

WORDS THAT DESCRIBE **TOMATOES**

FLAVOR • COLOR • TEXTURE

acidic

tart

grassy

sweet

seedy

sour

salty



meaty

juicy

fruity

metallic

balanced

astringent



GARDEN STATE ON YOUR PLATESM IS A PROJECT OF THE PRINCETON SCHOOL GARDENS COOPERATIVE, PRINCETON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AND POMPTONIAN FOOD SERVICE, WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM BENT SPOON, WHOLE EARTH CENTER, LILLIPES BAKERY, AND CHURCH & DWIGHT EMPLOYEE GIVING FUND.

© Adobe Stock • Rachel Diamond Design

Looking Back

History

A likely wild ancestor of the tomato, the red-fruited *Solanum pimpinellifolium*, arrived around 80,000 years ago in western South America.

Another ancestor emerged later, along a coastal region from Ecuador to northern Chile, including the Galapagos Islands.

Scientists think that the seeds were transported north across Central America

into Mesoamerica via migratory birds and ocean currents well before human influence, though road systems used mostly by llama caravans did link societies in the Andes Mountains, today's Southwestern US and the Maya lowlands.



What's in a Name?

Solanum lycopersicumin, aka...

In Mesoamerica, the Nahuatl word for tomato is tomatl; the Aztec word xitomatl. Solanum is the Latin word for nightshade; sol means sun or to soothe. Lycos is Greek for wolf; persicumin means peach. Wolf peach is a combination of the plant's botanical classification and early European folklore. In German lore, wild nightshades were associated with witchcraft and were believed to be used in potions that could summon werewolves.



Maps, Migration, & Culture

Around the World

Early writings of Aztecs in Mexico show at least 50 unique tomato recipes, including one that uses tomatoes, peppers, and seasoning. From Central and South America, conquistadors delivered the tomato to Spain and to southern Europe in the mid-16th century. English botanist William Salmon reported tomatoes in Carolina in 1710; in the late 1700s, the fruit began being used in cooking in the South of France. Around 1880, pizza was invented in Naples. They were brought to Africa and the Middle East in the 19th century. In 1876, Henry Heinz created tomato ketchup, and in 1897, Joseph Campbell discovered how to can tomatoes and sell them as condensed tomato soup.



GARDEN STATE ON YOUR PLATESM IS A PROJECT OF THE PRINCETON SCHOOL GARDENS COOPERATIVE, PRINCETON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AND POMPTONIAN FOOD SERVICE, WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM BENT SPOON, WHOLE EARTH CENTER, LILLIPIES BAKERY, AND CHURCH & DWIGHT EMPLOYEE GIVING FUND.

© Adobe Stock • Rachel Diamond Design

SM

The Spoken Word
Google Translates

Words for Tomato

Latin: lycopersicum

Arabic: م ط ا م ط

Cantonese: 番茄

French: tomate

Haitian Creole: tomat

Hindi: टमाटर

Italian: pomodoro

German: tomate

Japanese: トマト

Persian: یگنرفهجوگ

Spanish: tomate

Swahili: nyanya

Ukrainian: помідор



Heart & Soul

Art & Literature

Guy Clark
"Homegrown Tomatoes"

**"There ain't nothin' in the world that I like better
Than bacon and lettuce and homegrown tomatoes
Up in the mornin', out in the garden
Get you a ripe one, don't get a hard one
Plant 'em in the spring, eat 'em in the summer
All winter without 'em's a culinary bummer
I forget all about the sweatin' and diggin'
Every time I go out and pick me a big one
Homegrown tomatoes, homegrown tomatoes
What'd life be without homegrown tomatoes?
Only two things that money can't buy
And that's true love and homegrown tomatoes..."**

~ **"Better Days" album, 1983**



Tomatoes and a Pewter Tankard on a Table, Paul Gauguin, 1883



Botany

One of the earliest-known European references to the tomato was made in 1544 by the Italian herbalist Pietro Andrea Mattioli, who classified it as a nightshade and, incorrectly, as a mandrake.* We know now that *Solanum lycopersicum*, a close relative to potatoes, tomatillos, eggplants, peppers, and tobacco, is an edible berry. But the Supreme Court said no. In a 1893 tax ruling in *Nix v. Hedden*, the justices wrote that botanically speaking, tomatoes were fruits. But in everyday life, they declared, vegetables were things "usually served at dinner" so the importer must pay the vegetable tariff (fruits had no such levy).

*"The Greek physician Dioscorides (AD 40-90) describe the early use of mandrake as an anesthetic used to numb and sedate patients; in "The Odyssey," the enchantress Circe used Mandragora in a brew to turn Odysseus' men into swine."



