



PACIFIC COAST  
FARMERS' MARKET  
ASSOCIATION

## TOMATOES – FRESH OFF THE VINE



*"A world without tomatoes is like a string quartet without violins."*

Laurie Colwin, Home Cooking

One of the best things about summer is the joy of eating a delicious juicy tomato picked fresh off the vine and delivered to your farmers' market the same day. The taste of fat slices of Early Girls in a simple tomato salad, or beefsteak tomatoes stuffed with cooked shrimp, or Romas chopped into a fresh *pico de gallo* salsa is enough to make anyone a convert to summer [tomatoes](#) from the farmers' market. These tomatoes are not picked under-ripe, trucked across the country, and then gassed to ripen them for supermarket shelves. The flavor of a fresh-from-the-farm tomato surpasses even the "vine-ripened" ones you get at the grocery store.

During the summer months there are many tomato varieties available at your farmers' market, from little cherry, pear, and grape tomatoes and medium-sized Early Girl and beefsteak tomatoes, to large juicy heirloom varieties that come in shades from deep purple to bright yellow. The flavors are amazing!

There are over 10,000 known varieties of tomatoes, each with a slightly different taste, size, and even texture. There's a tomato variety for every culinary need. Beefsteaks are large, juicy, and great for slicing on sandwiches. Romas hold up well sauces and salsas. Sweet little cherry tomatoes are small enough to pop in your mouth for a snack or roast on a sheet pan till they pop with flavor. Fragrance is a good indicator of a good tomato than color. Use your nose and smell the stem end. The stem should retain the garden aroma of the plant itself - if it doesn't, your tomato will lack flavor.

Once you have purchased these luscious tomatoes, don't store them in the refrigerator. The cold destroys the wonderful flavor and can alter the texture. Place them on the counter and use within three days. If you must refrigerate them, bring to room temperature before preparing or cooking to bring back some of the flavor.

Here are some easy ideas for using summer-fresh tomatoes:

- Toss halved Roma or San Marzano tomatoes with olive oil, garlic, salt, and pepper and roast at 400°F for about 30 minutes to 1 hour, until they are slightly blackened. Chop the tomatoes, garlic, and an onion, ground chili pepper, some cilantro, and lime juice and you have a savory homemade salsa.
- “Zoodle” some zucchini, toss with olive oil and halved cherry tomatoes for a light meal. Or toss with cooked pasta.
- Slice thick slabs of beefsteak or colorful heirloom tomatoes and plate. Add sliced mozzarella, a drizzle of olive oil and balsamic vinegar. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.
- Add a slice of beefsteak tomato to your grilled cheese or bacon, lettuce, avocado sandwiches. Any sandwich is better with a slab of summer tomato!
- Make some of our [West Indian Tomato Sauce](#). Yum!

Stop by your local farmers' market and find summer's favorite vegetable from Bautista Ranch in Stockton, J&M Farms out of Hollister, Tomatero Organic Farm in Aptos, Resendiz Farms in Hughson, and so many other fantastic farmers.

TAGS