

Health Benefits of Tomatillos



The tomatillo, or husk tomato, is a food staple of Mexican and Guatemalan cultures. It was cultivated in ancient Central America in 800 BCE and named *tomatl* by the Aztecs. Currently, Mexico and California are the largest growers of tomatillos.

Although there are yellow and purple varieties, in the US, the green tomatillo is the most widely available.

WHAT MAKES TOMATILLOS GREAT?

Nutrition

½ cup raw tomatillos provides 32 calories, <1 gm protein, 1 gm fiber, 1 gm fat, and no cholesterol.

Vitamins

Tomatillos are rich in a wide variety of antioxidants. Vitamin C and beta-carotene boost immunity, fight inflammation and reduce risk of cancer. Lutein and zeaxanthin help to maintain eye health.

B vitamins folate and B6 are important for metabolism. Vitamin K is necessary for proper blood clotting and for building and maintaining bone health.

Tomatillos also contain *withanolides*, a compound with anti-tumor properties shown to be toxic to cancer cells. These compounds have also been used in the treatment of chronic inflammation, diabetes, kidney disease, stroke and Alzheimer's.

Minerals

Minerals in tomatillos include potassium, magnesium, phosphorus and calcium for strong bones and healthy blood pressure. Other minerals in smaller amounts include zinc, iron and selenium.

Fiber

Although not high in fiber, adding fresh tomatillos to any dish contributes to the daily fiber recommendation of a minimum of 25 to 38 grams of fiber per day. Some sources recommend an optimal intake of 40-60 grams of dietary fiber per day.

BUYING & USING TOMATILLOS

Tomatillos are harvested green in late summer and fall. Look for small, firm fruit, about 2", with tight-fitting husks. As they ripen, husks will split and fruit will turn yellow, purple or red. Green tomatillos have the most flavor.

Store with husks intact, in a single layer in paper towels or a paper bag. Avoid storing in plastic which can increase spoiling. Before using, remove husks under running water and rinse off any stickiness. Tomatillos can also be found frozen whole or sliced, or canned for long-term storage.

Tomatillos have a bright, lemon-like flavor. They are often paired with chile peppers since the sweetness of the tomatillo mellows out the heat of a chile.



Often used in Mexican green sauces, they can be added raw to guacamole, salsas and salads or used on sandwiches for a tangy citrus flavor. When cooked, the flavor turns sweeter and milder. They can be sautéed, steamed or broiled and hold together well for barbecuing. Toss in soups, stews, sauces, chili or beans. Or try adding chopped tomatillo to baked goods such as corn bread or oatmeal cookies.

Since tomatillos are sweeter than tomatoes, with a flavor more like berries, they make delicious jams, jellies and fruit spreads. Dehydrated tomatillos can be used like cranberries in salads, baked goods and trail mix.



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Summer Salad of TomatillosAdapted from blog.williams-sonoma.com**Salad Ingredients:**

- 8 6" corn tortillas
- 1 pound tomatillos, husked, rinsed, chopped
- ½ white onion, chopped
- 3 Tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped

Directions:

1. Stack tortillas and cut into 4-6 triangular wedges. Spread in a single layer on cookie sheet. Squeeze fresh lime over chips and sprinkle with desired spices (cumin, chili powder and salt). Bake at 350°F for 7 minutes. Flip, re-spice and bake 5-8 minutes until crispy.
2. Mix salad ingredients and place each serving in the center of a small plate.
3. Whisk dressing ingredients in a small bowl until blended. Add additional spices to taste.
4. To serve, spoon dressing over salad and surround with baked tortilla chips.

Dressing:

- ¼ cup olive oil (less if desired)
- 1-2 canned chipotle chiles, chopped
- 1 tsp brown sugar
- Salt and pepper to taste

Fresh Tomatillo Salsa

Feastingathome.com

Ingredients:

- 1 pound tomatillos (2 cups), husks removed, washed, quartered
- ½ cup onion, chopped
- 1 small clove garlic, chopped
- ½ bunch (1 cup) fresh cilantro, chopped
- 2 serrano chiles, seeds, removed, chopped
- 3 Tbsp lime juice
- ½ tsp ground coriander
- ½ tsp sugar or honey (optional)

Directions:

1. Place all ingredients in a food processor blender and combine.
2. Adjust taste by adding salt, extra heat (serrano chilies) or additional lime.
3. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Tomatillo Curry

Veryveganval.com

Ingredients:

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| 1-2 Tbsp vegetable oil | 2 tsp curry powder |
| 2 cups tomatillos, chopped | 1 tsp turmeric |
| 1½ Tbsp fresh ginger, grated | 1 Tbsp dried basil |
| 1 jalapeno, seeds removed, minced | ½ tsp chili powder |
| 2 carrots, chopped | 1 can full fat coconut milk |
| 1 large onion, quartered | 1 Tbsp soy sauce |
| 1 bell pepper, chopped | Salt, pepper to taste |

Directions:

1. Heat oil in large pan over medium heat. Add tomatillos, ginger, garlic and jalapeño. Stir and cook several minutes. Then add spices and vegetables and stir to coat with spice.
2. Add in the full can of coconut milk, soy sauce and one cup water. Whisk to combine and bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer 10 minutes.
3. When potatoes and carrots are to desired tenderness, remove from heat and serve over rice or quinoa.

REFERENCES

USDA National Nutrient Database
Ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/
<https://www.organicfacts.net/tomatillo.html>
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32385801/>
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37202602/>
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CAUTION

The compound *solanine* in nightshade vegetables may aggravate arthritis and inflammation.

Nightshade foods include tomatoes, bell peppers, white potatoes and eggplant.

Although not a tomato, tomatillos are part of the nightshade family and may contribute to symptoms of inflammation in sensitive individuals.