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Tomatoes

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# sarah's superfoods: tomatoes

Posted in June, July, August, September, All Recipes, Summer on 1st September 2019



INSPIRE ME  
*Sarah Raven's*  
**SUPERFOODS**  
ADVICE



Every month, Sarah picks the healthiest fruit and vegetables to eat in season, with delicious recipes to make the most of their flavours and natural goodness

JULY: TOMATOES



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This article first appeared in Country Living in July 2015. To read the PDF copy of the feature as it appeared in the magazine, please [click here](#), or you can read the article in full below.

Super-healthy tomatoes are so versatile, you could eat them at every meal in a thousand different ways and never be bored. Raw, they're a rich source of vitamin A, C and E, as well as the mineral manganese. Commercial greenhouse crops, grown and picked not fully ripe, have been recorded as having one-third the vitamin C of those ripened outside. With health in mind, farmers are now producing 'designer tomatoes' in greenhouses that use pink LED lights to intensify flavour and add vitamin C. However, tomatoes are relatively easy to grow at home, plus they'll taste and be better for you.

High levels of lycopene – the most powerful antioxidant to have been measured in food – gives the deep-red pigment and is also found in watermelon, papaya and rosehip, as well as grapefruit, asparagus, parsley and basil. Cooking actually improves its absorption, with up to three times the amount compared with raw. Lycopene's anti-cancer benefits have been repeatedly shown, the evidence strongest for prostate, but also linked to a decrease in lung, stomach and breast cancer. In tomatoes, it's the skin that has the highest concentration, so leave them on and use as much tomato paste, purée and sundried tomatoes as you can in your day-to-day food, as these three provide the most lycopene gram for gram. Always eat tomatoes with a small amount of oil: lycopene is fat-soluble, so it helps to absorb it more efficiently.

Cooked tomatoes are also one of the best healthy-heart foods. Both raw and cooked have been shown to lower total cholesterol, LDL (bad) cholesterol and triglycerides. The phytonutrients – again more active in cooked tomatoes than raw – also combine together to prevent unwanted clumping of platelets and so reducing the risk of clogging of the arteries, as well as contributing to improving the function of the blood vessel walls. Several studies have shown that tomatoes can help lower blood pressure, especially in those where it is already raised.

With tomatoes at their best over the next few weeks and months, plan to feast on them as often as you can – it will do you a power of good.

This article also includes *four tomato recipes*:

- Provencal squid, new potato, olive and tomato stew
- Roasted tomato soup
- Linguine alla scoglio
- Tomato and poppy seed tart

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