

A *Passion* for *Heirloom* **Tomatoes**

by Ann Elizabeth Singley



Photo by © Kelli Udall

Assorted Heirloom tomatoes
grown by Gary Ibsen

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7th Annual TomatoFest™"**

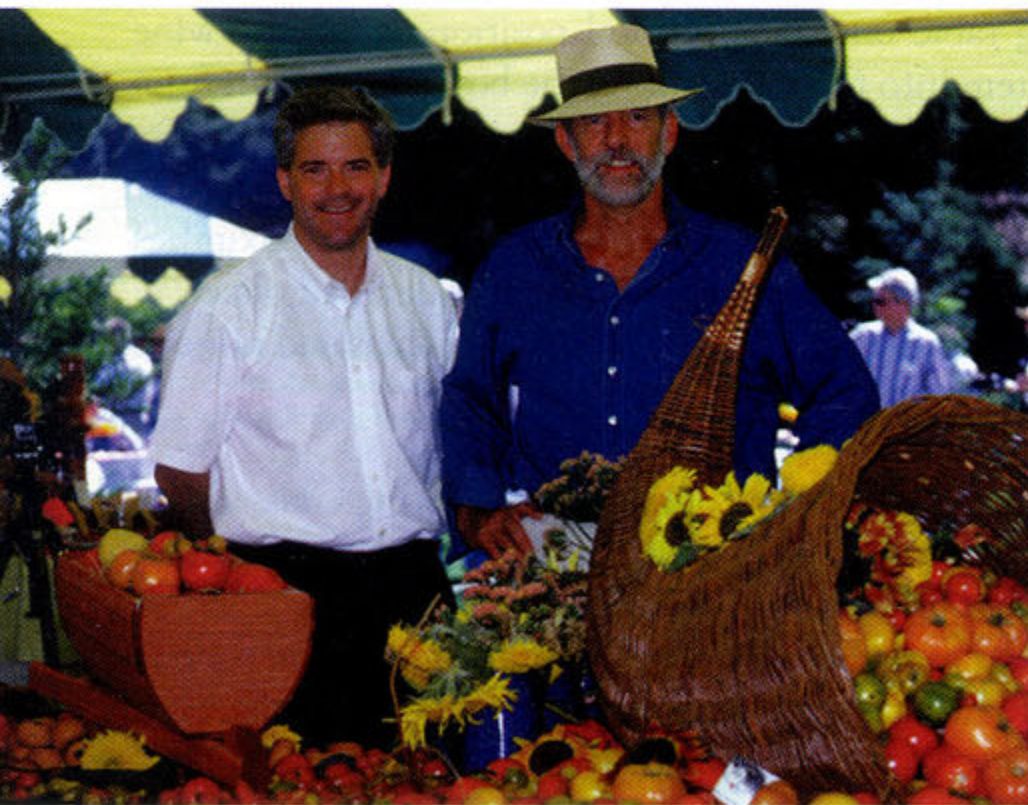


Photo by © Batista Moon

Gary Ibsen (right) and friend at the 1997 TomatoFest™

The largest annual tomato-tasting event in the nation takes place in Carmel Valley. Snow White, Radiator Charlie's Mortgage Lifter, Aunt Ruby's Yellow Cherry, the Black Prince, Hawaiian Pineapple, and Box Car Willie will all be there.

Pinks, yellow, reds, oranges, rainbow-striped, whites, purples and even "black" tomatoes, as small as currants and as large as melons, heart-shaped, round, oval, flat or fluted... and each different in flavor from the next. What these tomatoes have in common is they are all considered to be the "best tasting" tomato varieties from around the country and around the world.

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"There ain't nothin' better in life than true love and vine-ripened tomatoes," Ibsen says laughingly... "and considering the attention I devote to preparing a healthy soil and nourishment for my plants I'm not surprised that people are delighted with the intensity of 'old-fashioned' tomato flavors they had either forgotten about or hadn't previously tasted. The river bottom soil and climate of Carmel Valley has proven ideal for growing these favorite tomato varieties, all of which I've grown organically from seed."

Ibsen has grown tomatoes as a hobby during his 25-year career in the food/wine business. He recently sold his interest in *Adventures In Dining* magazine, where he served as publisher, to farm organically-grown heirloom tomatoes for the TomatoFest™ and markets in the Monterey Bay area under the Little River Organics brand. Ten Speed Press in Berkeley will be publishing Ibsen's "The Great Tomato Book" in 1999.

The event that is now known throughout the west began as a backyard tomato tasting party where several friends brought their favorite tomato dish and enjoyed tasting several varieties of heirloom tomatoes from Ibsen's garden. Last year the event

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