

# Nature's Fast Food Enjoyed In Summer

By BARBARA A. MINTER

What is one of nature's own fast foods, enjoyed year around, the world over, and is most abundant this time of year? That's right, it's North Carolina tomatoes plump, red, flavorful, and vine-ripe!

As a vitamin C rich food, tomatoes are great. One good size vine-ripened tomato will give you about half of your daily quota of vitamin C, as well as a generous proportion of vitamin A. To get the most nutrition from tomatoes, it is best to eat them fresh and raw in salads, sandwiches, stuffed or marinated. Its nice to know though, tomatoes do hold a large share of their vitamins even when cooked or canned.

When shopping for tomatoes, select those which are formed well, ripened, free from blemishes, and have a smooth surface. For tomatoes you plan to eat right away, look for an overall red color and a slight softness. For tomatoes you plan to use in several days, look for firm texture and color ranging from pink to light red.

To continue ripening your tomatoes once you are home, set them in a warm place away from direct sunlight. It is best not to store your tomatoes in the refrigerator until fully ripe. Refrigeration will prevent the fruit from ripening. Once the tomatoes are ripe, they will keep in the refrigerator for several days.

If you are planning to can some of this popular fruit, then you know that it is one of the easiest foods to can. The average bushel of tomatoes will weigh about 53 pounds and yield from 15 to 20 quarts of cut-up tomatoes. This amount will vary depending on whether you add boiling water to your tomato mixture.

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture along with myself invites you to enjoy North Carolina's fresh tomatoes while they are peaked with flavor. Why not try one of these tempting recipes.

## Marinated Sliced Tomatoes

- 3 large tomatoes
- ¼ C. salad oil
- 1 T. lemon juice
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. oregano leaves
- ¼ tsp. minced garlic

Peel and slice tomatoes. Arrange in shallow dish. Combine oil, lemon juice, garlic, salt, black pepper and oregano; mix well. Pour over tomatoes. Cover and refrigerate several hours, until well chilled. Makes 4 servings.

## Grilled Tomatoes

- 6 firm ripe tomatoes
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Ground oregano
- Shredded Cheddar cheese
- Butter or margarine

Cut each tomato in half crosswise; sprinkle cut surfaces with salt, pepper, and oregano. Place each tomato half on a square of heavy-duty aluminum foil. Sprinkle with cheese, and dot with butter. Fold foil securely around tomato halves. Cook on grill over moderate heat 10 to 15 minutes or until tomatoes are tender and cheese is melted. Yield: 6 servings.

## Tomato And Squash Au Gratin

- 2 lbs. yellow summer squash
- ½ cup flour
- ½ cup fat
- ½ cup grated sharp cheese
- 6 sliced fresh North Carolina tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

Wash squash, do not peel, cut in 1" slices. Dip in flour and saute in fat until slightly browned. Place in a greased seven inch casserole in layers with tomatoes. Sprinkle each layer with cheese, salt and pepper. Bake at 350 degrees F. about 30 minutes. Yields 6 servings.

## Mother's Favorite Tomato Preserves

- 5 lbs. firm, ripe, small tomatoes
- 8 cups sugar
- 3 lemons, sliced thinly and cut into half
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 stick cinnamon
- Few pcs. ginger root

Scald tomatoes and slip off the skins. Leave enough core to hold tomato together without losing inside pulp. Put tomatoes in large crockery mixing bowl; cover with sugar and let stand overnight to firm tomatoes. In the morning, drain off all juice in heavy cookery; bring to a boil and boil rapidly until juice will spin a thread. Add spice, lemons, salt and tomatoes. Cook until fruit is clear and syrup is thick. Remove cinnamon and ginger. Fill hot sterile jars; seal; process in boiling water 10 minutes.

# FUN IN THE MAKING!

1. Cut a piece of inner tube or balloon to fit over the top of a jar and tie it on.
2. You will need a smooth stick. Punch a hole in the middle of the rubber just large enough for the stick to go through.
3. Move the stick up and down in the hole making all kinds of eerie noises!



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