



Tips on maximizing your produce from EGGman!



Tomato

Selection. Firm, well developed color, glossy, smooth skin, with minimum blemishes

Of course, the classic tomato is a bright red. But, there are a wide variety of tomatoes that range from black to yellow and everything between. In any color, tomatoes should be firm, glossy with smooth skin. Tomatoes that are soft, bruised, cracked, or damaged should be avoided. Although tomatoes do continue to ripen after they have been picked, tomatoes not ripened on the vine tend to be less flavorful. So, choose tomatoes that are as ripe as possible, that will last until you will be using them. The Ohio State University has a great page on tomatoes. <http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/5000/pdf/5532.pdf>

Storage. Room temperature, high humidity, manage ethylene presence

Store on the counter in a paper bag. The paper bag will insure adequate oxygen for respiration, protect from sunlight, and slow desiccation. If the tomatoes are ripe put an egg from the E.G.G. Into the bag, too. If they are not fully ripe do not put the egg in the bag, until they are ripe. If you are storing a single unripe tomato you may want to put an apple or a banana in the bag until it is ripe.

Temperature

Unless your tomatoes are starting to soften from over-ripening, store them at room temperature (~70 degrees F), away from direct sunlight, with the stem end up. The skin around the stem is the tenderest part of the tomato and it can bruise just from the weight of the fruit. DO NOT refrigerate tomatoes unless they are overly ripe and beginning to rot. Temperatures below 55 degrees F stop the ripening process and inhibits taste development. Once the tomatoes have been cooled enough to stop ripening, the process can not be reversed by a return to room temperature. Fully ripe or cut tomatoes may be stored for two to three days in a refrigerator. Although they will be edible they will lose flavor.

Humidity

Store your tomatoes in a high humidity area, if possible. The high humidity will prevent desiccation (water loss). If you know the humidity will be lower than ideal (95%), you may want to put a piece of tape over the stem end. Most of a tomatoes moisture is lost through the stem. Sealing it will slow that loss. However, don't allow humidity to be high enough for condensation to form on the skin during the cooler part of the day, as it may promote fungal growth.

Ethylene sensitivity

Tomatoes use ethylene as a ripening signal. The general advice for a variety that is sensitive to and generates ethylene, when it is ripe, is to remove the ethylene as soon as it is given off, i.e. keep an E.G.G. in the immediate proximity. If the tomatoes are not totally ripe when you bring them home from the store, you can shorten their ripening time by storing them together. Since they give off ethylene, which in turns accelerates the ripening process, storing them together makes them ripen quicker. Once they have reached the ideal ripeness, you should remove the ethylene. Of course, once the ripening process has started, it can never be completely stopped, but removing the ethylene will slow it down.

Respiration

Tomatoes have a relatively high respiration rate, so do not store it in a closed plastic bag.

Nutrition. Low calorie, rich in vitamins C and A, good source of antioxidants.

One medium tomato has only 35 calories, is rich in vitamins C and A, and contains small amounts of the B vitamins and potassium. Tomatoes are also associated with lower risk of heart disease and certain cancers because they contain phytonutrients like lycopene.

Uses. Tossed salads, sandwiches, but also great in sauces and soups

Comments.

Basil and tomatoes were made for each other and are alike in so many ways. One major trait they share is that neither should ever be refrigerated unless they have been chopped.

Tomatoes are the base of the two biggest selling condiments in the U.S. But, in my opinion they are the ultimate garden harvest to be eaten out of hand, in a BLT sandwich, and in a tossed salad worthy of the name if not for the tomatoes.

The Ethylene Gas Guardian home – www.producefreshness.com – contains links to various technical information sources.