

Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services

Info Sheet
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Nutrition Information about Tomatoes

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Audience:

Extension Field Agents

Purpose:

To describe the nutritional properties of tomatoes.



Source: Vkusnyblog



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Tomatoes contain many vitamins and minerals that are important for our healthy life. They are a particularly good source of vitamin C, folate, potassium and magnesium (USDA, 2017). See Table I for the highlights of the nutritional benefits of tomatoes. Tomatoes can be consumed, both raw in salads, or cooked in soups, stews and sauces. Tomatoes can be baked, broiled, roasted, stewed, pickled, and bottled.

½ cup of tomatoes can provide 15% of the daily recommended amount of vitamin A and 20% of the daily recommended amount of vitamin C (USDA 2012).

Table I. Highlights of Nutritional Benefits of Tomatoes

Vitamin/mineral in Tomatoes	Health Function
Vitamin C	Keeps our immune system strong, supports good health and strength of all soft and hard parts of the body, and helps to absorb iron from the plant foods (Sizer and Whitney, 2016; National Institute of Health, 2016)
Folate	Is very important for development of a brain, spinal cord and cells that protect them in a baby (National Institute of Health, 2016b)
Potassium	Is needed to build body proteins, such as heart and all parts of immune system, and proper communication between brain and the rest of the body (U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2017).
Magnesium	Magnesium helps to build strong bones, proper functioning of the nervous system and muscles, and help us fight infections (National Institute of Health, 2016c)
Lycopene	Lycopene may help protect us from cancers (Marti, Rosello and Cebolla-Cornejo, 2016; U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2015)

Eating raw tomatoes allows you to enjoy more of their nutritional value, since the concentration of vitamins and minerals is the highest in uncooked foods. Cooking tomatoes decreases their amount of vitamin C and folate by

almost half, however cooking does not affect the magnesium and potassium content of tomatoes as much. When cooking tomatoes remember that vitamins and minerals may dissolve into the water during the cooking process. To retain the nutrients from the tomatoes dissolved in the cooking water, incorporate the cooking water into the soup or sauce (Conde Nast, 2014).

Although, cooking tomatoes decreases the concentration of vitamin C and folate, it actually helps our body absorb another nutrient in tomatoes called lycopene. Lycopene is a chemical in tomatoes that helps protect us against cancer and it is easier for our body to absorb and use lycopene from cooked tomatoes (U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2015).

While learning about the nutritional value of tomatoes please remember that it is beneficial to our health to have different foods each day and think about our meals in colors.

References

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