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As much as I love cooking, one of the last things I want to do when it's 80 degrees out and sunny is stay inside over a hot stove. Winter is more than long enough in Maine to enjoy all the warm comfort foods we could ever want. Summer, on the other hand, is about enjoying the best the garden has to offer in the freshest and easiest ways possible. If your tomatoes are coming on strong like mine, here are some ideas for how you can enjoy them in some simple ways, some old, some new.

1) On the Spot

My favorite way of enjoying a tomato, especially sweet cherry tomatoes, is picked warm and ripe from the vine and eaten on the spot. This is one of life's greatest pleasures right up there with getting your hair shampooed by someone else's gentle hands and hearing a baby laugh.



2) Sliced and Salted

Almost as easy as #1 and even more satisfying. A little salt makes a tomato taste more tomatoey and makes a good tomato even better.



3) Served on Toasted Bread, Italian-Style

Called "bruschetta" in Italian, this popular, simple appetizer might also be called tomato salad on garlic toast. You can chop whatever you have and like--tomatoes, peppers, sweet onions, herbs, capers, anchovies--add some salt, pepper and olive oil and you're almost done. All you need at that point is the delivery device: a crusty loaf of bread sliced thin, drizzled with olive oil, rubbed with garlic and toasted. Flick photo credit: [Patsy](#) [1].



4) No-Cook Tomato, Basil and Cheese Pasta Sauce

This is one of our go-to recipes when the weather's hot and the tomatoes are flying at us fast and furiously. Chop the most flavorful tomatoes you have and place them in a large serving bowl add enough salt to pull some of the tasty juices out of your tomatoes. Chop basil and add it to the tomatoes along with a generous drizzle of olive oil. For the cheese, you have a choice: you can go with the grated parmesan or, if you want to try something different and a bit decadent, chunks of brie with the rind removed. Mix the whole deal and let it sit for at least three hours in the refrigerator. When you're ready to eat, boil your pasta, drain it, and quickly add it to your serving bowl. Toss the pasta and serve immediately. Photo credit: [The Texan New Yorker](#) [2]



5) Tomato and Mayo Tartine

There are different reasons for making an open-faced sandwich or "tartine" as it's called in French. One good one is that you may only have one slice of bread! But even if you're rich with bread, a tartine offers a way of altering the "bread/stuff that normally goes between bread slices ratio" (which, by the way, is not really a thing). It also allows you to extract more visual pleasure from what you're eating. My favorite late-summer sandwich is bread with sliced tomatoes and mayo. If you think my feet look happy in this picture, you should see my face!



6) Tomato Mozzarella Salad

You've probably already guessed that this preparation also hails from Italy, from the island of Capri to be exact. Called an "Insalata Caprese" this salad brings together fresh ripe tomatoes, mozzarella and basil and is seasoned very simply with olive oil, salt and pepper. You may never see Capri's rocky coastal cliffs or any of Italy for that matter, but one mouthful of these ingredients will offer you an inexpensive, vicarious trip.



7) Tomato Chickpea Salad with Lime and Chili

While ripe tomatoes are luscious, at 95% water, they're not exactly filling. One way to turn no-cook tomatoes into an almost no-cook meal is to combine them with heartier fare like corn and chickpeas. I say "almost no-cook" because at some point the corn and chickpeas need to be cooked by someone, but you can definitely get by with the canned varieties. In addition to the tomatoes, corn and chickpeas, you can add bell peppers and red onion for flavor and color. To dress it, combine olive oil, lime juice, and salt, pepper and chili powder to taste. Photo and recipe credit: [Adele](#) [3]



8) Stuffed with Shrimp, Belgian Style

The Belgians don't have much of a coastline compared to that of many countries, but in the summer they squeeze a lot of enjoyment out of the little they have. One Belgian dish that says summer all over it is called "tomates aux crevettes" which is made with the ripest tomatoes available which have been hollowed out and filled with cooked and cooled shrimp, usually in a mayonnaise-based dressing with some chopped parsley.



Image (optional):

