

Tomatoes

Educator | VermontHarvestoftheMonth.org

Harvest of the Month provides resources for the cafeteria, classroom, and community to promote the use of local, seasonal foods.



History of Tomatoes

Tomatoes are a member of the family Solanaceae, along with eggplants, peppers and potatoes. They are native to Central America and Mexico; their dissemination throughout the globe was sparked by the Spanish's colonization of the Americas. In tropical regions, they grow as short-lived perennials; in the temperate region of Vermont, they are annuals.

Fun Facts

- The word tomato stems from the word *tomatl*, which was what the fruit was called in Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs.
- There are over 1,000 varieties of tomatoes.
- Italians refer to the tomato as *pomodoro*, which translates as golden apple.

Reading Corner

Children's Books

- » *A Fruit is a Suitcase for Seeds*, by Jean Richards
- » *I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato*, by Lauren Child
- » *Little Yellow Pear Tomatoes*, by Demian Yumei
- » *Tomatoes Grow on a Vine*, by Mari Schuh

Local Tomato Varieties:



Tang



Green Zebra



Copia Beefsteak



Red Cherry



Black Cherry



Yellow Pear



Amish Paste



San Marzano Paste

Sources: *The Encyclopedia of Healing Foods*, *The Visual Food Encyclopedia*.

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Benefits

Tomatoes are an excellent source of vitamin C, the mineral potassium and lycopene, a member of the carotenoid pigment family; they are a good source of vitamin B3 (niacin), B5 (pantothenic acid), B6 (pyridoxal phosphate) and B9 (folic acid), as well as dietary fiber.



Classroom Connections

Math | Counting Seeds

Supplies needed:

Varieties of tomatoes—aim for small (cherry, pear tomato), medium (green zebra, mountain princess) and large (beefsteak), drop cloths, knives.

Directions:

- Have students estimate the number of seeds inside each size of tomato. Write estimates on the board.
- Next, have students cut the tomatoes and count the seeds by hand.
- Write the true seed counts on the board—compare and contrast with the estimates and between the various sizes.

Science | Compare Tomato Varieties

Supplies needed:

Varieties of tomatoes, a handout that allows for drawings and written observations.

Directions:

- Have students compare and contrast varieties of tomatoes using sight (color, shape, size), touch (texture), taste and smell.
- Create a class bar graph indicating favorite varieties.

Source: GMFTS.

History | Tomato Timeline

Supplies needed:

Follow this link:

<http://www.uvfts.org/fts-tools/classroom/harvest-lessons/> and click on “Tomato Lesson Plan” under “2013-14 Harvest Lesson Plans & Materials”, to print out the timeline and map activity sheets.

Directions:

- Guiding question: Where do tomatoes come from?
- Distribute the map and timeline. Students will read the tomato timeline and mark the tomato’s journey around the world.

Source: *Upper Valley Farm-to-School*.

Note: For extended, standards-based versions of the “Tomato Timeline” and “Counting Seeds” lesson plans, please visit Upper Valley Farm-to-School’s Harvest Lessons: <http://www.uvfts.org/fts-tools/classroom/harvest-lessons/>.