

# I LOVE TOMATOES



How to keep enjoying them fresh.

I love thin sliced tomatoes on a pizza, sprinkled with oil, coarse salt and pepper, and maybe fresh green herbs, then blasted in the hottest oven you can find. The juice sinks into the dough, and the edges get jammy and crispy. I don't even miss the cheese. A layer of pesto before you lay down the tomatoes is delicious.

I love thick sliced tomatoes on toast in the morning. Again, just salt and pepper. You don't even need any oil because the juice from the tomato is enough to season the bread. I make my own, because I can, but use whatever you have. A dense whole wheat is nice, or a crunchy ciabatta.

Once you get to the end of your loaf, or it's been sitting around too long, dice it up into small cubes, toss with oil, salt, pepper, and sauté until charred and crispy. You can use these as croutons in any kind of salad, but because I still have tomatoes ripening on

my counter, I've been eating panzanella. Bread salad is as simple as chopped tomatoes and day old bread. You can add other things to it. I prefer just green herbs, maybe green onions. A few shots of balsamic vinegar, toss, and eat.

The tomatoes from my own pot were tiny, but plentiful. For a few weeks at the end of August, I was picking a handful a day, then slicing them in half and adding them on top of the fried potato and kale hash I made for breakfast. Grate or dice your potatoes. Sauté on high until golden and crispy. If I dice the potatoes, I shake the pan constantly. If I grate, I let it go for a long time before executing a less-than-perfect flip. The secret is to show no fear, and sometimes that works, but sometimes I balk at the last minute. I don't know how, but the pan always knows. Depending on how many potatoes you've grated and how big your pan is, the thickness of your hash brown will determine how long it takes to cook. Stick the pan in a

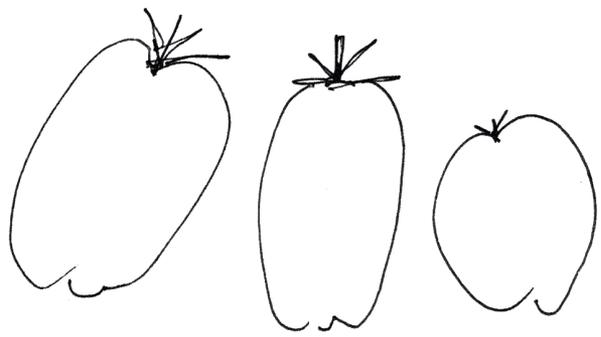
and a whole mess of tomatoes. Let it sit on the stove just below a simmer for a long time. I started my pot after getting home from work at 7 and turned it off when I was ready to go to bed at 11. This kind of sauce, I would absolutely recommend putting through the blender, if only to break up the tomato skins alone.

My load of tomatoes made such a big batch of sauce that I put half in the freezer for the winter, then put the rest back on the stove the next day. I chopped up a bunch of carrots, celery, fennel tops--anything in my fridge on the verge of going bad. I cooked that down for another few hours, went at it with my immersion blender, then pushed the whole works through a fine mesh sieve. It made a beautifully sweet silky sauce that I've eaten with cabbage and rice, cooked with lentils, and tossed with pasta. Not much makes me happier than making something delicious with the bits that too often get thrown away.

How to preserve the flavour:

My grandma, though, has a lot more tomato plants than me. Therefore, she ended up with a lot more tomatoes than me. And once she had made a few dozen quarts of whole tomatoes, tomato sauce, and antipasto, she still had boxes and baskets, from green to ripe. The first thing I made was oven dried tomatoes. Slice them thick the long way. (These are Roma tomatoes, by the way.) Arrange in a single layer on a baking sheet, salt and pepper, maybe some dried herbs, if you have them. I crushed some oregano over top. Then bake at 350 for about an hour. I like mine to have a bit of chew still. I like to chop them up and mix into couscous or rice, or even add to a pasta sauce for that extra deep tomato flavour. A simple tomato sauce you can put up in jars or into the freezer starts with thinly sliced onion. Sauté in oil for as long as it takes to get some good colour. Add chopped garlic

350 oven for few minutes if it's a thick one. Use that time to chop tomatoes, kale, zucchini, swiss chard--whatever you have in your fridge that's fresh. When I'm cooking potatoes, I like something green for contrast. Once the potatoes are crisp, I add the tomatoes. Let them melt into the pan, soften, spread their juices. Then the kale. Toss and use a lid to let it steam. At the last minute, I like a little vinegar--apple cider or balsamic--and just enough time in the pan to make it sticky.



Tomatoes signal the last of the summer. Whether they're ripe on the vine or not, it's time to pick them all before the blight gets to them. The great thing about tomatoes is that you can eat them green--chopped up in a relish, coated in corn meal and shallow fried--or you can let them sit on your counter and they'll work their way to red.

How to love tomatoes in salad.

One of the things that eating vegan has only confirmed for me is how much I don't like lettuce salads. I find them boring. I'm not interested. Take all those veggies and add them to some couscous with the exact same dressing, and I'll eat that for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. But lettuce--don't care. Tomato salad--that's what I can get behind.

Salad almost always starts with tomato for me. Not because it's my favourite vegetable, but because it brings its own acid to the dressing. Chop a couple of tomatoes and

throw them in a bowl, making sure you get as much of that juice off the board as you can. Then add whatever you like. Salad has no rules. I think, as long as it's a bunch of vegetables, mixed with oil and vinegar, you can call it a salad. I love green onions, grated carrot, shredded cabbage, sliced radish, chopped parsley. If I'm making a meal, I'll add carbs: couscous, quinoa, short pasta, croutons. Nuts and dried fruit are nice on top. A salad dressing doesn't have to be anything more than oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper, though mustard is a good addition.

