



Tomatoes – the elixir of youth: the virtues of lycopene illustrated by the "Red Gold Tomatoes from Europe" project promoted by ANICAV

"Red gold" really is our ally when it comes to good health. pasta with tomato sauce and snacks for German mealtimes.

Naples - 14 November 2024 - Good, red, juicy and versatile. The prince of mealtimes the world over is served: **tomatoes**. Not only are they a staple of the Mediterranean diet, but also a source of nutrients, vitamins, trace elements, and above all, **lycopene**, a hydrocarbon responsible for the red colour of tomatoes, which helps defend against damage caused by free radicals, preventing diseases related to cellular aging. This is why **tomatoes are considered an ally for good health as well as an elixir of youth**. This is clearly explained by the international project "**Red Gold Tomatoes From Europe**", supported by ANICAV (the Italian Association of Canned Vegetable Industries) and co-funded by the European Union, which promotes consumption and supports the export of **Italian organic preserved tomatoes to Germany**.

Lycopene is known to have important antioxidant, cardioprotective and anticancer properties. Tomato pulp contains 11mg of lycopene per 100g, and tomato skin contains 54mg per 100g. A high level of lycopene in blood plasma is associated with a **low incidence of certain cancers**, particularly prostate cancer. This carotenoid is mainly present in the skin and the outermost part of the tomato pulp. As well as the virtues of lycopene, there are others: **tomatoes are a low-calorie food**, remineralising and thirst-quenching because they are largely made up of water (over 90%) and very important for heart and blood vessel health; they are rich in vitamins, especially A and C, and contain high levels of mineral salts, such as potassium, phosphorus and calcium. Tomato consumption also helps in the proper functioning of the intestine because of the **high vegetable fibre content**. Looking at vitamin C in more detail (a fundamental element for healthy functioning of the immune system), according to the WHO (World Health Organization), we require at least 45mg daily to protect against disease; 100g of ripe tomatoes contains 25mg, while 100g of processed tomatoes contains 43mg—all the more reason to enjoy them every day and include them in a weight-loss diet. Tomatoes can stimulate the production of a particular amino acid, which is used by the body to transform lipids into energy. Tomatoes also contain zeaxanthin, another valuable antioxidant which **protects our eyesight**; their beta-carotene and lutein content **protect eyes** from degenerative diseases.

What's more, there is no shortage of ways to use tomatoes in **natural cosmetics**: applying a mixture of tomato juice, glycerine and salt to the hands will make them soft, silky and smooth. You can also



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prepare effective **beauty masks with tomato extracts**, leaving your facial skin firm and toned. A good tip for teenagers: creams made with tomatoes **can be used to treat acne**.

Tomatoes are low in calories, containing only about 18 calories per 100g. They provide about 1g of protein per 100g, are full of water and are therefore an effective diuretic, if eaten raw and without added salt. In addition, they contain carnosine, an amino acid that helps the body transform fats into energy. Unlike other foods, whose beneficial properties are best derived from the raw ingredient, **tomatoes have a very special characteristic: cooking actually improves the bioavailability of lycopene** and enhances its antioxidant effects.

You can prepare **healthy and energy-rich meals and snacks with tomatoes**: pasta with tomato sauce; bread, olive oil and tomato; bruschetta with tomatoes; poached eggs in tomato sauce; tomato risotto; meat 'alla pizzaiola' in tomato sauce; meatballs with tomato sauce; devilled chicken in tomato sauce; fish "all'acqua pazza", that is, with cherry tomatoes; melting mozzarella and provola in tomato sauce. Kids can snack on a tasty tuna and tomato sandwich, tomato juice, or tomato jams.

But remember: tomatoes must be fully ripe and red otherwise they do not contain lycopene, which is precisely the pigment that gives them their beautiful red colour and is so beneficial. Now to finish, a recipe for a satisfying and flavoursome dish:

Currywurst with spicy tomato sauce and ketchup and a touch of curry powder

Treat yourself and your family and friends to a homemade sauce for your currywurst, elevating this German street snack to gourmet levels.

Ingredients (serves 4):

4 veal (frankfurter) sausages

1 tbsp curry powder

For the sauce:

1 white onion

4 tsp curry powder

1 tsp paprika

1 tsp cumin

salt to taste

2 ladles hot water

250g organic tomato passata

extra virgin olive oil to taste

250g ketchup

Method:



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Start by preparing the sauce: Finely chop the onion. Add a drizzle of oil to a frying pan and sauté the onion until soft, then add the paprika. Pour in the passata and ketchup and simmer the sauce. Stir in the cumin and curry powder, season with salt and add two ladles of hot water. Continue cooking until the sauce has thickened, then turn off the heat and set aside. Now cook the sausages: stir a tablespoon of curry powder into a large pan of water and bring to the boil, add the frankfurters and boil for about 5 minutes, then drain and place on a very hot griddle until golden brown on both sides. Serve the currywurst piping hot with the sauce and, if you like, plenty of chips.



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