

NIKKI'S SUPER FOOD OF THE WEEK

Tomatoes

Tomatoes are part of the nightshade family which includes potatoes and eggplants (aubergine). The French call them 'pommes d'amour', apples of love – believing they have aphrodisiac qualities.

Tomatoes should be stored at room temperature and never in the refrigerator or placed in direct sunlight.

The average tomato contains only 35 kilocalories and is high in fibre, vitamins A, B and C, and potassium, iron and phosphorous. There is also a very important carotenoid found in tomatoes called lycopene. Lycopene has antioxidant activity and fights free radicals that our body produces.

A recent study has reported that eating tomatoes (and inducing the protective effects of lycopene) reduces the risk of digestive tract cancers.

During the summer there is often a huge glut of tomatoes – so why not slow-roast or oven dry your own? My favourite variety of tomato is the vine-ripened type but you can use any kind for drying. Make sure you select firm tomatoes with no blemishes that have a 'tomato' aroma.

Oven-dried tomatoes

- 1 Cover oven racks with tinfoil and pierce with small holes to allow for air circulation.
- 2 Preheat oven to 50°C.
- 3 Wash and dry tomatoes.
- 4 Cut the tomatoes lengthwise.
- 5 Cut a slit in the skin-side of the tomato to accelerate the drying process.
- 6 Place halves skin-side down on the tinfoil racks and sprinkle with salt. Salt provides flavour and helps draw liquid from the tomato.
- 7 Bake in a closed oven for 6 to 12 hours until tomatoes are shrivelled and dry.

Dried tomatoes may be kept frozen for about 18 months if wrapped securely in plastic.

