Tomatoes have humble beginnings in the wild as small, bitter bush berries. When first domesticated in Mexico, tomatoes were about the size of the ones we today call cherry tomatoes. In recent years, tomatoes have soared in popularity and are an important part of every cuisine.

Just a smaller version of regular tomatoes, the cherry-types are the first to ripen, about mid-summer. During this part of the season, you can count on cherry tomatoes to have better flavor than their larger counterparts. All tomatoes, regardless of size or method of ripening, are best when fully ripe. Place them on the countertop (not in the refrigerator), away from direct sunlight. Be prepared to use them within a day or two.

In the off-growing season, if you must have fresh tomatoes, it’s best to go with the cherry-types. Cherry tomatoes are known for their juiciness, which is fine when eating them raw. However, too much juice leads to a watery problem in some recipes. If you want less juice and more tomato flavor, follow one of these techniques:

1. Roast them, as outlined in this month’s recipe, to cook off excess liquid
2. Toss them with salt and sugar to draw off excess liquid:
   - Cut each cherry tomato into quarters
   - Place in a bowl and toss with ¼ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon sugar per four cups of tomatoes
   - Let stand for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally
   - Give them a whirl in your salad spinner for about one minute; or drain in a colander or on paper towel

A cherry tomato plant can be grown almost anywhere — staked in a small garden or potted in a container on the patio. A single plant will reward you with oodles of fruit, enough for a small household!

Roasted Cherry Tomatoes
Recipe developed by Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski and featured in Residential Dining Services. Serves 6 – 8

- 1 pint (2 cups) Red Cherry Tomatoes
- 1 pint (2 cups) Yellow Cherry Tomatoes
- 2 Tablespoons Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 2 teaspoons Kosher Salt
- 1 teaspoon Cracked Black Pepper

Preheat oven to 350°F. Rinse and dry tomatoes. Place tomatoes in a bowl with olive oil, salt and pepper; toss to evenly coat tomatoes with oil and seasonings.

Place seasoned tomatoes on a baking sheet and roast in oven for five to seven minutes. All ovens work differently; adjust oven temperature to keep tomatoes from popping open while roasting.

Roasted cherry tomatoes may be served as a side dish, tossed with pasta or served as a topping for grilled or sautéed chicken or pork.

Roasted Cherry Tomatoes will be served for lunch at The Gallery at Snyder/Phillips and Riverwalk Market at Owen on June 23. Visit www.eatatstate.com for dining hall hours and menus.