

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Gary Ibsen
TomatoFest® Garden Seeds
Tel: 831.625.6041
Email: gary@tomatofest.com

Images Available

Announcing “Top 10” Heirloom Tomatoes for 2008 *Consumer Tastes Help “Black” Tomatoes Steal the Show*

Carmel, Calif. – January 24, 2008 – TomatoFest® Garden Seeds today announced that “black” tomatoes rank high in the “Top 10” list of favorite heirloom tomatoes going into 2008.

The “Top 10” favorite heirloom tomatoes are: Paul Robeson (purple/black), Cherokee Purple (purple/black), Brandywine (pink), Amana Orange (orange), Marvel Stripe (red/yellow striped), Julia Child (pink), Black Zebra (green/purple striped), Black Cherry (purple/black), Kellogg’s Breakfast (orange), and Aussie (red).

“It’s not just not red and pink tomatoes that steal the show on the “Top 10” list anymore,” said Gary Ibsen, grower of 600 varieties of certified organic, heirloom tomatoes in California, and owner of TomatoFest® Garden Seeds, one of the largest internet retailers of organic heirloom tomato seeds.

“The purple/black colored heirloom tomatoes continue to rise in popularity at produce markets, with restaurant chefs, and with home gardeners for 5th year in a row,” says Ibsen. “Black” tomatoes are fast becoming the new “red” tomato. They’re the ‘Cinderellas’ of the produce markets.”

“A survey of our tomato seed sales to home gardeners and commercial tomato farmers, along with a review of our sales of fresh heirloom tomatoes to retailers and restaurants, demonstrate soundly that consumers have discovered the superior and complex flavors of the “black” heirloom tomatoes, and are selecting these bold colors with their mix of favorite red, pink, orange and bi-colored tomatoes.”

Ibsen adds, “I’ve also seen a jump in demand for the “black” tomatoes in China, Spain, Japan and the UK. And it’s not just my own experience that supports this growing trend toward the “blacks” and other-colored heirloom tomatoes; other tomato farmers are showing similar results.” During recent years, California-based Happy Boy Farms, one of the largest grower/shippers of heirloom tomatoes in the nation, also found a huge increase in the demand for black tomatoes among produce retailers as well as restaurant accounts.

“This is exciting news,” Ibsen continues, “because it shows that consumers are being more adventurous in selecting the dark colored varieties of heirloom tomatoes that only a few years ago were next to impossible to find in the marketplace.”

“Black” tomatoes are not really black, remarked Ibsen. “They cover a range of dark colors, including deep purple, dusky deep brown, smoky mahogany with dark green shoulders, and bluish-brown. The depth of colors seems to be encouraged by a higher acid and mineral content in the soil.”

“Black” tomatoes are native to Southern Ukraine during the early 19th century. They originally existed in only a small region of the Crimean Peninsula. Soon they were showing up as new varieties in many shapes and sizes and began to appear throughout the territories of the former Soviet Union. Then they began turning up in the former Yugoslavia, Germany and the United States.

The Paul Robeson “black” heirloom tomato, ranking high on the “Top 10” list, won “Best Tasting Tomato” for several years at the Carmel TomatoFest® in California. Its deep, rich colors stand it apart from other traditional tomatoes, boasting a dusky, dark-red skin with dark-green shoulders and red flesh in its center. This beefsteak tomato is filled with luscious, earthy, exotic flavors, and has a good acid-to-sweet balance.

TomatoFest Garden Seeds has found a consumer and retailer preference with other “black” tomato favorites, such as: Cherokee Purple, Black Crimson, the pear-shaped Japanese Black Trifele, Black from Tula, Black Plum and Cherokee Chocolate. The Black Cherry tomato has also been on a meteoric rise in popularity due to its jewel-like appearance and pronounced sweet, complex flavors.

###

About Carmel TomatoFest®

Founded and operated by Gary Ibsen in 1991, the Carmel TomatoFest has revitalized the appreciation and desire for true heirloom tomatoes. Ibsen’s belief in sustainable, organic farming and seed saving has inspired him to develop and grow heirloom tomato varieties for more than 30 years. For the 2008 season, he is 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. This year’s NatureSweet Carmel TomatoFest takes place at Quail Lodge Resort, Carmel, California on September 14th. Net proceeds from the festivities will be donated to regional and national youth-focused charities. For additional information, visit www.tomatofest.com or call 831-625-6041.