

# What Color Says About Tomato Flavor



By Julie Martens Forney

Take some of the guesswork out of choosing tomato varieties by learning a few basics about how tomato color relates to tomato flavor. This simple guide will help you fine-tune your choices and find just the right tomatoes to please your palate.

## Red Tomatoes

**Acidity:** Usually brings a higher acidity to the table.

**Flavor:** Varies, but typically delivers classic tomato taste with plenty of juiciness. With paste types, flavor often intensifies as you cook them down to sauce or paste.

**Use:** Slicing (especially beefsteak types), salsa, canning, sauce, paste, juice, salads.

**Examples:** [Atkinson](#), [Better Boy](#), [Bonnie Original](#), [Celebrity](#), [Heinz Classic](#), [Juliet](#), [Red Beefsteak](#), [Roma](#), [Rutgers](#), [San Marzano](#)

## Pink Tomatoes

**Acidity:** Offers a medium acid level—less than red, but more than striped (see below).

**Flavor:** Similar to that of red tomatoes, but tends to be sweeter and somewhat milder. Several consistent taste-test winners (including Pink Brandywine and German Johnson) belong to the pink group.

**Use:** Slicing, fresh eating, stewing, freezing. Most pink tomatoes work fine for canning as well, as long as you follow [USDA guidelines](#) for adding acidity.

**Examples:** [Bradley](#), [German Queen](#), [Martha Washington](#), [Pink Brandywine](#), [Pink Girl](#)



Tomato or work of art? The sweet, mild-flavored Mr. Stripey is both!

## Yellow/Orange Tomatoes

**Acidity:** Delivers a low to sometimes medium acid level.

**Flavor:** Varies from sweet (almost candy-like) to fruity.

**Use:** Slicing, fresh eating, salads, juicing, salsa. Older canning books may advise against canning yellow tomatoes, but you can do it safely as long as you follow USDA guidelines (see link above)

**Examples:** [Golden Jubilee](#), [Lemon Boy](#), [Sun Gold](#), [Sun Sugar](#), [Yellow Pear](#)

## Black/Purple Tomatoes

**Acidity:** Tends to have a higher acid level, along the lines of a red tomato.

**Flavor:** Complex flavor prized by chefs, who have described the taste using words like “smoky” and “rich.” Some gardeners who raise dark tomatoes have trouble sharing them because they’re *that* good.

**Use:** Slicing, fresh eating, salads, cooking for sauce. Slices are eye-catching on a plate! In Russia, native land of Black Prince, the dark fruits are pressed to make an extract sold as Black Prince Tomato Oil.

**Examples:** [Black Cherry](#), [Black Prince](#), [Cherokee Purple](#), [Chocolate Sprinkles](#)

## Striped Tomatoes

**Acidity:** Usually combines low acid with high sugar.

**Flavor:** These bring a sweet, almost fruity taste.

**Use:** Slicing, fresh eating, salsa. Most traditional canning recipes advise against using striped tomatoes, but USDA guidelines make no such distinction as long as you add a source of acid to jars. But really, this kind is just too delicious (and beautiful!) not to eat fresh. It’s the variety you’ll want to take to a summer picnic, but only if you have enough to spare.

**Example:** [Mr. Stripey](#)