



A Garden-Based Learning Program for Preschoolers

# TOMATOES



The tomato is one of the most popular vegetables. But tomatoes are more than just ketchup and an ingredient in a salad. Tomatoes are an excellent source of vitamin C, which helps heal cuts and wounds and keeps teeth and gums healthy. It is also a good source of vitamin A, which keeps eyes and skin healthy and helps protect against infections. Tomatoes also contain very few calories. There are many varieties of tomatoes. They include cherry, grape, plum or slicing tomatoes. Tomatoes also come in different colors such as yellow, orange, and green. Typically, tomatoes should be plump, smooth, and red to an orange-red color. Tomatoes are available in grocery stores all year.

MyPyramid suggests that adults eat 2½ cups of vegetables a day. Children ages 3 to 5 years should eat 1½ cups of vegetables a day. Tomatoes can be enjoyed several ways. They can be eaten raw, baked, broiled, dried and many other ways. Tomatoes can be incorporated into salads, sandwiches, vegetable trays, dips, sauces, casseroles, and soups. There are countless ways that tomatoes can be enjoyed.

<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/month/tomato.html>

## MEALTIME IDEAS

Salsa is a healthy, easy, and fun dish to make that can be eaten as a snack or with your lunch and dinner. Here are some recipes to try:

### Fresh Salsa (10 servings)

- 4 very ripe tomatoes or
- 2 cans diced tomatoes, drained
- 1 can chopped chilies (mild)
- 1 onion, chopped
- ½ cup cilantro
- 2 tablespoons taco sauce
- 1 tablespoon vinegar (red wine preferred)



### Directions

Chop tomatoes, onion, and cilantro very fine. Combine all ingredients in a quart-size jar. Make sure lid is tightly closed and shake well to mix. Enjoy with your favorite chips.

*Calories 35; Total fat 0g; Saturated fat 0g; Cholesterol 0mg; Sodium 35mg; Dietary fiber 1g; Sugar 5g; Protein 1g*

### Mexican Rice (6 servings)

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 cup uncooked rice
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 2 cups hot water
- 2 low-sodium chicken-flavored bouillon cubes
- 1 (8 ounce) can low-sodium tomato sauce
- 3½ cups frozen vegetables (peas and carrots)
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

### Directions

Lightly spray a large saucepan with nonstick cooking spray. Add rice to saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned. Stir in onions and garlic. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes. Add bouillon cubes. Add hot water until bouillon cubes have dissolved. Reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes. Add frozen vegetables. Cover and simmer for an additional 10 minutes or until all moisture is absorbed. Sprinkle cilantro on top of cooked rice. Serve.

*Calories 190; Total fat 1g; Saturated fat 0g; Cholesterol 0mg; Sodium 440mg; Total Carbohydrates 41g; Dietary fiber 4g*

## FOOD SAFETY TIP

Remember to wash hands before cooking. Wash all vegetables thoroughly before use. Leftovers should be covered and stored in the refrigerator.

## IN THE GARDEN

Thinking about growing tomatoes? Use the following tips to help you grow tomatoes for your family:

- Start seeds indoors for 4 to 6 weeks, then transplant outside.
- Plant the seeds in early summer when the temperature reaches 70°F.
- Space the plants 18 inches apart.
- Each plant requires 1 inch of water per week.
- Harvest when fruit is completely red and firm, around 60 to 80 days after planting.

Garden Tabloid #1091, Mississippi State University Extension Service



### I CAN HELP BY

- Placing vegetables in a bowl.
- Shaking jar (with assistance).
- Washing the vegetables.
- Measuring the ingredients.
- Mixing together the ingredients
- Helping with clean-up after the meal.

### BUDGET TIP FOR BUYING MORE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Get creative with your leftover fruits and vegetables. Make salsa from your tomatoes and smoothies from your fruits!

<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/month/tomato.html>

## THE COLOR IS RED

Fruits and vegetables are a good way to help preschoolers learn the difference in colors. When going to the grocery store try to find all the foods that are RED.

These were the RED foods we found:

Count the red fruits and vegetables

How many red fruits and vegetables did you find in the store? Count the different red fruits and vegetables in the store. If there is only one, how many of that one fruit or vegetable was available in the grocery store or farmer's market?

My family and I found \_\_\_\_\_ red foods.

# LET'S GET MOVING

Try this fun game with your preschoolers:

## BALLOON TOSS

Materials: balloons and a stopwatch

Have players form three groups. Each group receives a balloon and the purpose is to keep the balloon floating. No player can touch the balloon twice in a row. Pass the balloon by tapping it, not holding it. Players can be creative by using their elbows, knees, or other body parts to tap the balloon. If the balloon drops three times, that group is out and watches the other groups. The last group whose balloon has not dropped three times wins.

Wiertsemsa, Huberta. (2002). 101 Movement Games for Children. Balloon Toss (pp. 83). Alameda, CA: Hunter House Inc., Publishers.



[www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov)

<http://apps.need.cdc.gov/dnparecipe/recipesearch.aspx>

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