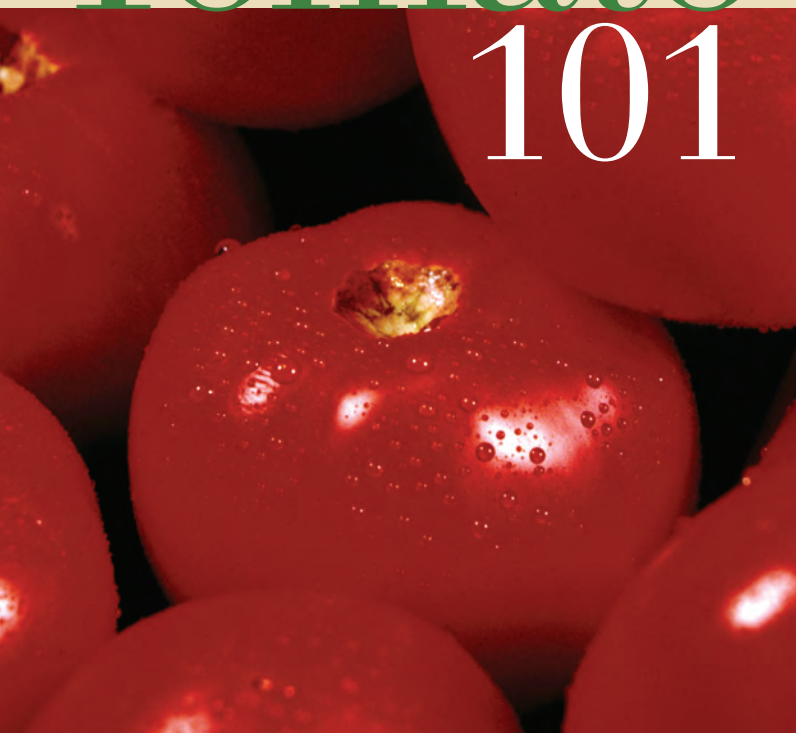


Tomato

101



The tomato, native to the Americas, has made its mark on cuisines around the world. The conquistadors encountered tomatoes, called xitomatl by the Aztecs, when they arrived in the New World. When they carried their discovery back to Spain, the name became tomate. From there, tomatoes made their way to the rest of Europe. Temperate regions along the Mediterranean were particularly conducive to growing this sun-loving fruit. On its travels, the tomato found its way into Spanish gazpachos, French salads, Italian sauces, North African tagines and, eventually, Indian curries and other Asian dishes.

The fruit that acts like a vegetable

Botanically, the tomato is a fruit of the vine. In the kitchen, it is almost always treated as a vegetable. In fact, in 1893, the United States Supreme Court ruled, for the purpose of levying a tariff, that the tomato was a vegetable.

Growing tomatoes in Florida

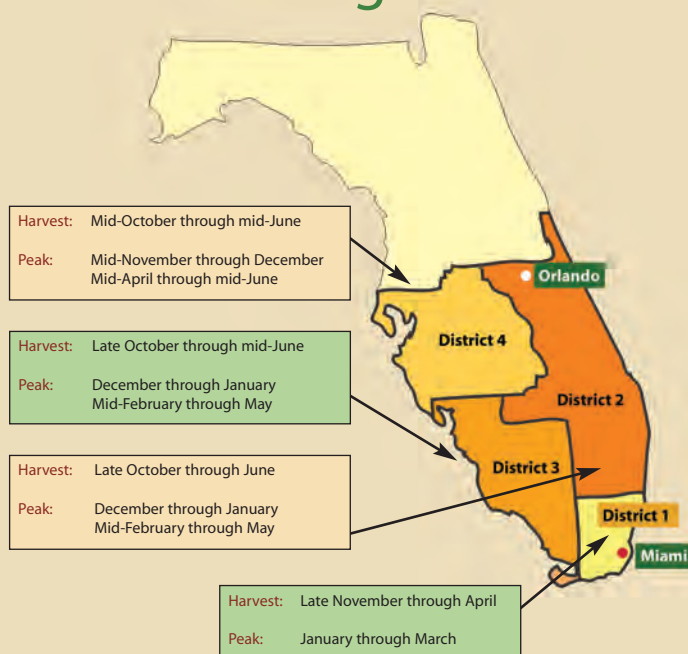
Like the sunny Mediterranean region, Florida has the warm temperatures necessary for cultivating tomatoes. This state's tomato industry is believed to have started in the 1870s. Today, Florida is the nation's largest producer of fresh tomatoes.

With almost every southern county in the state cultivating tomatoes, Florida produces virtually all the fresh-market, field-grown tomatoes in the US from October through June each year, and accounts for about 50 % of all fresh tomatoes produced domestically.