Ripe for the Picking

Season's Best

Garden State tomatoes are at their peak from around the first of July to the waning days of October. Look for cherry, grape, plum (Roma/sauce), and heirloom varieties at farmers' markets, or grow them in your garden. At the market, choose fruits that are heavy for their size, and somewhat yielding to gentle pressure with a finger. Smell the stem end and choose earthy, floral scents; at home, store tomatoes on the counter, or on a platter. Don't refrigerate.



Soil & Sun & Water

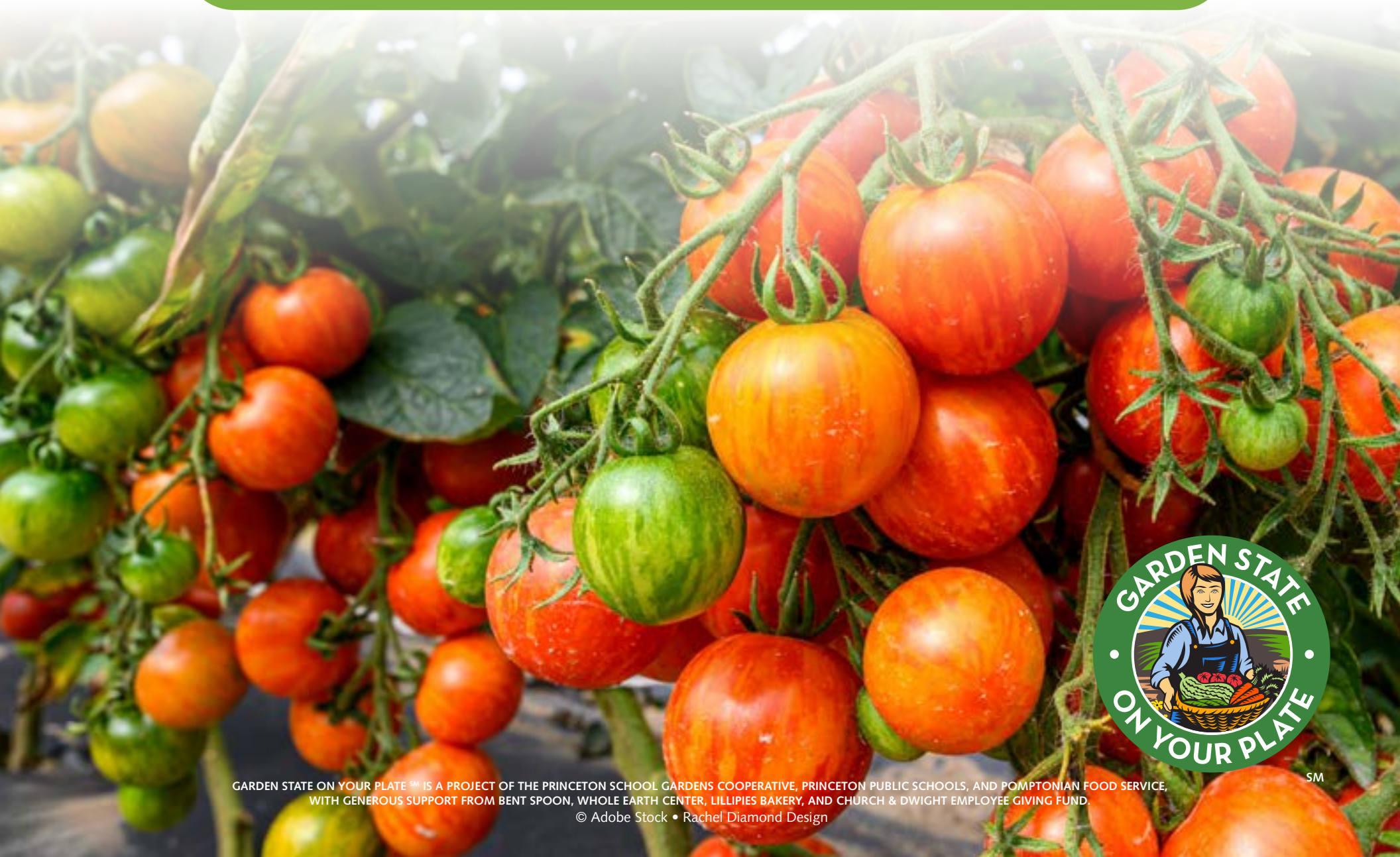
In the Garden

Tomato plants are tender annuals. Plant in full sun and in well-drained soil after all risk of frost has passed, between April 21-April 24. Pinch the lower leaves of the plant off, and dig a hole deep enough to hold the entire stem up to the remaining leaves.

Mulch thickly and water regularly.

Use tomato cages or stakes for vertical support. Tomatoes grown from seedlings will begin producing in 50-100 days; if planted from seed, expect fruits in 100-120 days.

