

tantalizing **TOMATO** tidbits

FAMILY FEATURES

Great appetizers are full of flavor to stimulate the appetite, but not so rich that they spoil it. To get that balance, look to fresh, flavorful ingredients like Florida tomatoes.

Ripe tomatoes add beautiful color, great taste, and a host of healthy nutrients — like vitamin C — to any appetizer. Chef Justin Timinieri, known as the Florida Chef, and Florida Tomatoes have created some mouthwatering appetizer recipes using the versatile, tantalizing tomato.

- **Tomato Cobb Salad Wrap** — Turn a favorite salad into a tasty finger food by wrapping up Cobb salad ingredients in a flour tortilla.
- **Tomato and Avocado Salsa** — Whether you make it mild or spice it up, this salsa will make a lot of mouths happy. Try serving it in individual, wide mouthed glasses so guests can dip and re-dip as much as they like.
- **Hot Artichoke Dip Stuffed Tomatoes** — A savory party favorite, this dip gets extra flavor by being paired up with juicy baked tomatoes.
- **Bruschetta with Tomatoes, Blue Cheese and Pecans** — Sweet, savory, crunchy, salty — this appetizer has it all.

To get more appetizer and party-ready recipes, as well as sign up for a free newsletter, visit www.floridatomatoes.org.

Tomato and Avocado Salsa

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

- 2 large Florida tomatoes, diced
- 1 large avocado, peeled, seeded and diced
- 1/2 cup red onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup bell pepper, chopped
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 lime, juiced
- 1 teaspoon powdered cumin
- Your favorite hot sauce (or heat)
- Kosher salt and fresh ground pepper to taste

In medium mixing bowl, combine all ingredients. Stir to combine.

Taste and adjust seasoning with salt, pepper and hot sauce.

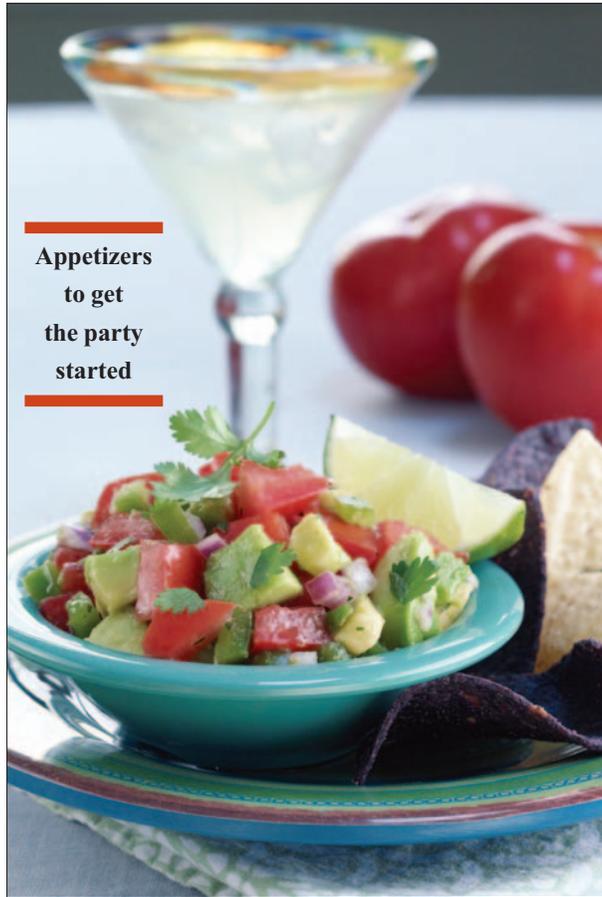
Serve at room temperature for best flavor.

For hotter version, substitute 1 seeded fresh jalapeño pepper for green pepper. Also, if you prefer, use toasted cumin seed instead of ground cumin.

Don't Refrigerate

For the best tomato flavor, never refrigerate them. A chilled tomato will not finish ripening because cold halts the ripening process. Cold also kills the flavor of tomatoes, so even when the tomatoes are fully ripe, keep them out of the refrigerator.

Appetizers to get the party started



Hot Artichoke Dip Stuffed Tomatoes

Yield: 4 servings

- 1 package (8 ounces) low-fat cream cheese, softened
- 2 large fresh Florida tomatoes, seeds removed and diced
- 1/4 cup low-fat mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup Parmesan or Romano cheese, grated
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon fresh basil
- 1 can low-sodium artichoke hearts, drained and chopped fine
- 1 cup fresh spinach, chopped
- 1 lemon, juiced
- Kosher salt and fresh ground pepper to taste
- 4 large fresh Florida tomatoes
- 1/4 cup mozzarella cheese, shredded

Preheat oven to 375°F.

In medium mixing bowl, combine cream cheese, diced tomatoes, mayonnaise, Parmesan cheese, garlic and fresh basil. Stir in chopped artichoke hearts and spinach. Taste mixture and adjust seasoning with lemon juice, kosher salt and fresh ground pepper. Set stuffing mixture aside.

Rinse whole tomatoes under cold running water and pat dry with clean paper towels. Slice off top of each tomato with a serrated knife; cut in half. Squeeze each half to loosen seeds. Using a spoon, scoop out 1/3 of the insides of tomato. Fill tomatoes with stuffing mixture. Top each stuffed tomato with shredded mozzarella.

Place stuffed tomatoes in baking dish and put into preheated oven. Bake for 10 to 15 minutes or until bubbly and golden brown. Remove from oven and let cool slightly. Serve warm with tortilla chips, crisp flatbreads, or sliced vegetables.

Bruschetta with Tomatoes, Blue Cheese and Pecans

Yield: 4 servings

- 2 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup crumbled blue cheese
- 2 tablespoons coarsely chopped pecans
- 4 slices crusty, firm-textured bread, cut about 3/4 inch thick
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and halved
- 2 large Florida tomatoes, sliced about 1/8 inch thick
- Freshly ground pepper to taste
- Chopped fresh basil or dried basil for garnish

In small bowl, mash cheeses together with fork, leaving mixture somewhat chunky. Mix in pecans.

Preheat broiler. Arrange bread on small baking sheet and broil slices for about 1 minute on each side, just until golden. Watch carefully so bread doesn't burn.

Rub one side of each piece of bread with garlic.

Spread some of the cheese mixture over each slice and arrange 2 or 3 overlapping tomato slices on top. Pepper tomatoes lightly, then garnish with basil and serve.

How Much?

1 medium tomato, seeded = approximately 3/4 cup chopped.

1 large tomato, seeded = 1 cup chopped.

1 pound of tomatoes = approximately 2 1/2 cups chopped, or 2 cups puréed.



Tomato Cobb Salad Wrap

Yield: 4 servings

- 4 large (10-inch) flour tortillas
- 6 tablespoons prepared blue cheese dressing
- 8 ounces sliced cooked turkey breast
- 3 medium, fully ripened fresh Florida tomatoes (about 1 pound), cut into thin slices
- 4 leaves Boston, iceberg or leaf lettuce

- 1 ripe Hass avocado, peeled and cut into thin slices
- 4 strips cooked bacon

Spread each tortilla with 1 1/2 tablespoons of dressing.

Top with layers of turkey, tomato, lettuce, avocado and bacon, dividing evenly. Roll up tortillas. If desired, tie each wrap with chives, or secure with long toothpicks, and cut each sandwich in half. To serve, stand both halves of each sandwich on cut ends. Garnish with tomato wedges, green onions and avocado.