

## Tomatoes

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There are many varieties of tomatoes that come in many sizes. If you like to eat tomatoes in salad, consider a cherry variety. Larger varieties may be better for making sauces and salsa.

### Planting

- Tomatoes are best planted from transplants. To start transplants, plant seeds at a depth of ½ inch 4 to 7 weeks before planned planting date.
- If purchasing transplants, look for plants 6 to 10 inches tall.
- Tomato transplants should be planted between April 20 and July 1, May 5 and June 15, and May 15 and June 1 in western, central, and eastern Kentucky.
- Transplants should be spaced 24 inches apart.



### Care and Harvest

- Indeterminate varieties, require staking, but can provide a continuous supply of fruit (up to 15 lbs) and are recommended for home gardens.
- Tomato cages, twine attached to a frame, or 6 foot stakes placed 1 foot into the ground can be used to support growing tomato plants.
- Indeterminate tomato plants should be pruned to 1 or 2 main stems. Determinate varieties will not require pruning.
- Water about 1 inch per week (including rain). Take special care to provide water after flowering starts.
- If using compost, add 0.17 cubic feet of compost per square foot of bed space.
- 2.5 lb/100 sq ft of a 5-10-10-10 fertilizer should be enough for a small garden.
- 5 Tbs of a high nitrogen fertilizer (eg. 33-0-0) is recommended 1 to 2 weeks before first picking and



again 2 weeks after first picking. Too much nitrogen can cause plants to get very leafy and produce bland fruit.

- Tomatoes are ready for harvest 60-90 days after the seeds were planted, with cherry and smaller varieties producing sooner.
- Pick ripe tomatoes at maximum color, but before they get soft.

## Storage and Use

- Green tomatoes can also be picked and ripened in a dark place covered with paper. The process may take up to 2 weeks, and tomatoes should be checked regularly for damage.
- A wide variety of recipes are also available for green tomatoes.
- Washed, ripe tomatoes will keep for a week at room temperature and up to two weeks in the refrigerator.
- Tomatoes produce ethylene, which may cause other vegetables or fruit to ripen faster if they are stored together.
- Tomatoes can be caned using either hot packed or fresh pack methods leaving  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch of head space. Process in boiling water for 35-40 min for pints and 45-50 min for quarts depending on packing method and recipe.



## RECIPE



### Salsa Fresco, or Pico de Gallo

*From The Joy of Cooking*

**Combine in a medium bowl:**

- $\frac{1}{2}$  small onion, finely chopped, rinsed and drained
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 2 large ripe tomatoes, seeded if desired and finely diced
- $\frac{1}{4}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped cilantro
- 3-5 serrano or jalapeño peppers or  $\frac{1}{4}$  to 1 habanero pepper seeded and minced
- 6 radishes finely minced- optional
- 1 medium garlic clove, minced- optional

**Stir together well. Season with salt to taste.**

*Makes 2 cups, serve immediately.*

## References

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