Companion/guild plantings: Marigolds, basil, chives or garlic, borage, carrots, cucumbers, leafy greens

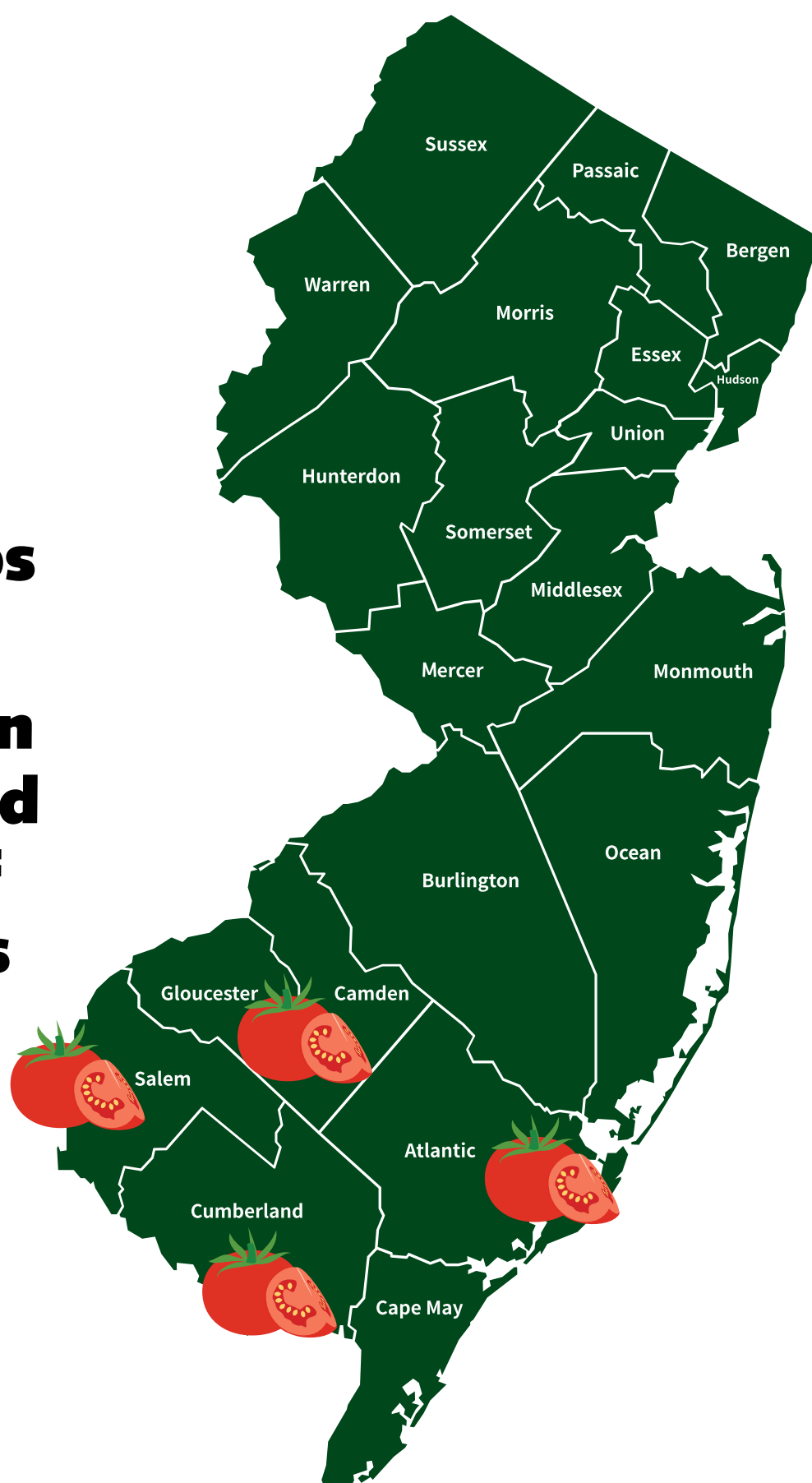


By The Numbers

Math & Money

China, India, Turkey and the US grow the most tomatoes. New Jersey is 8th or 9th in the top US producers, with California in the lead. Tomatoes are among the top 10 crops of New Jersey.

In a recent year, Garden State farmers harvested 79.1 million pounds of fresh-market tomatoes and processed tomato products from 2,900 acres, worth \$46.4 million. The majority of wholesale production and acreage is in the inner Coastal Plain, in the counties of Gloucester, Cumberland, Salem, and Atlantic.



Tomatoes &...

