occur in your processed jars.

Stay Safe!

If your recipe calls for other vegetables, meat or fish, in addition to tomatoes, you must use a pressure canner. A water bath canner does not get hot enough to prevent illness.

["4 common problems when growing tomatoes"](#) Santa Rosa Press Democrat article, June 30, 2023