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Ah, tomato! Summer wouldn't be the same without it! Delicious in so many ways, refreshing and nutritious, always a tasty mouthful.

When to harvest tomatoes?

Typically, about 4 to 5 months run by from the moment you sow them to the first tomatoes you can harvest. This duration depends on the weather. Lots of sunny weather means an earlier harvest! Usually, sowing first starts under cover in February-March. After that, seedlings are transplanted to the growing bed as soon as freezing is over, after the last frost date. This leads us to July, the month where you can expect the first harvest. The harvest season lasts up to October-November, depending on the region - the cutoff date is usually the first frost.

How to harvest tomatoes?

It's important to harvest your tomato when the fruits are perfectly ripe. Their color is full and flush, even though there may still be a hint of green around the stem. Bring your nose up close: you can recognize that sweet tomato scent. Twist the fruit on its branch: it should break off easily. If any one of these three clues isn't yet checked, then you'll have to wait a little longer: your tomato isn't yet perfectly ripe.

What about harvesting green tomatoes?

There are a few tomato varieties that stay green even as they ripen. For example, this is the case of the delicious 'Green Zebra'. So what's the trick to know it's ripe? When it turns ripe, the fruit becomes soft and the flesh gives a bit if you squeeze it softly. Press your finger against the fruit: it will sink inwards a little. Once again, the tomato easily separates from the stem when it's ready to harvest.

How to increase tomato harvests?

To make sure your harvest is abundant, you'll have to prune it a bit. Basically, you should just remove suckers. These are the small stems that grow wherever secondary stems and

leaves connect. These suckers won't bear fruit, and they consume nutrients that would be best directed to flowers and fruits instead. In order to increase the flow of sap to fruit-bearing stems, it's important to remove the suckers often. It's one of the easiest tricks of the vegetable patch: simply pinch the suckers off with your thumb and forefinger. These soft, tender shoots come right off!

How often should you harvest your tomato?

Harvest the fruits as you need them. After picking, tomatoes will keep for 3 to 4 days in a cool room. It's best to not put them in the refrigerator: the cold temperatures will destroy their tasty compounds! If you've got too many tomatoes to handle, go one step further: cook them in batches and make preserves. Tomato sauce, jelly, jam... you'll love that summer-linked taste when the winter season rolls in! It's also possible to cook meals and freeze them.

How to make your tomatoes turn red?

Sometimes the harvest is slow to ripen, especially towards the end of the season when the sun hides behind clouds more often than not. Something to know is that you can still harvest the fruits and finish ripening them indoors. Indeed, heat is what helps the tomato ripen, not light. Harvest unripe tomatoes and place them in a warm spot. Indoors is perfect, next to a heat source. You'll see the tomatoes start to turn red as time passes.

Another solution is to alternate them with apples, pears or bananas in a fruit basket. These three fruits release ethylene. It's a gas that tends to speed the ripening process of other fruits up. Place your tomatoes nearby, cover with a cloth - they'll be ripe in a matter of days!

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