



39 Ways to Eat a Tomato

IT'S ONE OF SUMMER'S GREATEST GIFTS. HERE'S HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF IT.

by MICHAEL RUHLMAN

IF TOMATOES ARE THE IDEAL SUMMERTIME FRUIT — plentiful and perfectly ripe — then why do we insist on always making the same caprese salad? Maybe it's time to stop boring your dinner guests. Almost anything can, and should, be done to summer tomatoes (except refrigerating them, which will only lend a metallic taste to the fruit's otherwise sweetly acidic flesh). Each of the techniques described here has been simplified to its fundamental steps — you won't find exact measurements and only a few request a specific variety of tomato— so feel free to experiment. One tip: Always use salt. It's a surefire way to enhance a tomato's flavor.

1 Bake them. Slice off the tops and gently squeeze seeds and pulp into a bowl. Fill with grated parmigiano-reggiano and drizzle with olive oil. Stick in a 375° oven until tender, about 30 minutes.

2 Fix an English breakfast. Slice a tomato in half. Fry some bacon. Brown the tomato halves,

cut side down, in the bacon grease. Serve with toast, fried eggs, and, of course, that bacon.

3 Make this sauce: Chop several tomatoes and put into a bowl. Add salt and let sit for 30 minutes while the juices are drawn out. Strain into a sauté pan. Simmer and whisk in butter. Spoon over pasta, fish, or chicken.

4 Fry them. Dip thick slices of beefsteak tomato in flour, then in buttermilk, then in a mixture of equal parts flour and cornmeal. Fry in canola oil until browned. Serve with rémoulade sauce.

5 Roast cherry tomatoes. Toss with salt, pepper, and olive oil. Set in 425° oven for

10 minutes. Top with chopped mint, parsley, basil, or thyme.

6 Make this pasta: Melt some butter in a sauté pan over medium heat. Add five whole garlic cloves, and cook until just golden. Dice two large tomatoes and strain their juices into the pan. Bring to a simmer. Add some more butter and whisk until melted. Add diced tomatoes and remove from heat. Add some ribbons of basil, some salt, and a bit of freshly cracked black pepper. Toss with angel-hair pasta.

7 Build a better grilled cheese. Use cheddar. Add a slab of beefsteak tomato, some arugula, and a bit of shaved red onion.

8 Grill them. Cut in half. Squeeze out seeds and pulp. Brush with olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Set directly on a hot grill, cut side down, for 5 minutes.

9 Make this salad: Combine chunks of heirloom tomato with chunks of watermelon, cucumber, and avocado. Sprinkle with ground coriander, salt, and pepper. Toss with olive oil and balsamic vinegar.

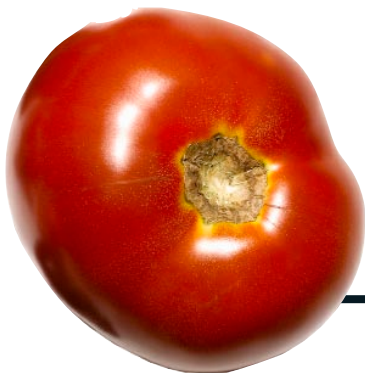
10 Refine the BLT. Stack slices of heirloom tomato, strips of applewood-smoked bacon, slices of avocado, and arugula between toasted slices of your favorite bread. Don't forget the mayo.

11 Make pico de gallo. Mash some garlic with a mortar and pestle. Add the juice of half a lime. Toss with a few chopped tomatoes, minced red onion, and a little chopped jalapeño. Garnish with cilantro. Use on everything.

12 Eat one like an apple. Add a dash of salt before every bite.

13 Make this salad: Cut tomatoes into small chunks. Grill slices of sourdough bread and cut into bite-size pieces. Toss with basil, olive oil, balsamic vinegar, salt, and pepper.

14 Make pesto. Squeeze out the seeds and pulp of several tomatoes. Cut them into strips. Dry in a 150° oven for 10 hours. Puree them, and stir in basil, balsamic vinegar, and sautéed garlic. Toss with pasta or spread on a sandwich.



15 Make this salad: Toss chopped tomatoes with blue cheese and bits of bacon. Drizzle with olive oil and honey. Sprinkle with salt.

16 Make gazpacho. Mix diced tomatoes with chopped veggies: red onion, cucumber, celery, and bell peppers. Add a bit of garlic, chives, and parsley. Add red wine vinegar, olive oil, lemon juice, and salt and pepper. Cover tightly. Chill overnight. Serve with slices of toasted baguette.