Producing, harvesting and packing fresh Florida tomatoes

- Tomato plants are started in greenhouses, and the seedlings are transplanted to fields about five weeks later. One pound of seed produces up to 140,000 tomato plants!
- As they grow, nearly all the tomato plants are supported by stakes. This greatly increases production costs, but improves yields and the overall quality of the fruit.
- The tomatoes are harvested by hand 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.
- Following a warm chlorinated bath and rinse, the tomatoes are graded by size and color and shipped to market.

Florida Tomato District Harvesting Schedule



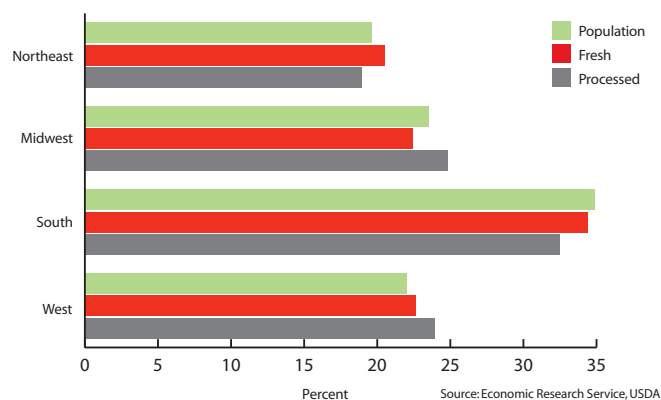
FLORIDA TOMATO FACTS AND FIGURES

- Approximately 31,500 acres were under cultivation for the fresh tomato market.
- Florida ships more than 1.1 billion pounds of fresh tomatoes to the US, Canada and abroad.
- About 33,000 workers are needed to hand pick the fruit.
- Total crop value at the farm level exceeds \$619 million.
- The cost of producing and harvesting tomatoes averages nearly \$12,000 per acre.
- Tomatoes comprise nearly one-third the total value of all fresh vegetables produced in Florida each year.

Consumers love fresh Florida 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 19.3 pounds per person, according to USDA's Economic Research Service.

U.S. Population and Tomato Consumption, by Region



Census region:	Population	Fresh	Processed
Northeast	19.6%	20.5%	18.9%
Midwest	23.5%	22.4%	24.8%
South	34.9%	34.4%	32.5%
West	22.0%	22.6%	23.9%

The research process is laborious because, as researcher Dr. J. W. Scott of the University of Florida says, "Genetic control is complex and environment has a profound effect on flavor." Changes in the genetic makeup take place through traditional breeding, not GMOs (genetically modified organisms).

Cultivation of high-lycopene tomatoes is in a testing phase, with breeding plots established for promising lines and hybrids. These must also meet high standards for flavor and, to that end, are being tested under a variety of soil conditions. Preliminary studies rate high-lycopene tomatoes excellent in flavor.

"We do a lot of tomato tasting, always in the hope of making progress that will result in new improved varieties for growers—and for consumers," says Dr. Scott.

Florida tomato industry committed to safe product

Food safety is a top priority for the Florida tomato industry. Nothing is more important to Florida's tomato growers than the confidence of their customers in our product's quality and wholesomeness. Producers are committed to taking whatever proactive steps are necessary to ensure and enhance the safety of the food they produce.

Florida is the first state in the country to adopt a comprehensive food safety program with mandatory government inspection and audit for tomato handling, production and packing. These Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and Best Management Practices (BMPs) were adopted as state regulations, effective July 1, 2008.

Highlights of the program include:

- Annual registration of all packers and repackers of tomatoes in Florida, to be facilitated by county extension offices
- Education, training courses and workshops on food safety practices
- Regulatory inspections and audits by state inspectors with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services FDACS

Field-Grown for Freshness, Flavor, Firmness & Texture

After tasting Florida tomatoes side by side with Mexican-grown and hothouse varieties, two out of three participants in a taste panel of 1,200 consumers said that Florida tomatoes had the best flavor. Of those who preferred Florida tomatoes, 60% said that overall flavor was the reason for their choice. Others singled out "sweetness," "texture" and "juiciness" as qualities they valued in the Florida fruit. The independent study, conducted by Rose Research, Inc., in New York, confirmed an earlier series of flavor tests conducted over four years by the University of Florida and the US Department of Agriculture.

In another survey, more than three-fourths of the consumers surveyed indicated that they prefer USA-grown tomatoes over imports.

Ongoing research focused on flavor

Building on their success, Florida's tomato growers are always working to improve the flavor and nutritional values of their product. Their goal is to grow a tomato with superior flavor, with just the right balance of sugars, acids and fruity/floral aromatics, and a higher level of the antioxidant lycopene.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size: 1 medium tomato (148g)	
Calories: 25	
Calories from fat: 0	
% Daily Value*	
Total fat	0g 0%
Saturated Fat	0g 0%
Cholesterol	0mg 0%
Sodium	20mg 1%
Total Carbohydrate	5g 2%
Dietary Fiber	1g 4%
Sugars	3g
Protein	1g
Vitamin A	20%
Vitamin C	40%
Calcium	2%
Iron	4%

Source: FDA/USDA