



Tomato History

There are so many ways to enjoy tomatoes; eaten like an apple fresh from the garden, underneath a layer of cheese and veggies on pizza or on top of spaghetti as sauce. It's hard to imagine life in the United States without the tomato. The truth is, Americans didn't start growing and eating them until the 1800's.

Many people believe our third president, Thomas Jefferson, was the first American to not only grow, but also eat the tomato. Up until this time, many thought the plant was beautiful decoration, but poisonous to eat.

By 1870, tomatoes began to be grown commercially. This means farmers grew them to sell to markets and buyers. It is believed that the first major farms to grow tomatoes for market in the United States were in Manatee County in the west-central region of Florida.

Today, Florida ships more than 1 billion pounds of fresh tomatoes to the rest of the United States, Canada and other countries. That is approximately 1 pound of tomatoes for each person living in India. That's a lot of a delicious fruit that eats like a vegetable.



Ask Terra

As a field-grown Florida Tomato, Terra knows a lot about tomatoes. Below are some of her favorite questions.

Question:

Is a tomato a fruit or a vegetable?

Terra:

Both! The tomato has the characteristics of a fruit, but it is most often used like a vegetable. In 1893 the United States Supreme Court determined the tomato would officially be called a vegetable.

Question:

Why is it important for me to eat fruits and vegetables?

Terra:

Fruits and vegetables have many things your body needs to be strong. The tomato alone has lots of Vitamin C, which helps keep you from getting sick and Vitamin A, which helps keep your eyes and bones healthy.

Question:

How big is the biggest tomato ever grown?

Terra:

According to Guinness World Records, the heaviest tomato was grown by Gordon Graham in Edmond, Oklahoma and weighed in at 7.75 pounds.

The largest tomato plant grew in the happiest place on earth – Walt Disney World. Grown as a science project in EPCOT, the tomato plant was measured to be 610.63 ft on March 27, 2007. (That's longer than a professional football field)

Note:

If you have a question for Terra, please e-mail it to Terra@floridatomatoes.org



Terra's Tasty Treats

Tips for making tomato-eating fun for kids and grown-ups.

Note to Parents:

Including your young one in menu planning and meal creation is a wonderful way for them to take responsibility for what they eat.

Shape it Up!

Materials:

Field-grown Florida Tomatoes

Shaped cookie cutter

Directions:

Ask an adult to cut a tomato in slices that are about 1 inch thick

Use cookie cutter to create desired shape

Arrange on plate and serve.

Use any scrap pieces you may have to add pop to your dinner salad.

Color Me Tomato

Materials:

Field-grown Florida Tomatoes in a variety of colors.

Directions:

Give your meal a color theme. Fresh field-grown Florida tomatoes come in more than one color. Try using a different color in your favorite dish and theme your meal around it. You may be surprised how much fun a new color can be.

Take a recipe like Fresh Vegetable Pita Pizza and make it your own yellow extravaganza by using yellow tomatoes, corn, and yellow squash, yum!

Goofy Names Game

Materials:

Field-grown Florida Tomatoes

Directions:

Help prepare your favorite tomato dish and rename it.

For example, that's not Fresh Tomato Linguini, it's Squiggles and Squishies.

For more ideas and inspiration look to your local library and books like Lauren Child's *I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato*.



Terra's Tomato Tryers

What do the children of Florida say when they try a tomato?

Aiden, age 5

"I like when I bite a tomato and the juice squishes on my face."

Payton, age 12

"I used to think tomatoes were kind of gross. The other night, my Dad and I chopped some up and put them on our pizza and now I think they're pretty good."

Ella, age 9

"My favorite way to eat a tomato is when it's on a sandwich with turkey, cheese, and avocado in a Panini."

Gregory, age 4

"Tomatoes are fun to eat because I can pull it out of my sandwich and do this, chomp, chomp, chomp."

Owen, age 3

"Yesterday night I don't like tomatoes. Sometimes I have them with my scabetti (spaghetti) and it's yummy!"



My friend Carson likes to eat them like this:

Try a tomato and tell us what you think!