17 Eat raw for breakfast with corn on the cob. The sweetness of the corn will balance the acidity of the tomatoes.

18 Make a bed for grilled chicken, fish, or steak. Chop tomatoes and marinate in olive oil and salt for a few hours. Spread on plates and top with your preferred protein.

19 Make this sandwich: Tomato, savoy cabbage, sardines, and cilantro or parsley — on bread.

20 Pickle them. Stuff a canning jar with salt, pickling spices, dill sprigs, garlic cloves, red hot chiles, and plenty of quartered green tomatoes. Fill with hot, but not boiling, water. Screw lid on tightly. Refrigerate for a month.

21 Upgrade the V8. Chop celery, green peppers, and onion, and cook with whole tomatoes in a pot for 20 minutes. Strain. Add salt, Worcestershire, Tabasco, and horseradish. Serve cold.

22 Then add vodka.

23 Or add tequila, with cilantro and a squeeze of lime.

24 Make this crostini: Chop, salt, and broil plum tomatoes until tender. Spread on toasted baguette that's been rubbed with garlic and brushed with olive oil.

25 Make huevos ahogados ("drowned eggs"). Poach eggs in a mixture of pureed tomatoes, vinegar, garlic, green chiles, a dash of sugar, and salt. Serve on toast.

26 Stuff them. Slice off the top, and scoop out the inside. Spoon in chopped cucumbers with feta and red wine vinaigrette.

27 Cook superior tomato soup. Spread chopped and strained tomatoes on a cookie sheet. Drizzle with olive oil, and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roast for 15 minutes in a 450° oven. Heat some olive oil in a saucepan, and cook diced celery, diced carrots, diced onions, and minced garlic for about 10 minutes. Add the roasted tomatoes and the juices. Add some chicken broth, some butter, and a bay leaf. Simmer for 20 minutes, until vegetables are tender. Add some chopped basil. Puree until the right consistency. Pair with #7.

28 Throw them. See page TK.

29 Stir-fry them with eggs. Cut tomatoes into wedges. Heat vegetable oil in a wok. Add tomatoes, finely chopped scallions, and a bit of garlic. Cook only until tomatoes begin to wilt. Combine with scrambled eggs, sugar, and salt.

30 Make tomato and corn relish. Sauté kernels of corn in olive oil. Add chopped tomatoes, cumin, and cayenne. Heat for one more minute. Season with salt and pepper. Pile atop steak.

31 Whip up a vinaigrette. Puree several tomatoes in a blender. Pour the goop onto cheesecloth, tie up the corners, and set in a strainer over a bowl overnight. In the morning, the bowl will be filled with tomato water. Stir in salt, olive oil, minced shallot, and red wine vinegar. Drizzle on whatever you want.



32 Eat them on toast. Mayo below. Salt and pepper on top.

33 Make this pasta: Sauté chopped onion in olive oil. Add diced tomatoes, fresh peas, basil, red pepper, salt, and a little heavy cream. Stir constantly until heated through. Serve with fusilli or another clingy pasta.

34 Make this salad: Toss tomatoes with minced shallot, pine nuts, and watercress. Season with balsamic vinegar, red wine vinegar, and freshly ground pepper. Top with grated ricotta salata.

35 Make your own ketchup. Chop onion, fennel, and celery, and sauté. Add salt, pepper, olive oil, ginger, garlic, cloves, basil, coriander seeds, and red chiles. Add chopped tomatoes (for an unconventional color, use yellow, orange, or green ones) and some water. Simmer until the sauce is reduced by half. Puree in a blender. Add vinegar and sugar. Simmer until the right consistency.

36 Then use it to make your own BBQ sauce. Puree apple cider vinegar, light brown sugar, Worcestershire, crushed red chili flakes, chopped cilantro, salt, anise seeds, cumin seeds, and chopped garlic. Combine with your ketchup, and cook in a saucepan until thickened. Slather on ribs or pulled pork.

37 Fill them with sausage. Slice off the top and scoop out the pulp and seeds. Cram with cooked merguez sausage and sautéed onions. Place in a 350° oven until tomatoes are soft, about 10 minutes.

38 Make consommé. Strain tomato water (see #31) through a coffee filter into a bowl. Mix with peeled whole cherry tomatoes and tarragon, and serve hot. Or mix with diced jalapeño, diced shallot, and chopped cilantro, and serve cold.

39 Sure, make that caprese salad, but use burrata instead of mozzarella.

