

PRESS RELEASE

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Gary Ibsen
Email: gary@tomatofest.com

Images Available

Announcing “Top 10” Heirloom Tomatoes for 2009 *“Black” Tomatoes Still Reign with the Best of the Reds and Pinks* *Bi-Colored and Cherry Tomatoes Also Growing In Popularity*

Carmel, Calif. – January 30, 2009 – TomatoFest® Garden Seeds today announced that “black” tomatoes again rank high in the “Top 10” list of favorite heirloom tomatoes going into 2009. The “Top 10” favorite heirloom tomatoes are:

Brandywine (pink)
Paul Robeson (purple/black)
Aussie (red)
Julia Child (pink)
Cherokee Purple (purple/black)
Black Cherry (purple/black)
Kellogg’s Breakfast (orange)
Gold Medal (yellow/red striped)
Aunt Ginny’s Purple (purple/black)
Carmello (red)

“Black” tomatoes were more popular in 2008 than in any prior year,” said Gary Ibsen, grower of 600 varieties of certified organic, heirloom tomatoes in California, and founder of TomatoFest® Garden Seeds, the most prominent internet retailer 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 the 6th year in a row,” “Black” tomatoes are fast becoming as popular as many of the best tasting pink and red tomatoes.”

“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.

“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 along with their mix of favorite red, pink, orange and bi-colored tomatoes, said Ibsen.”

Also showing a rise in popularity in 2008 with a greater presence in produce markets, are sweeter tasting bi-colored tomatoes, and a wider selection of different colored cherry tomatoes.

Photos and descriptions of all the above listed tomato varieties can be found at TomatoFest.com

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About TomatoFest® Garden Seeds

Founded by Gary Ibsen in 1991, TomatoFest Garden Seeds 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 2009 season, he, and his partner Dagma Lacey, are growing more than 600 varieties of certified organic, heirloom tomatoes from seeds originally sourced from family farms around the world. Their hands-on tomato production and seed harvest techniques ensure the highest quality product and help ensure that these precious heirloom tomato varieties will be sustained for years to come. In 2008 Ibsen retired from 18 years of producing the nationally celebrated Carmel TomatoFest event in Carmel CA. Through their TomatoFest Seed Donation Program, TomatoFest Garden Seeds has been donating heirloom tomato seeds to more than 250 urban garden projects, school gardens, community outreach gardens around the U.S., India, Africa, Europe, China. For additional information, visit www.tomatofest.com