Ingredient Pairings

Tomato pairs well with almonds, anchovies, arugula, avocado, beets, capers, carrots, celery, chicken, chickpeas, chile peppers, coconut milk, crab, cucumber, eggplant, eggs, fennel, frisee, garlic, goat cheese, leeks, legumes, mayonnaise, mozzarella, mushrooms, olives, peas, chile peppers, prosciutto, shellfish, ricotta, onions, fennel, Gorgonzola, watercress, watermelon, & yogurt

FLAVORINGS THAT GO WELL WITH TOMATOES

basil • butter • cayenne • chervil • chives • cilantro • coriander
cumin • dill • garlic • ginger • lemon • lime • mint • oregano •
salt • thyme • vinegar



Senses & Physiology

In the Kitchen

Bake, broil, fry, grill, roast, saute, or stew - tomatoes can star or perform a supporting role in cuisines around the world. To prep, wash under cold running water. Remove the stem, and with the tip of a sharp knife, cut a divot around the core base. To peel for a recipe, lower them, one by one, on a slotted spoon, into boiling water, then remove after about 30-45 seconds. Transfer the fruit to a bowl of cold water, and then slip the peel off.



GARDEN STATE ON YOUR PLATESM IS A PROJECT OF THE PRINCETON SCHOOL GARDENS COOPERATIVE, PRINCETON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AND POMPTONIAN FOOD SERVICE, WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM BENT SPOON, WHOLE EARTH CENTER, LILLIPES BAKERY, AND CHURCH & DWIGHT EMPLOYEE GIVING FUND.

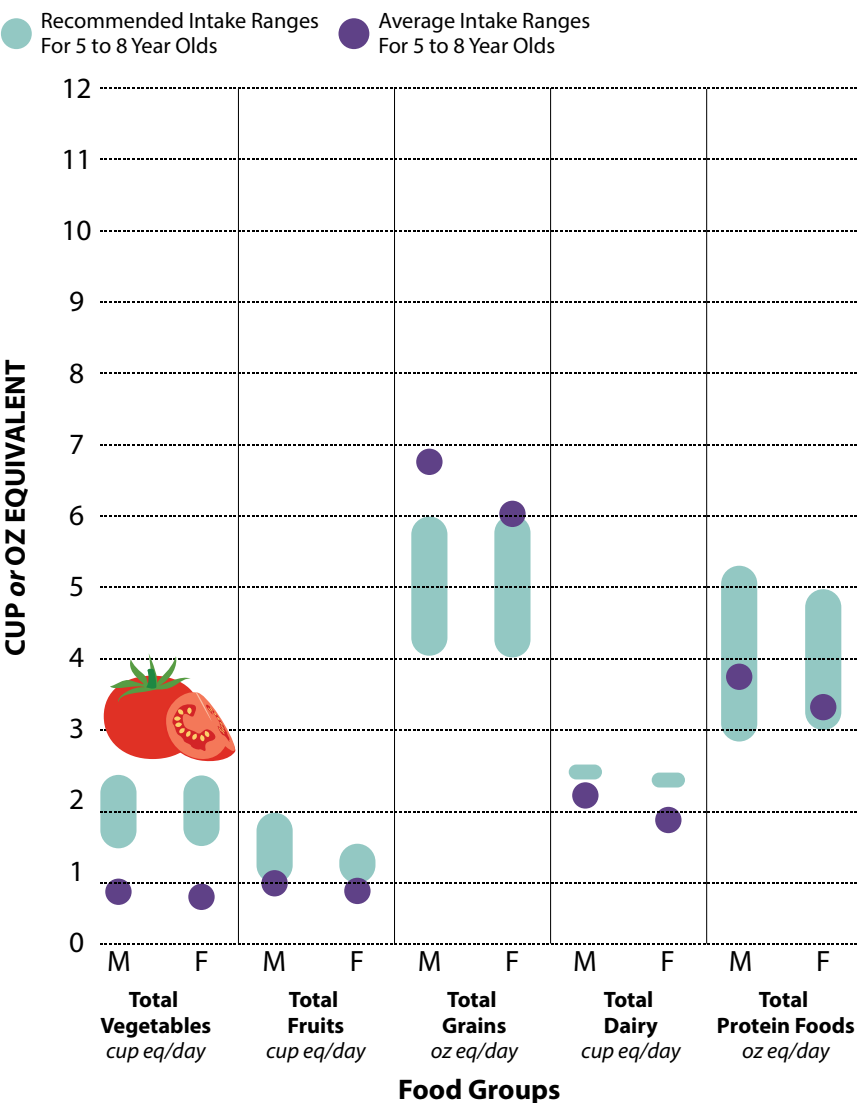
© Adobe Stock • Rachel Diamond Design
Merve Nur Türker • Pexels.com

