

## THE JOYS OF A SUMMER RIPENED TOMATO

When summer finally starts heating up, one of my favorite foods that I look forward to eating is ripe heirloom tomatoes. I could eat them on their own or on whole grain toast or with cream cheese or goat cheese every day. With warmer summer months bringing out the peak season for ripe, sweet, juicy tomatoes, there are several varieties to choose from. Homegrown grape or cherry tomatoes can be as sweet as fruit! Scientifically speaking, tomatoes are actually classified as fruit as they have seeds and grow from flowers, even though we often think of them as vegetables. Tomatoes are available fresh, canned, and dried at most grocery stores. There are even different colors of tomatoes such as yellow, green, or orange heirloom varieties, or purple-brown Kumamoto tomatoes. They all offer unique flavors, acidity levels, and textures.



*Packed with essential nutrients, tomatoes contribute to overall health by supporting immunity, blood circulation, bone strength, and tissue growth.*

Most recently, there has been research pointing to the benefits of tomatoes for liver health and gut health. This research is still new and being further investigated, but it only adds to the long list of nutritional benefits we do know about. Their benefits extend to eye health, skin vitality, and cognitive function. Rich in potassium, they help regulate blood pressure and promote heart health. As one of the best sources of lycopene, an antioxidant linked to reducing the risk of cancer and heart disease, tomatoes become even more powerful when cooked or canned, as their lycopene concentration increases. Additionally, with about 95% water content and roughly 1.5 grams of fiber per medium-sized tomato, they provide hydration while remaining naturally low in calories.





That must explain why tomatoes are so refreshing in the summer! Raw tomatoes are a juicy addition to salads, sandwiches, toast, or bagels or can be dipped into hummus, or a light creamy dressing. One of my favorite summer dishes is a Caprese salad with fresh mozzarella, basil, and a light drizzle of extra virgin olive oil and balsamic glaze.

While summer is the best time to enjoy raw tomatoes, they are available year-round and in several different products. Cooked tomatoes have a more intense flavor. Cut tomatoes in half, sprinkle with parmesan cheese, and roast or broil for an intense umami flavor. Any time of year you can enjoy spaghetti with a rich tomato sauce, or a piping hot bowl of tomato soup paired with gooey grilled cheese. They are utilized in several ethnic cuisines in sauces, soups, and stews. As condiments, tomatoes are used in salsa, bruschetta, and ketchup.

Bowls of all sorts have been trending for a while. Usually you'll see grain bowls, smoothie bowls, and poke bowls pop up on menus, but I wanted to step outside of the box. Mostly you'll see yogurt topped with sweet things, but there are plenty of savory ways to enjoy it. I grew up eating raita which is a salty, spiced cucumber yogurt sauce. I drew some inspiration from that dish to create a hearty, filling, nutritious yogurt bowl.

This recipe also draws some inspiration from an upcoming trip to Iceland which is known for a product similar to yogurt called skyr. Fun fact, there is also a farm in Iceland called Fridheimar which is world renowned for their tomatoes!

Note: Since everyone's health history and nutritional needs are so different, please make sure that you talk with your doctor and a registered dietitian to get advice about the diet and exercise plan that's right for you.





# SAVORY EVERYTHING TOMATO SKYR BOWL

## INGREDIENTS

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup 0% Icelandic Skyr or Greek yogurt.

$\frac{1}{2}$  tsp everything bagel seasoning

$\frac{1}{2}$  tsp extra virgin olive oil

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup of canned chickpeas, drained

$\frac{1}{2}$  tsp spices of choice

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup grape tomatoes, sliced in half

1 mini cucumber, quartered and sliced

1 tbsp toasted pumpkin seeds

1 tbsp sliced scallions (optional)

Hope you're willing to step out of the box to try this dish. It's quick and easy for breakfast, lunch, or dinner when you don't feel like cooking. Not a yogurt fan?

Swap for low-fat or fat-free cottage cheese.

*Parul*

Chef Parul Desai, RDN

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Mix skyr and everything bagel seasoning in wide bowl.
2. In a separate smaller bowl, mix chickpeas with olive oil and spices (I used a mix of smoked paprika, garlic powder, and cayenne pepper).
3. Place seasoned chickpeas in the basket of an air fryer and cook for 8 minutes at 400°F. If you do not have an air fryer, cook them on a parchment lined baking sheet in an oven pre-heated to 400°F for 12 minutes.
4. While the chickpeas are in the air fryer or oven, slice tomatoes, cucumbers, and scallions.
5. Once the chickpeas are done cooking, top yogurt mixture into sections of thirds with tomatoes, cucumber, and chickpeas. Sprinkle with optional scallions, pumpkin seeds, and a little extra everything bagel seasoning if desired. Grab a spoon and enjoy!