Tomatoes are a very peculiar fruit. Everybody thinks it's a vegetable, but it's really a fruit, and more precisely a berry! In botanical terms a fruit derives from the ovary of a plant by means of its seeds, and that's exactly what a tomato is. There are more than 4,000 varieties of tomatoes, ranging from the small, marble-size cherry tomato to the giant Ponderosa that can weigh more than 3 pounds. Tomatoes have lots of important health benefits, including reduction in risks for cardiovascular diseases, colorectal cancer, inflammation, prostate cancer, pancreatic cancer, and thrombosis.

Tomatoes with a brighter, deeper color are better-tasting and contain higher quantities of the most important micronutrient, lycopene. Tomatoes don't develop adequate flavor unless allowed to ripen on the vine. They will change color and soften, but the sugar, acid, and aroma compounds are locked in once the fruit is taken off the vine. Therefore, choose vine-ripened tomatoes, preferably locally grown, because the less the tomatoes have to travel, the more likely they were picked ripe.

Tomatoes should be stored at room temperature (since the cold decreases their rate of ripening) and away from direct exposure to light. The ripening process can be hastened by placing them in a plastic bag with bananas or apples, since these fruits produce the gas ethylene, which will make the ripening process faster. Depending on their ripeness when bought, tomatoes usually keep for up to a week. If tomatoes are getting over-ripe, place them in the fridge, this will slow their ripening and allow for an additional 2-3 days of storage. Tomatoes are best consumed at room temperature, since they tend to lose their flavor when cold.

Sources:
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