

ROMA TOMATO



Like crops grown in the Yuma area, acreage devoted to tomatoes is minimal, yet an important one for those who produce and utilize it. Roma Tomato or Roma is a plum tomato which is commonly found in supermarkets. The Roma tomato is a meaty, egg- or pear-shaped tomato that is available in red and yellow. It has few seeds and is a good canning and sauce tomato. The Roma is not considered an heirloom tomato. Roma tomatoes are also known as Italian tomatoes or Italian plum tomatoes.

Roma tomatoes are grown in the United States, Mexico, Australia and Great Britain. The vines are determinate, which means that the fruit ripens at one time, rather than continually through the season. Roma tomatoes fruit heavily, making it a popular variety for making tomato-based sauces and ketchup. While Roma is an open-pollinated variety rather than a hybrid, it has been steadily improved to the point where most Roma tomato vines are *fusarium* wilt and *verticillium* resistant. Most commercial plum tomatoes sold in markets in the Western Hemisphere are Romas or related types. Smaller plum-shaped tomatoes are sometimes sold as "baby Romas".

A Roma tomato is a paste tomato and generally has a thicker fruit wall, fewer seeds and a denser but grainier flesh. Roma tomatoes tend to be oblong in shape and heavy for their size. They also tend to be more firm than a non-Roma tomato. While they can be eaten raw, they are at their best when they are cooked.

Americans consume 80 tons of tomatoes on average each year and obtain more of their vitamins from this source than any other fruit or vegetable. There is a considerable difference in vitamin content and taste between gassed and vine-ripened tomatoes---with the latter normally containing far more vitamins and a better taste.

The first tomatoes grown were similar in size to modern day cherry tomatoes. The larger, sliceable varieties were grown and produced by farmers much later. The largest tomato ever recorded weighed 7 pounds and was grown in Oklahoma.

Researchers determined that Aztecs in South America developed the tomato, as we know it. When the first conquistadors arrived in Mexico, the red fruit attracted their attention and intrigued them. In the 1600's, they shipped some to Europe, but at first, the tomato failed to excite the palates of Europeans. When tomatoes were labeled tomato as an aphrodisiac their popularity soared.

The best Roma tomatoes come from San Marzano, just outside of Naples, Italy, where both climatic conditions and soil composition are ideal for this versatile fruit to acquire that bright red color and pleasant acidity, not to speak of a delectable texture. Italians are masters of the tomato sauce often used in pastas, soups and pizzas. Of course, meat dishes and often stews are liberally flavored with fresh or canned tomatoes. San Marzano tomato seeds brought to North America and planted in many states produce a good crop, but most claim that the taste never compares with that of those grown near Naples.

Roma tomatoes are harvested roughly 100 to 120 days after the seeds are planted. At the mature green stage, they have reached their full size and contain virtually all of the vitamins and nutrients of fully ripened tomatoes.

Among vegetables, fresh tomatoes rank third in popularity with American consumers, after potatoes and lettuce. Tomato consumption in the US has increased by 50% over the past 40 years, and continues to climb. In 2009, per capita consumption reached 20.8 pounds per person, according to USDA's Economic Research Service.

Roma tomatoes are oval shaped tomatoes that make a great sauce. Roma tomatoes are a rich red flavorful tomato that is good for cooking with or eating raw. The Roma tomato is meaty and full of flesh that is tasty and boils into a sauce that is good for canning. A Roma tomato is a popular type of tomato for Italian sauces. It is also a good tomato for salads.

The Roma tomato is easier to make into tomato sauces than a beefsteak tomato. Romas tend to boil down faster than a salad tomato and have more flesh and less juice than a regular tomato. They also have more flesh and less liquid which makes them the perfect choice for sauces and canning. However, a Roma can be cut up and eaten in salads, sandwiches or raw just like a big boy tomato or a big girl tomato.

Tomato canning is the best way to enjoy the flavors of the best tasting tomatoes and is also one of the best methods of storing tomatoes and preserving the health benefits of tomatoes for up to a year. Cooking does destroy some of the nutritional value of tomatoes. And more vitamins are lost as the storage time lengthens. Still, canned tomatoes will retain about a third of their vitamins.

What is not lost in canning or storage is minerals. An average tomato contains: Potassium, Phosphorus, Magnesium, Calcium, Selenium, and Iron.

Roma tomatoes, also known as plum tomatoes, are oval or plum shaped and usually medium sized. Many Roma varieties are low in acid, although not all. This tomato isn't as juicy as other tomatoes, which gives them a more concentrated flavor that works well in sauces and stews. These are also the best tomatoes for drying.

Tomatoes belong to the genus *Lycopersicon*, which is in the same family as potatoes. The resemblance is within the leaves and flowers.

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