

## PRESS RELEASE

### ***For immediate release***

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### ***Images available***

## **Gary Ibsen, Founder of the Carmel TomatoFest, Announces Retirement at 17<sup>th</sup> Annual NatureSweet Carmel TomatoFest, Sept. 14, 2008**

**Carmel, Calif. – June 10, 2008** – This year's NatureSweet Carmel TomatoFest, scheduled for September 14, 2008, 12:30PM at Quail Lodge Resort in Carmel, California, will also be Gary Ibsen's grand retirement party.

At this year's TomatoFest, Ibsen will be announcing his official retirement. "I started the TomatoFest to benefit our community. It has done so. At this point of my life, health issues and my a desire to spend more time with my children and grandchildren, presses me to finally let go of my role in this wonderful event that has given me so much joy for so many years. I'm retiring with a great TomatoFest celebration while remaining open for anyone interested in continuing the TomatoFest, beyond 2008, to be in contact with me," said Ibsen.

Ibsen began the Carmel TomatoFest in the backyard of his home in Carmel Valley in 1991, with several chef friends and their families as a 'pot-luck' celebration of the season's harvest. His desire to share the legacy of heirloom tomatoes has since inspired a national awakening and appreciation of heirloom tomatoes.

Gary Ibsen and Dagma Lacey will continue to operate their successful tomatofest.com website, which sells Organic Heirloom Tomato seeds to gardeners worldwide, from the organic tomato seeds they harvest annually. Ibsen adds, "I'm also looking forward to devoting more time to our TomatoFest Seed Donations Program that benefits school gardens, urban gardens and community garden projects world-wide. It is especially important to us, particularly in this time of hardship for many, that we do all we can to support people's ability to provide for themselves healthy foods through healthy gardening and teach sustainable practices to children."

"I'm immensely pleased that the Carmel TomatoFest has attracted many gardening friends, chefs, wineries and sponsors from around the nation over the years. And I'm grateful for the years of support by our local volunteers, community sponsors and particularly grateful that NatureSweet joined the TomatoFest last year as our title sponsor. They exemplify integrity and excellence as a corporation and with their tomato products. NatureSweet is making the world a better place by through social responsibility as leaders in sustainable agriculture."

This year, don't miss the opportunity to satiate your desire for old-fashioned, heirloom tomato flavors at one of the best food & wine events in California. Enjoy 60 of America's finest chefs will attend this year's TomatoFest to offer guests the opportunity to enjoy world-class cuisine featuring heirloom tomatoes in an unpretentious, harvest-celebration atmosphere. Ibsen says, "Our gathering of culinary artists will showcase a range of unforgettable epicurean creations from classical to innovative food adventures. The chefs selected to appear at this year's TomatoFest lead the way to experiencing the possibility, range and pleasures of exceptional cuisine prepared with heirloom tomatoes."

The NatureSweet Carmel TomatoFest also offers guests the opportunity to indulge their senses with a grand display & tasting of 350 varieties of delicious heirloom tomatoes, 50 wineries pouring more than

200 premium wines, an "International Olive Oil Tasting," a "Salsa Showcase" tasting of 90 tomato salsas from around the U.S., and an incredible, "old-fashioned," country BBQ.

"The NatureSweet Carmel TomatoFest® entertains more than one's senses," said Ibsen. It celebrates the spirit of the season's harvest and encourages home gardeners to carry on the honored tradition of seed-saving and growing their family's own organic heirloom tomatoes. It truly is a unique community festival for food & wine lovers, chefs, family gardeners and farmers. It's a celebration of life!"

Get your ticket now... so you don't miss the opportunity to take part in "America's Premier Tomato Harvest Festival" before tickets sell out.

General admission tickets at \$95. are available in advance up to the day of the event and are limited to 3000 guests to ensure a quality experience for all. Early ticket purchase is suggested since the event sells out every year. Ticket includes entry, all food, wine tasting, wine glasses and the day's activities. Children under the age of 12 with attending parent are admitted free. Net proceeds from the festivities are donated to regional and national youth-focused charities. Tickets may be purchased through [www.tomatofest.com](http://www.tomatofest.com) or by calling 1-800-965-4827.

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**Founded and operated by Gary Ibsen in 1991, the TomatoFest® has revitalized the appreciation and desire for true heirloom tomatoes over the years. Ibsen's belief in sustainable farming and organic seed saving has inspired him to develop and grow heirloom tomato varieties for more than 30 years. For the 2008 season, he is currently growing more than 600 varieties of certified organic heirloom tomatoes from seeds originally sourced from family farms around the world. Ibsen's hands-on production and harvest techniques ensure the highest quality product from harvest to table. For more information visit [www.tomatofest.com](http://www.tomatofest.com) or call 1-800-965-4827.**