

Cocktail tomatoes

School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme

Your delivery

- Each pack contains: At least 10 tomatoes
- Number of pieces per pupil: 1
- **Storage:** Somewhere cool, dry, away from direct sunlight and chemicals, and ideally off the ground
- **Preparation:** Wash

What to expect

The cocktail tomatoes should arrive at school clean and firm, with a bright, unblemished skin. Avoid tomatoes that are soft, lacking in colour or that have splits in the skin. Cocktail tomatoes are quite prone to splitting of the skin. Split tomatoes, and others that have come into contact with the escaped juice, are prone to develop moulds in storage and should be removed.

You may find some children, especially those in reception classes, may not immediately like the cocktail tomatoes, often because of the texture of the skin. They will need to be gently encouraged to try them. Key Stage 1 children, however usually enjoy them.



Nutritional information

- ✓ Contains vitamin C and A
- ✓ Good source of Vitamin E when eaten raw
- ✓ Good source of the natural plant pigments, carotenoids (both beta carotene and lycopene) and flavonoids. Recent research shows that lycopene may be particularly active in protecting the body against heart disease and some forms of cancer.
- ✓ Good source of minerals (potassium and other mineral salts). Potassium has been linked to blood pressure.
- ✓ All fruit and vegetables are generally low in sodium, calories and fat and are a good source of dietary fibre

Place of origin

The tomato originated in Central and South America, in Mexico and the Andes. In the sixteenth century, European explorers brought the tomato from the Americas to Europe. Tomatoes are now the most widely grown vegetable and are cultivated all over the world.

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Interesting fact

- The renaissance French called tomatoes “pommes d’amour” (apples of love) because they thought they had aphrodisiac properties, and that eating one would make you fall in love.
- Tomato seedlings have been grown in space
- Technically tomatoes are fruits because they develop from pollinated flowers and carry seeds. However, they are more often referred to as vegetables because they are usually eaten in savoury dishes.

Tips for storing, handling and eating citrus fruits at home

- Tomatoes should not be refrigerated as this impairs the flavour and prevents normal ripening. Tomatoes are best stored in cool but not cold conditions (10-12°C) with any plastic packaging removed. To ripen home-grown tomatoes, place them in a paper bag with a ripe tomato and keep at room temperature.
- Tomatoes can be eaten raw (alone or added to salads and sandwiches) or cooked (in almost any savory dish). While a certain amount of nutrients are lost through cooking others such as lycopene, may increase in concentration. Therefore it is a good idea to make sure your diet includes both raw and cooked tomatoes.

How tomatoes are grown

- Tomatoes are grown from seed
- They grow in clusters on stems called vines
- The parent plants produce yellow flowers that are pollinated by wind and insects.
- The flowers then produce fruits that are the tomatoes
- Tomatoes take 40 to 60 days from pollination to reach full ripeness. They change from green to red as they ripen
- In the UK, most commercially produced tomatoes are grown in glasshouses. This allows the season to be extended from March to November. Under outdoor conditions, they can be cultivated between July and October. Beehives will be found in British greenhouses to house the bumble bees used for pollination.
- In hotter countries, tomatoes are grown outside or under plastic.

Simple recipe

Make some tomato kebabs by threading cocktail tomatoes, basil leaves and mozzarella cheese balls alternatively onto a skewer. Make a basic dip with crème fraîche and chopped tomatoes and a dollop of pesto. Heat the kebabs and serve with a dip and warm pitta bread.

For more information

www.nhs.uk/5aday, www.nhs.uk/change4life, www.food.gov.uk, www.nhs.uk/healthyeating and www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk