



By Peggy Crum, MA, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

Farmers nowadays can rush tomatoes to market by growing them in high tunnels or hoop houses—those unheated greenhouses that extend the growing season. Tomato-hungry shoppers grab them up after a long winter's famine from fresh tomatoes and having resisted the grocery store imports. While exciting to finally find fresh tomatoes in June, it can be a little hard on the pocketbook to buy them. Here in Michigan, tomatoes are a late summer fruit.

Tomato varieties generally fit into 3 categories:

**Cherry-type tomatoes** are the first to ripen. Small, colorful, and intensely sweet, cherry-type tomatoes are easy-to-grow. Use them raw in salad or roasted for tossing with pasta or putting on pizza. My first harvest of these little jewels often get cut in half, scattered on a plate and drizzled with aged balsamic vinegar and olive oil—worth repeating throughout the season.

**Paste-type tomatoes** such as plum and Roma are thick-skinned and meaty rather than juicy. Great for making sauces and paste, drying, roasting, and canning.

**Beefsteak tomatoes** are round and large to impressively large, and juicy. These are the kind you slice and put on your sandwich, requiring 2 napkins but oh, so worth the drips.

Heirlooms and hybrids are varieties that fit into any of these 3 categories. Heirlooms have been reproduced for generations without cross breeding. Known for their interesting colors, shapes, and flavor, heirlooms take longer to mature and produce fewer tomatoes per plant than their hybrid counterpart, making them pricier at the market. Hybrids are a cross between two tomato varieties to get the best qualities from both parents. Hybrid tomato plants yield more tomatoes with dependable red, smooth, and round "regular" tomatoes.

For flavorful tomatoes when out of season, buy commercially canned tomatoes. Or try [canning or freezing](#) your favorites for the taste of summer all winter long.

# RECIPE for health

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featured food:  
**TOMATOES**

## Roasted Tomato Sauce

By Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski, Residential Dining Services

Yield: about 1 quart

- 5 T. canola oil
- 1/2 c. medium diced white onion
- 1/4 c. medium diced celery
- 1/4 c. medium diced carrots
- 1 T. tomato paste
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 2 c. chicken (or vegetable) broth
- 1 c. beef (or vegetable) broth
- 2 T. cashews
- 2# (about 16 medium) Roma tomatoes, quartered
- 1 t. garam masala
- 1/4 t. cayenne pepper (more if you like spicy)
- 1 t. paprika
- 1 t. tandoori seasoning
- 1/2 t. curry powder
- 1/2 t. cumin, ground
- Salt and pepper to taste

Heat 3 T. oil in a saucepan and sauté onions, celery, and carrots for 5 minutes. Add tomato paste and garlic; sauté for an additional minute. Deglaze the pan with broth. Bring to a boil and then reduce heat to medium low. Add cashews to sauce. Simmer while roasting tomatoes.

Coat the tomatoes with remaining oil and spread them in a single layer on rimmed baking sheets. Put in a preheated 350°F oven for 15 to 20 minutes. Remove from oven.

Add roasted tomatoes and spices to your sauce. Let sauce simmer for an additional 15 minutes. While warm, blend until smooth with immersion blender or a regular blender. Pour through fine-mesh strainer. Taste and adjust with salt and pepper.

Serve with pork, chicken, beef, vegetables, or grain.