SM

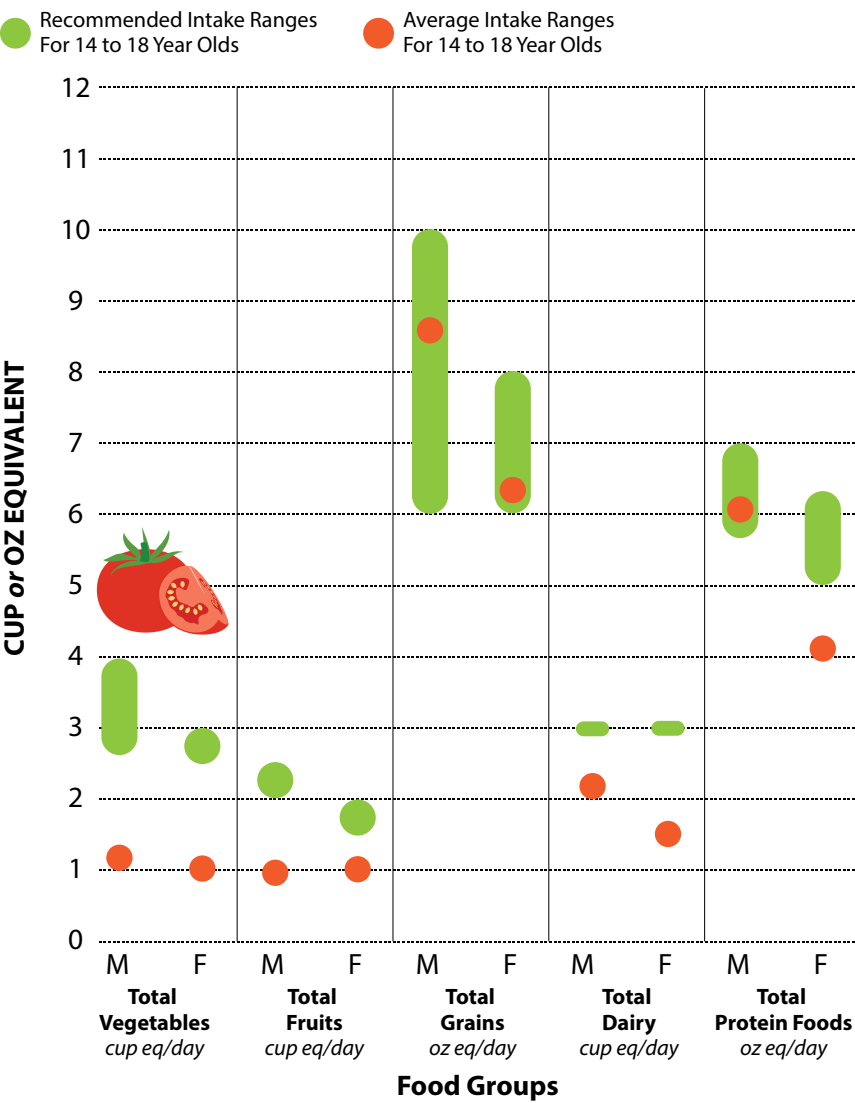
Nutrition for Body & Mind

Fuel for Learning & Powerful Play

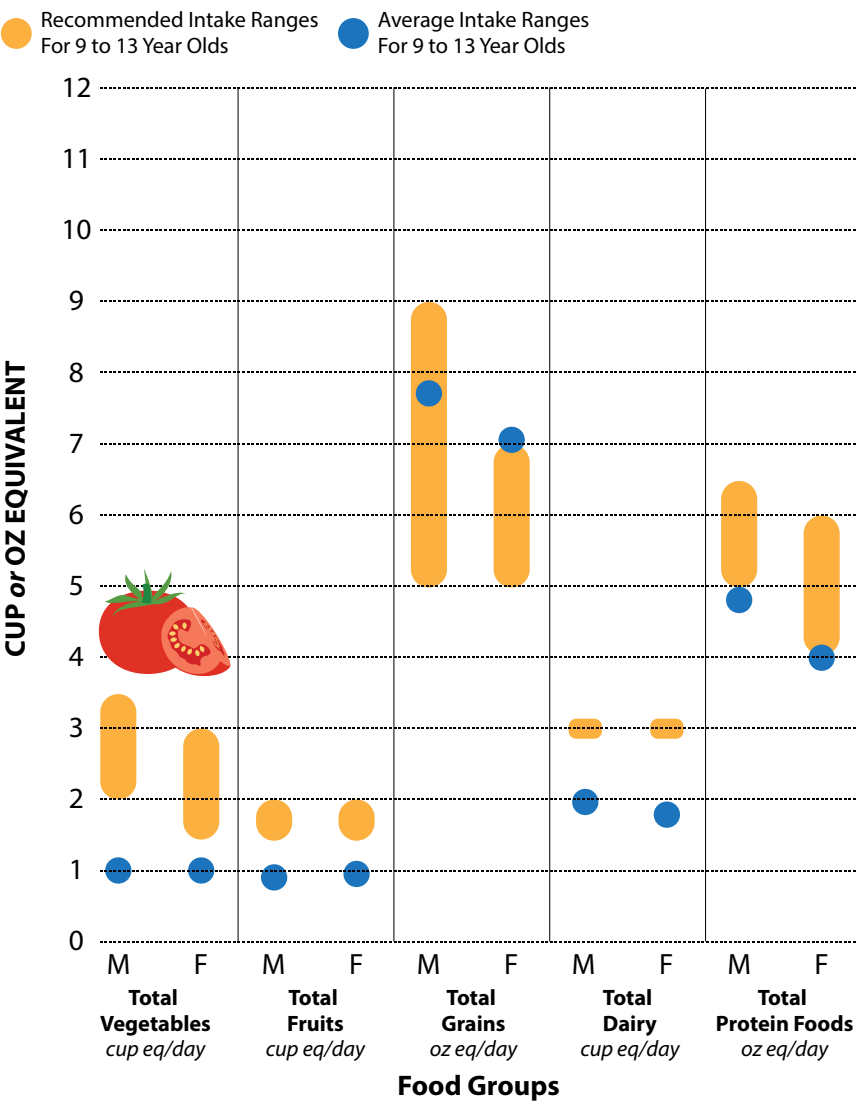
Current Intakes: Ages 5 Through 8



Current Intakes: Ages 14 Through 18



Current Intakes: Ages 9 Through 13



Tomatoes are high in vitamin C and match the banana in potassium content. The color in tomato (and in beets and other similarly hued produce) indicates lycopene and beta carotene, which support heart, skin and immune systems.



