



Tomatoes

# Tomatoes



## Taste these

- Cherry
- Baby Plum
- Beefsteak
- Sungold
- Gardener's Delight
- Tumbling Tom
- Coeur de Boeuf
- Auriga
- Chocodel
- Green Zebra

## Pick for the school plot?

- Yes
- No

## Plant it

 Spring

## Eat it

 Summer

 Autumn

## ★ Did you know?

- ★ Tomatoes are the most widely grown fruit on the planet. They grow as far north as Iceland and as far south as the Falkland Islands. Tomato seedlings have even been grown in space!
- ★ There are more than 1,000 different tomato varieties, in a kaleidoscope of shapes and colours. You can find yellow, orange, purple or even striped tomatoes.
- ★ When they first arrived in Europe from South America in the 16th century, these early tomatoes looked like small, yellow apples. This explains why they are called “pomodoro” in Italy, which literally translates as “golden apples”.

### Grow: Are they a fruit or vegetable?

We think of tomatoes as vegetables, but technically they're fruits. Tomatoes are in the Nightshade plant family, which includes peppers and potatoes.

### How do they grow?

Tomatoes grow from seeds to form bushy plants that flower, then develop fruit. They're typically trained to grow up strings, canes or other supports. They are varieties that suit either indoor or outdoor growing, and both require plenty of sun for the fruit to ripen.

### Should I grow them?

Definitely. At school it's best to grow the smaller cherry or baby plum varieties so they have a chance to ripen before the holidays. Sow seeds in pots somewhere warm in early spring, then re-pot a few times before moving them to their final position – preferably the sunniest spot. Tomatoes can also be grown in grow bags.

### When are they ready?

Tomatoes turn from green to red as they ripen. When ready, twist them off the plant. In the UK, the commercial tomato season runs from around

April for crops grown in greenhouses, to October.

### Shop: what should you look for?

Ideally, buy a variety of tomatoes to compare their flavours and textures. They are sometimes sold on their vine, which can be added to sauces for extra flavour. Choose ripe, heavy tomatoes, that smell fresh and don't have any blemishes or squashy bits.

### How should you store them?

Take tomatoes out of packaging and store at room temperature to ripen. Never keep in the fridge as this will make them lose their nice, sweet flavour.

### Eat: How can you eat it?

Tomatoes are delicious eaten raw or cooked in savoury dishes. They can be made into sauces, added to pasta or pizza, chopped up and served in a salad, or made into soup. They're also really tasty eaten on their own with a few basil leaves and a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil.

### Why is it good for you?

Tomatoes are a great source of vitamin C. Vitamin C helps keep our immune system working properly so we can fight illness and flu.

# Key info for teachers



## Key facts

- ★ Tomatoes have only been a common food in Britain since the late 19th century, but they are now grown in more than 100 countries. They are grown throughout the UK in greenhouses and sunny spots in the garden.
- ★ Tomatoes arrived in Europe about 400 years ago, but were initially regarded as poisonous plants and treated with suspicion. It took at least two centuries for them to become a popular vegetable in the UK.

## Curriculum links

### Literacy

#### Story writing

Read the class, *I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato* (Charlie and Lola), by Lauren Child. It's a story full of imaginative descriptions of different vegetables, created in an effort to encourage the child heroine to try them (carrots, for example, are called "orange twiglets from Jupiter"). Get the children to write their own versions, creating alternative descriptions of other fruits and vegetables.

### Maths

#### Time

Growing tomatoes can pose problems for schools because many of the larger varieties ripen during the summer holidays. Challenge the children to work out a planting plan so that you can harvest the fruit before the end of the summer term. Research the number of days it takes for various varieties to mature, and then work backwards to calculate the best planting dates in early spring.

### Maths

#### Ratios and proportion

Investigate the size and mass of different varieties of tomatoes to compare ratios and proportions. Ask questions such as: how much smaller or lighter is a cherry tomato compared to a beefsteak? To extend, look at various recipes and work out how many of each tomato variety you would need.

## Tips for teachers



- ★ Try to use a variety of different-coloured tomatoes for each of these recipes because children tend to enjoy trying the ones they haven't seen before.
- ★ Storing tomatoes in the fridge will contribute to the mealy texture and will lessen the flavour – try to keep them out of the fridge for these lessons.
- ★ Cutting tomatoes can be slightly tricky, hold your hands in the bridge position but poke the tip of the knife in to puncture the skin before cutting down.

# Evolution tomato salad

Serves 4



Use different types and colours of tomatoes to make your salad really interesting, just make sure they're lovely and ripe for the very best results. You can either keep things super simple and make a basic tomato salad, or include steps 5 to 8 to evolve it into a more substantial meal.

