



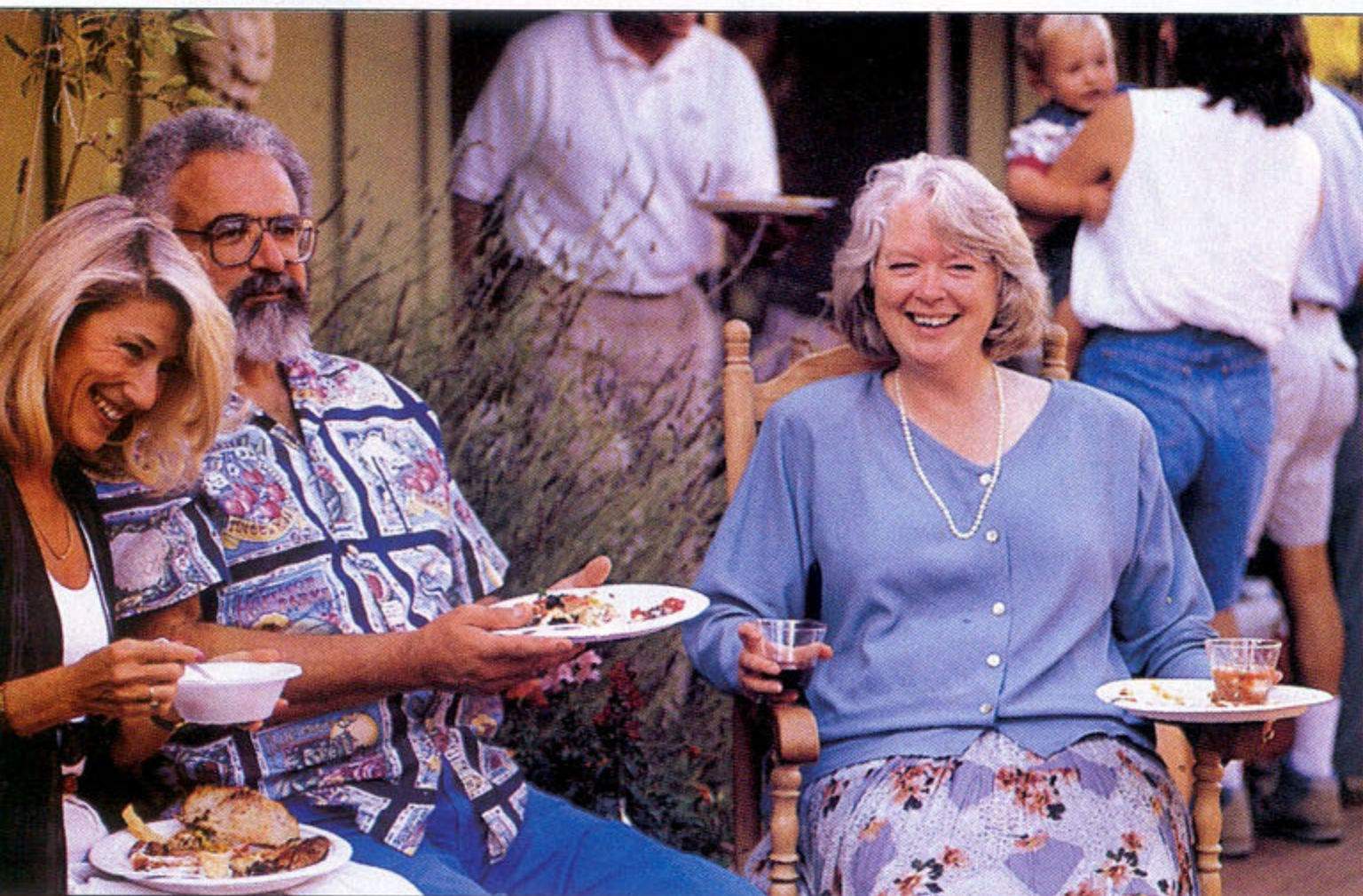
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foot-long display of every variety of tomato he has grown in various stages of ripeness and allows guests to sample each type to compare them for taste, texture, sweetness, acid level and appearance to determine their favorite tomato of the season.

Once the guests have assembled, the tasting begins. Gary provides informational sheets that list all the varieties, describing their history, characteristics and where to obtain seeds. Guests peruse the display and sample bite-sized pieces of tomatoes, jotting down notes to help them remember their favorites. Hands-down winner every year to date has been Brandywine, a pink tomato with a deep, succulent flavor that makes you forget any other tomato you have ever tasted.

Second place at this party was Costoluto Genovese, a picturesque bright-red fluted tomato, with Carmello, a deep-red, medium-sized variety with exquisite flavor, coming in third. Other top-ranking favorites were Sweet 100 Plus cherry tomato, Lemon Boy and Radiator Charlie's Mortgage Lifter. (The latter got its name almost 50 years ago, according to Gary, from its developer, M.C. Byles, known as Radiator Charlie because he owned a radiator repair business located at the base of a steep hill on which trucks would often overheat. Although he had no formal education or plant-breeding experience, Byles created this tomato by cross-breeding four of the largest fruited tomatoes he could find. After he developed the tasty variety, he sold plants for \$1 each and paid off the \$6,000 mortgage on his home in six years.)

Since many of the guests are well-known food professionals—Brian Whitmer (chef/co-owner of Montrio in Monterey) and his wife Tracy Maes (pastry chef), Walter and Gaston Georis (co-owners of Casanova in Carmel), Wendy Brodie (chef at Rancho San Carlos), David Fink (general manager of



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Tomato, Basil and Buffalo Mozzarella Salad (top); Phyllis Decker, from left, Shelly Schachter and Alice Kinsler sampling the luscious tomato dishes (bottom)