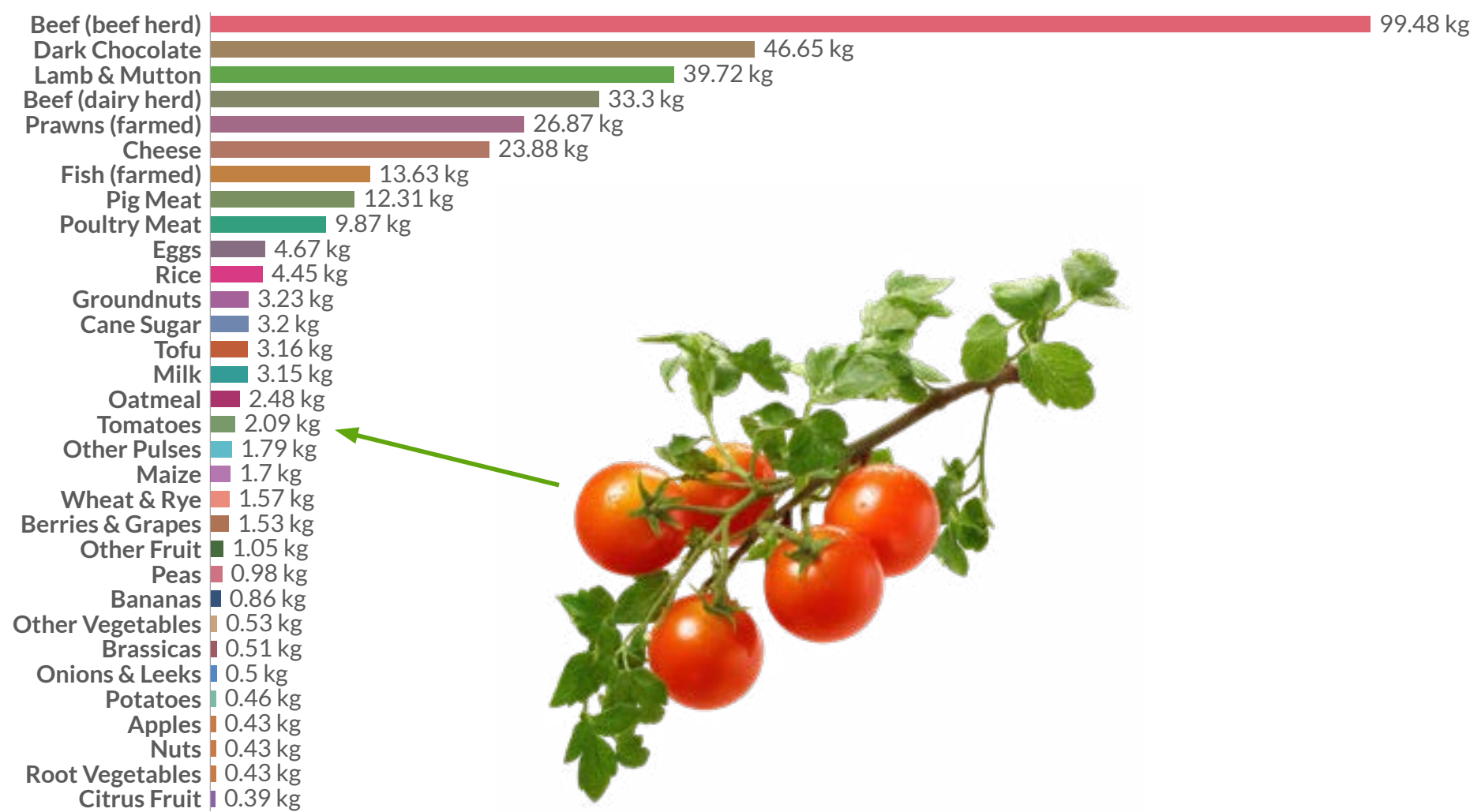
CLIMATE IMPACT OF TOMATOES

ONLY THOSE GROWN LOCALLY AND SEASONALLY

Greenhouse gas emissions per kilogram of food product

Our World
in Data

Greenhouse gas emissions¹ are measured in kilograms of carbon dioxide-equivalents². This means non-CO₂ gases are weighted by the amount of warming they cause over a 100-year timescale.



Data source: Poore and Nemecek (2018)

OurWorldinData.org/environmental-impacts-of-food | CC BY

The greatest emissions are caused by the conversion of land, the continued use of that land rather than reforestation, and by processes on the farm. When possible, choose foods in season, and from smaller farms.