## Ingredients

- 350g ripe mixed-size and colour tomatoes
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- optional:** 10 black olives, stone in
- optional:** ½ x 410g tin of cannellini beans
- optional:** 1 x 80g tin of quality tuna
- a few sprigs of fresh basil

## Equipment list

- Weighing scales
- Chopping board
- Knife
- Mixing bowl
- Measuring spoons
- Spoon
- Tin opener
- Sieve
- Fork



## Here's how to make it

- 1** Cut the tomatoes into fairly even-sized chunks on a chopping board – cut the larger tomatoes into wedges, big cherry tomatoes in half and leave the little ones whole.
- 2** Place the tomatoes in a mixing bowl.
- 3** Add the extra virgin olive oil, balsamic vinegar, and a tiny pinch of salt and pepper.
- 4** Stir together to coat, then either skip straight to step 9 for a simple tomato salad, or continue on to step 5 to evolve the salad further.
- 5** Place the olives onto a chopping board, squash them with the heel of your hand, pull out and discard the stones, then roughly chop them and add them to the bowl.
- 6** Drain the cannellini beans in a sieve over the sink (save the rest for another recipe), rinse under cold water, shake dry and add to the salad.
- 7** Toss everything together well.
- 8** Drain the tuna in a sieve over the sink, then flake it apart with a fork and scatter over the salad.
- 9** Pick the basil leaves, discarding the stalks, tear them over the salad, then serve.



# Tomato and basil bruschetta

Serves 4



Using the very best, ripest tomatoes and good-quality olive oil will make all the difference. You can, of course, introduce other seasonal veggies or herbs into the mix too, if you like.

## Ingredients

- ½ x 270g loaf of ciabatta
- 250g mixed-colour ripe tomatoes
- ½ a bunch fresh basil
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ½ tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 clove of garlic
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar or red wine vinegar

## Equipment list

- Weighing scales
- Chopping board
- Knife
- Mixing bowl
- Griddle pan
- Measuring spoons
- Tongs
- Serving board

## Here's how to make it

**1** On a chopping board, cut the ciabatta into 8 slices, roughly 1cm thick, then place to one side.

**2** Cut the tomatoes in half.

**3** Squeeze out and discard the seeds, then roughly chop and place in a mixing bowl.

**4** Pick the basil leaves, discarding the stalks, tearing the bigger leaves into the bowl and keeping the baby leaves to one side.

**5** Add a tiny pinch of salt and pepper to the tomatoes and basil and use your hands to gently toss together, then put aside.

**6** Place a griddle pan on a medium heat to warm up.

**7** Once hot, toast the bread on the griddle for around 2 minutes on each side, or until golden and bar-marked, turning with tongs – you'll need to do this in batches.

**8** Carefully transfer the toasts to a serving plate or board and drizzle with the extra virgin olive oil.

**9** Cut the garlic clove in half, then rub it all over the surface of the toasted bread.

**10** Lay the toast onto a serving board and top each with a spoonful of the tomato and basil mixture.

**11** Drizzle with a little vinegar and finish with a scattering of the baby basil leaves, then serve.



# Simple tomato soup

Serves 8 to 10



Jamie's top tip

Homemade tomato soup is a classic and you'll be surprised by the difference between your version and the tinned stuff. Don't forget, it's also great to use as a quick base sauce for dishes such as cannelloni or lasagne.

## Ingredients

- 2 carrots
- 2 onions
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 2 sticks of celery
- olive oil
- 2 organic chicken or vegetable stock cubes
- 2 x 400g tins of plum tomatoes
- 6 large ripe tomatoes
- ½ a bunch of fresh basil
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

## Equipment list

- Chopping board
- Knife
- Large pot with lid
- Measuring spoons
- Wooden spoon
- Measuring jug
- Tin opener

## Here's how to make it

**1** Peel the carrots, onions and garlic, roughly chop them on a chopping board and place in a large mixing bowl.

**2** Trim, then finely slice the celery and add to the bowl.



**3** Place a large pot on a medium heat and add 2 tablespoons of olive oil and all the chopped vegetables from the bowl.

**4** Stir well, then with the lid askew, cook for 10 to 15 minutes, or until the carrots have softened and the onion is lightly golden, stirring occasionally.

**5** Crumble the stock cubes into the pot, carefully top up with 1.8 litres of boiling water and stir to dissolve.

**6** Add the tinned and fresh whole tomatoes, including the green stalks that may still be attached to some of them (these give amazing flavour!).

**7** Turn the heat up to high and bring to the boil, then reduce the heat to medium-low, pop the lid back on and simmer for around 10 minutes, or until cooked through, stirring occasionally. Meanwhile...

**8** Pick the basil leaves, discarding the stalks.

**9** When the veg is cooked, carefully remove the pot to a heatproof surface and leave for a minute or two to stop bubbling, then stir through the basil leaves.

**10** Carefully blitz with a stick blender until smooth (use a tea towel to protect your hands from little splashes).

**11** Have a taste and add a tiny pinch of salt and pepper if you think it needs it, then carefully ladle the soup into bowls and serve.

Allergy info



wheat, gluten, celery



For nutritional information, ask your teacher.