



RECIPE for health

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featured food:

ROMA TOMATOES

By Peggy Crum, MA, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

It's tomato time in Michigan and it's brief—a flash in the pan, really. If you're a tomato lover, best get into the kitchen to set some summer aside for the rest of the year.

Romas, a type of paste tomato, preserve well because of their meaty texture and low moisture. While Romas may be frozen in any shape or form, the easiest way to freeze them is whole. Select firm, ripe tomatoes; wash well by wetting, rubbing the surface of each tomato and rinsing under running water; dry with a clean kitchen cloth or paper towel. Place the tomatoes on sheet trays and freeze. Once they are frozen, place them in freezer bags and seal tightly. Remove them a few at a time. Hold the frozen tomato under warm running water to slip off the skin. Good for use in cooking.

Grating tomatoes into pulp makes them more compact if your freezer space is limited. Tomato pulp is perfect for making sauces. Wash tomatoes well and cut them in half through the middle. Use the largest holes on your vegetable grater, place the cut side of the tomato half against the grater blade and grate down as closely to the tomato skin as you can. Place pulp in freezer bags and freeze flat.

Another method for preparing tomatoes for the freezer is slow-roasting, not to be confused with drying. Slow-roasting cooks the tomatoes and removes some of the liquid but does not dehydrate sufficiently for preservation. Start with fresh unblemished tomatoes and wash them well before cutting. Then cut away the stem scar and cut each in half lengthwise. Place cut side up in a single layer on parchment paper-lined baking sheets. Drizzle generously with olive oil and sprinkle lightly with salt, herbs or spices. Roast in 200°F oven for 10 to 12 hours. Cool then place the baking sheets in the freezer. Place frozen roasted tomatoes in freezer bags then back to the freezer. Excellent for adding to pasta dishes, making sauces and topping bruschetta.

Sofrito

Recipe developed by Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski and featured in Residential Dining Services. Makes 2 ½ - 3 cups.

- 3 pounds ripe Roma tomatoes
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 4 cup small diced onions
- ½ cup small diced red pepper
- 8 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 c. vegetable broth
- 1 t. dried thyme
- 1 dried bay leaf
- 1 t. smoked paprika
- Honey to taste
- Red wine vinegar or lemon juice to taste
- Salt and pepper to taste

Bring stock pot of water to a boil. Meanwhile, prepare tomatoes for blanching: wash and core them, then score blossom ends with an X. Place a few tomatoes at a time in boiling water for 15 to 20 seconds (longer if the tomatoes are not perfectly ripe), then transfer immediately to an ice bath. When cool, slip off skins. Next, cut tomatoes in half through the middle to expose the seeds. Hold tomato half over a bowl and gently squeeze; use your fingers to help the seeds come out while squeezing as gently as possible. Once the tomatoes are peeled and deseeded, cut them into a large dice and set aside.

In a non-reactive sauce pan, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add onions and sauté for about 5 minutes. Add red pepper and garlic and continue to sauté for an additional 2 minutes. Transfer mixture to food processor or blender and blend until smooth. Put puree back into sauce pan. Add tomatoes, broth, thyme, bay leaf and paprika. Simmer until sauce has thickened, about 30 minutes. Add honey or vinegar to adjust tartness to suit your taste buds—go slowly as ½ teaspoon of either may be enough. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Serve sofrito as a sauce to season vegetables, pasta or other dishes.

Try **Sofrito** for lunch at The Gallery at Snyder/Phillips, Brody Square and Riverwalk Market at Owen on September 11.