

Best big flavor use for summer tomato gluts?

[Midwest Foodie \(www.vchale.com\)](http://www.vchale.com)

Ah, summer! The season of sunshine, long days, and, for many home gardeners, an overwhelming bounty of ripe, juicy tomatoes. While a few perfect specimens are a delight, an actual ‘glut’ can leave you scrambling for ideas. Fear not, fellow tomato lovers! This isn’t a problem, but an incredible opportunity to harness their peak flavor in ways that will bring joy for weeks and months to come.

Sauces and Purees: The Heart of Tomato Flavor

When you have tomatoes in abundance, the first thought often turns to sauce – and for good reason. A truly great tomato sauce, made from sun-ripened, fresh tomatoes, is a revelation. Whether it’s a simple marinara, a rich passata, or a robust Bolognese base, cooking down tomatoes concentrates their natural sugars and umami, creating a deep, satisfying flavor that store-bought versions can only dream of.

Consider making large batches of basic tomato sauce or crushed tomatoes. These can be canned, frozen in various portion sizes, or even dehydrated into a flavor-packed powder. Imagine the ease of pulling out homemade pasta sauce on a chilly winter evening, tasting the stored sunshine!



Fresh & Bright: Celebrating Raw Tomato Goodness

While cooking brings out depth, sometimes the best use for a perfect summer tomato is to enjoy it raw, showcasing its vibrant freshness. From simple slices with a sprinkle of sea salt and basil to elaborate salads, raw applications highlight the fruit's natural acidity and sweetness.

- **Caprese Salad:** The classic trio of tomatoes, fresh mozzarella, and basil, drizzled with olive oil and balsamic.
- **Bruschetta:** Diced ripe tomatoes, garlic, basil, and a touch of olive oil piled high on toasted bread.
- **Gazpacho:** A refreshing cold soup, blending tomatoes with cucumber, bell pepper, onion, and a hint of vinegar. Perfect for hot days.
- **Salsa:** A chunky, fresh salsa is always a crowd-pleaser and a fantastic way to use up a lot of tomatoes, especially when mixed with onions, cilantro, jalapeños, and lime juice.

Roasting & Preserving: Locking in the Sweetness

Roasting tomatoes low and slow caramelizes their sugars, creating an intensely sweet and savory flavor that is utterly addictive. Roasted tomatoes can be blended into a luscious soup, added to pasta, or simply spread on toast. For long-term storage, roasting before freezing or canning intensifies their profile.

Beyond sauces and fresh eats, don't overlook traditional preservation methods. Canning whole or diced tomatoes ensures you have a supply for future cooking. Drying tomatoes, either in a dehydrator or a low oven, transforms them into sun-dried delights, perfect for adding concentrated flavor to salads, sandwiches, and Mediterranean dishes.



Creative Culinary Adventures: Unexpected Tomato Uses

Once you've covered the basics, get adventurous! Tomatoes are surprisingly versatile and can shine in unexpected ways.

- **Tomato Jam:** Sweet and tangy, tomato jam is fantastic on toast, with cheese, or as a glaze for meats.
- **Tomato Ketchup:** Far superior to store-bought, homemade ketchup allows you to control the spices and sweetness.
- **Tomato Confit:** Slow-cooked in olive oil with garlic and herbs, confit tomatoes are tender, bursting with flavor, and excellent for spreading or adding to dishes.
- **Spicy Tomato Drinks:** Think beyond the Bloody Mary. Tomato juice can be the base for unique cocktails or refreshing savory mocktails.



Don't Let a Single Tomato Go to Waste

A summer tomato glut is a gift, offering endless possibilities for culinary creativity. From the timeless comfort of a rich pasta sauce to the vibrant burst of a fresh salsa or the concentrated punch of roasted halves, each method brings out a different facet of the tomato's complex flavor. Embrace the bounty, experiment with new recipes, and savor the taste of summer long after the season ends. Your future self,

and your taste buds, will thank you!