French's Mustard yellow and lime green, and shaped like pickles. After an hour or so, I was experiencing what the experts call taste fatigue. And I was getting a stomachache.

Ibsen had named Clint Eastwood's Rowdy Red after his friend, the actor-director and former Carmel mayor. "It's a very sweet tomato," Ibsen said. A panel of vintners and chefs voted as its favorite the Paul Robeson — a large blackish purple beefsteak tomato named after the African-American singer and actor. But for me and several others, the champ was the small, leathery-looking Speckled Peach, a German-bred tomato that packs a wallop of tang and sweetness. "It reminds me of fruit," said Hannah Grogin, age 9, of Pebble Beach. Regina Greel, a hospital employee from Berkeley, said, "They taste melony, like peaches, but fruity, not tomato-y. Like a combination of a cantaloupe and a peach." Eureka, I thought: the perfect tomato.

**Florida is the biggest supplier** of winter fresh tomatoes for U.S. consumers, though Canada, where they're grown in greenhouses in the spring and winter, and Mexico are cutting into the Sunshine State's market. Tomato-growing in Florida is a tough business, because of, among other things, high humidity and frequent storms, which can wreak microbial havoc. "We see more diseases in a season than they do in California in a year," one expert says.