



Baskets of heirlooms fill the stalls at TomatoFest, in California's Carmel Valley.

Passion Fruit

What drives a man to cross the country to taste hundreds of tomatoes? JONATHAN REYNOLDS embarks on an epic quest to rediscover the heirloom fruit of his youth

AS A KID, I THOUGHT TOMATOES were terrifying. They felt soft and creepy when ripe, were visually intimidating once sliced, and their harsh flavor—acidic and salty—didn't jibe with the mushy blandness that usually characterizes kid food (or certainly did mine).

But at 18 I spent a summer working on a dairy farm in Waitsfield, Vermont, and the farmer and his wife, Otis and Elsie Wallis—neither of »