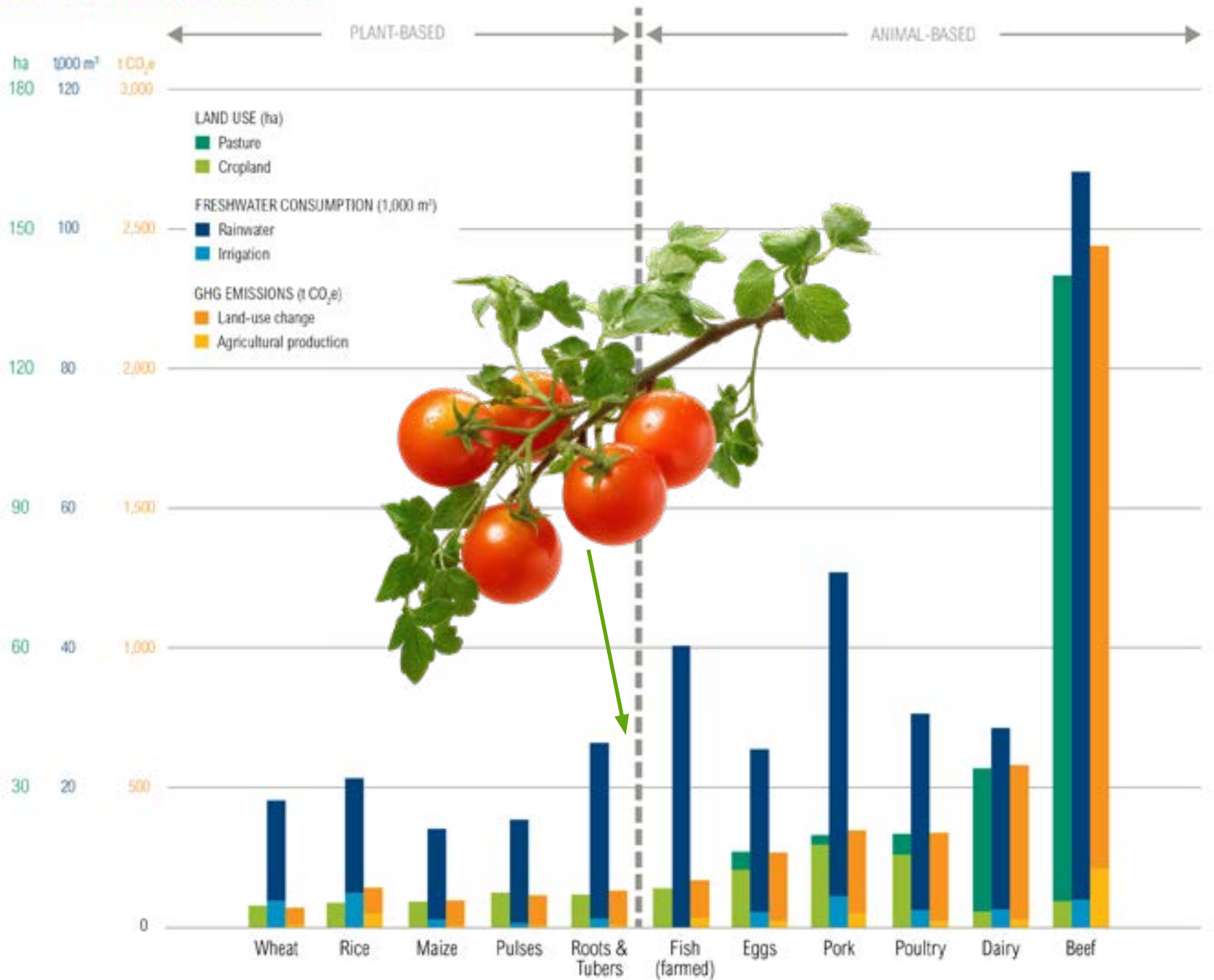


RESOURCE INTENSITY OF TOMATOES

ONLY THOSE GROWN LOCALLY AND SEASONALLY

Animal-Based Foods Are More Resource-Intensive than Plant-Based Foods

PER TON PROTEIN CONSUMED



wri.org/shiftingdiets

WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE

Growing tomatoes in an open field during the warm season, despite their need for regular water and their high need of potassium and nitrogen, uses fewer resources than climate-controlled indoor environments requiring artificial heat and light.



Garden State on Your Plate

Tomatoes Tasting

Begin by tasting unseasoned raw tomatoes. Then season with a pinch of salt. After observing how seasoning changes the flavor, taste with a drizzle of vinaigrette. If available, compare and contrast different methods of cooking beyond roasting: Steamed, boiled, sauteed, and with relevant flavorings.

This seasoning mix can be used to bathe vegetables before roasting, as a seasoning for braising or simmering, and for dressing salads of fresh greens.

Use a $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ ratio, acid to oil.

Vinaigrette

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup lemon juice

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup olive oil

1 garlic clove, crushed

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dijon mustard

Salt

Pepper

Place ingredients in a jar with a tight-fitting lid.

Shake to combine.

Store in refrigerator.



Credits

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-the-misrepresentation-of-tomatoes-as-stinking-poison-apples-that-provoked-vomiting-made-people-afraid-of-them-for-more-than-200-years-863735/>

https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/ethnobotany/Mind_and_Spirit/mandrake.shtml

"The Tomato in America: Early History, Culture and Cookery," by Andrew F. Smith, 1994

"Exploring the Tomato: Transformations of Nature, Society and Economy," by Mark Harvey, Stephen Quilley, Huw Beynon, · 2002

https://www.realclearscience.com/articles/2022/01/22/what_did_europes_first_tomato_look_like_812766.html

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AN00PtRWjIU&t=263s>

<https://opensourceplantbreeding.org/forum/index.php?topic=905.0>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomato>

