



By Martyn Fisher

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Supermarket tomatoes 'need to be dunked in hot water'



Doing so before ripening means tomatoes bought from shops could one day be as tasty as those straight off the vine, researchers claim

Tomatoes sold in supermarkets can be made to taste better by dunking them in hot water before they ripen, a US government study has found.

The research team believes that this could increase the likelihood that tomatoes bought from shops could one day be as tasty as those straight off the vine, UK news outlet The Guardian reports.

Tomatoes destined for supermarkets are usually picked while still green and coaxed to ripen while they are stored and transported at low temperatures.

However, chilling degrades their flavour, making supermarket tomatoes relatively tasteless compared with those sold on farms. But [scientists from the US Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#) found that a simple treatment process can dramatically boost the flavour of transported tomatoes.

Dr Jinhe Bai, of USDA, said: "Ideally, tomatoes should be picked ripe and then sold immediately, as they are at farm stands.

"To produce a better tasting tomato, we added a hot water pre-treatment step to the usual protocol that growers follow. We found that this pre-treatment step prevents flavour loss due to chilling."

In the tests, Florida-grown green tomatoes were dipped in water heated to about 51.6C for five minutes and allowed to cool at room temperature. Only then were the fruit chilled to the temperatures normally used for shipping.

Heating before chilling led to higher levels of flavour compounds, the scientists found.

Bai, whose research was presented at an American Chemical Society meeting in Boston, in the US, added: "Chilling

suppresses production of oxygen, nitrogen and sulphur-containing heterocyclic compounds, ketones, alcohols and aldehydes, including 13 important aroma components of tomato flavour.

"But hot water-treated fruit actually produced higher concentrations of these important aroma contributors, even with subsequent chilling."

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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