



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 Swedish 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 Sweden**.

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:

Swedish-style salmon (gravlax), organic datterini cherry tomatoes and basil focaccia

Ideal for a special brunch, drinks party or as a starter when you want to impress your guests! It needs some advance preparation, but it is worth it – a fusion of the best Swedish and Italian flavours and cooking traditions!

Serves 4

Ingredients for the gravlax:

800g of salmon (fresh)

80g salt (coarse)

100g brown sugar

100g fresh dill, chopped

1 tbsp juniper berries

1 tbsp peppercorns

1 tsp cumin seeds

Method:

Freeze the salmon at a temperature of -18°C for 96 hours, and thaw slowly in the refrigerator (it will take about a day). When the salmon fillet is ready, you can prepare the marinade. Combine the juniper



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berries, peppercorns and cumin seeds in a mortar and crush them to release their aromas. In a bowl, combine the salt, sugar and dill and the spices and mix. Dry the thawed salmon fillet using paper towels. Spread a first layer of marinade on the base of a baking dish, put in the salmon fillet and cover the fish with another fillet (if you have prepared two or if you have cut it in half, make sure that the two flesh sides are together), and cover with the remaining marinade. Cover the dish with clingfilm. If using two fillets, weigh the fish down, and place in the refrigerator. Leave the salmon to marinate for 48 hours, making sure to drain the juices every 12 hours. At this point the salmon is ready. Rinse briefly under running water, pat dry with paper towels and cut into thin slices.

Ingredients for the focaccia:

300g Italian type '00' flour
200g Manitoba (strong white) flour
300g water
25g extra virgin olive oil
10g salt
8g honey
5g dried yeast

For the topping:

300g canned organic whole datterini (cherry) tomatoes (drained)
40g extra virgin olive oil
oregano to taste
Maldon salt

Method:

Sift the flours into the bowl of a stand mixer, add the dried yeast and start the mixer with the dough hook fitted. Once combined, add the honey. At this point, add about three-quarters of the total amount of water, a little at a time. Once the dough has taken shape, add the salt and the remaining water a little at a time. When all the water has been absorbed, slowly add the oil (as for water) to allow the dough to absorb it gradually, so it develops a strong gluten structure. Knead the dough in the stand mixer for about 15 minutes, then tip it onto a floured worktop. Fold the dough, taking the ends and folding them inwards, turn and fold and then flip over to form a smooth ball and transfer it to a bowl. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and leave to rise for a couple of hours. After this time, the dough will have doubled in size. At this point, oil a 35x28cm baking tin and tip the dough into it. Spread the dough with your fingertips very gently so as to cover the tin. Drain the organic canned datterini tomatoes then scatter them over the dough, drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with salt. Lastly, sprinkle with oregano and leave to rise for another 30 minutes. Bake the focaccia in a preheated oven



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at 220°C for 30 minutes. The focaccia with organic datterini tomatoes and oregano is now ready to be cut into individual portions.

Cut the salmon in thin slices, place on the focaccia slices and serve while warm.



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