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[Attack of the Edible Wolf Peach](#)

Although it sounds like a terrifying horror movie monster, an edible wolf peach isn't scary at all. In fact, it's delicious. That's because an edible wolf peach is neither a wolf nor a peach. It's the literal translation for the Latin botanical name *lycopersicon esculentum* — or simply put, tomato.



Call it a wolf peach, a tomata or even a love apple. But don't underestimate the ubiquitous tomato. Brought to Europe from the New World in the 15th century, tomatoes took some time to catch on with Italian, French and Spanish palates. As a member of the nightshade family — along with potatoes, peppers and eggplant — the tomato was at first considered too poisonous to eat. Eventually, however, the tomato made its way onto pasta and into sauces, at which point the juicy red fruit became a staple in the vegetable garden.

Which leads to the age-old question: Are tomatoes fruits or vegetables? Technically, they're fruits — berries, in fact, thanks to their pulpy centers, which are full of edible seeds like raspberries are. We often call them vegetables, however, because that's how we prepare them, in savory dishes — along with things like squash, peppers, cucumbers and green beans — instead of the sweet dishes in which we tend to use fruit. Really, it depends who you ask. Scientists will tell you tomatoes are fruit. The U.S. Supreme Court, however, will tell you they're vegetables, as it classified them as such in 1893 so that the United States could charge a vegetable import tax on them.

Just as interesting as its classification is the tomato's name. The Oxford English Dictionary traces the origin of the name *tomato* to the indigenous Mexican word *tomatl*, which it suggests might have been changed to *tomato* to echo the other popular New World food, the potato. In its early days, the tomato was considered not only poisonous, but also powerful, as it was believed to have powerful aphrodisiac qualities; hence the nickname *love apple*.

In his fine food science reference *On Food and Cooking*, Harold McGee writes that despite “a period of European suspicion that lasted into the 19th century” tomatoes are now eaten “all over the world in a great variety of sizes, shapes and carotenoid-painted colors.” In fact, he observes in the United States “they're second in vegetable popularity only to the potato.”

Because they're so popular, it's lucky that tomatoes are so easy to grow. They can be grown from seed or from stem cuttings, and there are dozens of varieties available designed to grow indoors, in colder climates and through hydroponics. There are red tomatoes, green tomatoes and yellow tomatoes, not to mention round Beefsteak tomatoes, pear-shaped Roma tomatoes and small cherry or grape tomatoes. All, however, are delicious and — because they're rich in vitamins A and C, with only 35 calories apiece — nutritious.

Just as diverse as varieties and growing methods are recipes. Tomatoes do wonders for meats and sauces, and one of the best ways to load up on the antioxidant lycopene — believed to aid in the prevention of some types of cancer, especially prostate cancer — is by cooking tomatoes with a bit of your favorite red wine.

However you prepare them, make sure you choose only the freshest tomatoes for your recipes. While the canned variety work just fine, nothing beats the vine-ripened kind — especially in summer, when they're in season. At the market, look for tomatoes with taut skin that smell like the garden at the stem end. And when you get them home, keep them away from the refrigerator. Cold temperatures make tomatoes' flesh pulpy, mushy and flavorless, and you want your edible wolf peaches to be fierce, not flat.

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