

Transcription of *How the Tomato Shortage Affects Us* *Part 1* by Evernote

Good evening.

Recently, we have faced a tomato shortage. Due to the hurricanes, which not only affected my property, tomatoes were ruined. Thus, tomatoes became in short supply. Prices skyrocketed. Tomato lovers were dismayed because we had to pay more for tomatoes. This was disappointing because tomatoes are a very versatile plant. Technically, tomatoes are considered a fruit, but are more like vegetables in property and uses. [Google Gemini: 2004 Tomato Shortage: In 2004, the US experienced a significant tomato shortage due to a combination of factors, including hurricanes in Florida, heavy rains in California, and a pest outbreak in Mexico. These disruptions resulted in decreased tomato production, leading to higher prices and shortages at retail.

Here's a more detailed look at the 2004 tomato shortage:
Causes:

- **Hurricanes in Florida:**

Multiple hurricanes, such as Hurricanes Frances and Ivan, severely damaged tomato fields and delayed planting, impacting the fall production.

- **Heavy Rains in California:**

Prolonged rains and lower temperatures in California damaged crops and reduced yields.

- **Pest Outbreak in Mexico:**

A pest infestation in the Baja region of Mexico, a major source of tomatoes, resulted in a significant loss of production, up to 40% in some areas.

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Consequences:

- **Increased Prices:**

The decreased supply led to a sharp increase in the wholesale and retail prices of tomatoes.

Retail Shortages:

Tomatoes became scarce in some areas, with some stores even running out.

Restaurant Impact:

Restaurants, particularly those relying heavily on tomatoes for salsa, salads, and other dishes, faced challenges and menu adjustments. Some restaurants removed tomatoes from their menus, while others raised prices or substituted with less expensive options.

Consumer Behavior:

Consumers were forced to cut back on tomato consumption or purchase more expensive options.

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Resolution:

- As the Florida hurricane season ended and new tomato crops matured, the supply began to improve, and prices gradually decreased.

By December 2004, produce industry experts predicted that the shortage would ease as the new harvest replenished the supply.]

Tomatoes can be used for:

- Side dishes
- Main dishes
- Salads
- Sandwiches

Tomatoes can be chopped, cut, diced, mashed, blended, juiced, you name it. Tomatoes have tons of uses. In fact, tomatoes might even be the most versatile plant. George Washington Carver found 100 uses for peanuts. I think tomatoes have peanuts to beat. Soy is also versatile, but I think perhaps tomatoes have soy beat. Probably the only other vegetable that competes with tomatoes would be potato.

In addition to all these uses of tomatoes, tomatoes are used as ingredients in a number of products. There are tons of tomato-based products, including:

- Ketchup
- Salsa
- Spaghetti
- Pizza
- Tomato soup
- Tomato juice

The name is just a few. I was afraid tomato-based products would go up in prices since tomatoes themselves were, but this did not happen unfortunately. Perhaps the tomato companies had stored these tomato-based products. There already were reserves. Therefore, there was enough supply. But fresh tomatoes' windowment supply caused tomato products to be steady. Perhaps the reason prices rose was because of the economic law of supply and demand. When there's low demand or low supply, prices go up. When there's high demand or high supply, prices go down. Typically, tomatoes are not the most expensive food. They're always these dime-a-dozen, they're cheaper food, but there's a lot of food, which is more expensive. When a shortage occurred, tomatoes were scarce. We all know scarcity is the value. They became a prized commodity. My dad was saying, "when he owned a restaurant, a crate of tomatoes would cost \$12. Now, the same tomatoes would cost \$66."

My stepmom was saying, "Restaurants, which usually give tomatoes on sandwiches without asking, were asking people because restaurants did not want to waste tomatoes. "Tomatoes were that much. She also said, she "heard they were slicing tomatoes more thin." Isn't it interesting how such an event changes our perception of tomatoes? In some ways, it can be beneficial. Although I love tomatoes, I do see advantages that come from the shortage.

When I went to visit my dad, I was going to have a veggie burger. Typically, I have a tomato on the sandwich. Unfortunately, there was no tomatoes. I just thought my dad said they were too expensive because of the shortage. Later, when I went shopping, I grabbed some roma tomatoes since they weren't quite as expensive. And all those have went up too. He said "they don't have any taste." I don't think roma tomatoes are as good as the other type, but to me, they're definitely preferable to nothing.

Since my dad did not have tomatoes when I had those first veggie burgers, he recommended having onions and mushrooms. I was hesitant of the idea at first. Later, I decided I would go for it. I ended up having mushrooms on the burger. I didn't even have a bun. It still was really good. I wouldn't have tried that if there was not such a tomato shortage.

There can be a vicious cycle. Tomatoes are in short supply and therefore prices rise. People don't like that, thus people don't want to buy tomatoes. Therefore, prices have to rise even more [like economists describe the economic laws]. One of the reasons prices rise is because the tomato companies want to make the same profit They have bills to pay. They want to put food on their tables too. If fewer people are buying tomatoes, they need to charge more per unit in order to make the same level of profit. [like economists describe the economic laws for the whole paragraph].

I wonder why couldn't this have happened to any other vegetable? Why? The delicious, nutritious, versatile, useful tomato. Why not some other one? Tomatoes, what? I just couldn't do it out. Perhaps if it did happen to another vegetable, another plant, another food, we may not notice because it would not be valued the way tomatoes would. Maybe there's a shortage of another vegetable such as broccoli right now. We don't notice because we don't care.

When I went to the co-op one day, I was walking in the bulk food section.