

Tomatoes

1. What is the origin of the word “tomato”? What are some other names for the tomato?

- The word “tomato” derives from the word “tomatl” of the Aztecs’ Nahuatl language. The term means “something round and plump.” Tomatoes belong to the genus Lycopersicon, which is Latin for “wolf-peach.”
- Over the years, the tomato has been called by many different names, including:
 - Mala insane (unwholesome fruit, Spanish)
 - Pomi d’oro (golden apple, Italian)
 - Poma amoris (love apple, Italian)
 - Pomme d’amour (The Apple of Love, French)
 - The Apple of Paradise (German)
 - Devil Apple (British nickname)
 - Moor’s Apple (English)

2. California grows what percentage of the nation’s tomatoes for processing? List five processed tomato products available in most grocery stores.

- California grows about 95 percent of the nation’s tomatoes for processing.
- Processed tomato products include: ketchup, canned tomatoes, salsa, tomato sauce, tomato soup, tomato paste.

3. List three nutrients found in a tomato. Name some of the health benefits of these nutrients. Describe the impact of processing, if any, on each nutrient. (answers will vary)

- Lycopene – An antioxidant that may decrease the risk of certain cancers and heart disease. When processed, tomatoes contain higher amounts of lycopene than raw tomatoes due to greater concentration.
- Vitamin A – A fat-soluble vitamin that helps support vision health, promote the growth and health of cells and tissues within the body, and may help protect against infections by keeping the skin and certain body tissues healthy. When processed, the Vitamin A content in tomatoes slightly decreases

- Vitamin C – Also known as ascorbic acid, this water-soluble vitamin helps produce collagen, keep capillary walls and blood vessels strong, help the body absorb iron from plant food sources, help keep gums healthy, and help keep the body's immune system healthy. Processing destroys some of the Vitamin C content.
- Potassium – An essential mineral that helps regulate the body's fluids and mineral balance within the body's cells, helps maintain normal blood pressure, and helps with muscle contractions. The potassium content increases when tomatoes are processed.
- Thiamin (Vitamin B₁) – A water-soluble vitamin that helps produce energy from carbohydrates in cells of the body. The thiamin content of tomatoes increases slightly when processed.

4. Using a California map, color in the top three fresh market tomato-producing counties. In what months does peak harvesting take place in these counties?

- The top three tomato-producing counties (in order) are Fresno, Merced and San Joaquin.*
- Peak harvesting takes place in the Central Valley from June through October.

*NOTE: Variations in information between the newsletter and this Answer Key are due to updated data from the California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA). Information in the *Tomatoes* newsletter is based on data from 1999. Answers above reflect the most recent data from 2004.

5. How are processing tomatoes harvested differently than fresh market tomatoes? Why do processing tomatoes have thicker skins?

- Processing tomatoes are mechanically harvested when ripe as opposed to fresh tomatoes which are hand-harvested (generally before they are fully ripe but sometimes vine-ripened).
- The processing tomatoes have thicker skins and a firmer consistency, enabling it to be mechanically picked when ripe without damaging the fruit.

Sources:

www.eatcatomatoes.com

www.cfaitc.org/commodity/pdf/processingtomato.pdf

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/search/>

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