<https://www.umass.edu/agriculture-food-environment/news-events/highlights/its-been-long-journey-for-wild-tomatoes>

<https://historictexasmaps.com/collection/search-results/95926-ancient-mesoamerica-general-map-collection>

<https://www.oerproject.com/OER-Materials/OER-Media/HTML-Articles/Origins/Unit6/Long-Distance-Trade-in-the-Americas>

<https://www.nature.com/articles/ng.3117>

<https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/garden-scoop/2020-07-25-history-tomatoes-how-tropical-became-global-crop>

<https://www.oerproject.com/OER-Materials/OER-Media/HTML-Articles/Origins/Unit6/Long-Distance-Trade-in-the-Americas>

<https://mrlocalhistory.org/history-of-the-jersey-tomato/>

<https://academic.oup.com/mbe/article/37/4/1241/5810829>

<https://condimentclaire.substack.com/p/the-history-of-tomatoes>

<https://historicalbritainblog.com/the-history-of-the-tomato-guest-post-by-gerard-paul/>

<https://magazine.wsu.edu/2015/08/16/tomatoes/>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2013/12/26/256586055/when-the-supreme-court-decided-tomatoes-were-vegetables>

<https://www.worldatlas.com/industries/the-top-10-tomato-producing-states-in-the-united-states.html>

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0921344925001156>

<https://www.wri.org/data/animal-based-foods-are-more-resource-intensive-plant-based-foods>

<https://ourworldindata.org/environmental-impacts-of-food>

<https://www.anthropocenemagazine.org/2025/03/whats-the-best-way-to-make-the-tomato-industry-more-carbon-efficient-hint-its-not-local/>

<https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/brevardco/2025/04/07/tomatoes-a-nutritional-powerhouse-and-culinary-favorite/-30->

"The Cambridge World History of Food. Cambridge University Press, edited by KF Kiple and KC Ornelas, 2000."

Garden State on Your Plate is a K12 program that uses local produce, school cafeterias, campus lands, and student demographics to illustrate and amplify curriculum. The program, designed to elevate the everyday quality of school foods and to increase participation in the National School Lunch Program, was created in 2010 by the Princeton School Gardens Cooperative in partnership with Princeton Public Schools, and with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.



psgcoop.org