



Long before Leamington became known as the 'Tomato Capital of Canada', the story of the tomato and how it became a staple in almost every cuisine in the world is full of mystery, history, folktale, and lore. It is widely believed that the first tomatoes were cultivated and consumed in

South or Central America, possibly by the Aztecs. It's thought that Spanish explorers were the ones to first bring the fruit to Europe.

The tomatoes' history in Europe was full of misunderstanding, the French called the tomato 'pomme d'amour', or 'apple of love' as it was thought to be an aphrodisiac. In Italy, by the mid 16th century, it had been mentioned in a Nepalese cookbook. It's said that the famous pizza was first made in Naples to welcome Queen Margaret for a visit to represent the new Italian flag, the ingredients chosen to represent the colors, white for the mozzarella, green for the fresh basil toppings, and red...the sauce made by the tomatoes.

As the tomato is part of the Nightshade species of botanicals, along with peppers, eggplant, and tobacco, so for some of the tomato history, was ruled by fear and misunderstanding that they might be poisonous.

Why did tomatoes have such a bad reputation early in our history? The answer lies first in appearances and then in names. The close resemblance of tomatoes to deadly nightshade (so close that the two were occasionally mistaken for each other) did not encourage people to give the fruit a try. In 15th century Britain, it was widely thought that the tomato was indeed poisonous, but the tomato was mistaken for the true culprit. Europeans thought that the tomato was poisonous because of the way plates and flatware were made in the 1500's.

Rich people in that time used flatware made of pewter, which has a high-lead content. Foods high in acid, like tomatoes, would cause the lead to leech out into the food, resulting in lead poisoning and death. Poor people, who ate off plates made of wood, did not have that problem, and hence did not have an aversion to tomatoes. This is essentially the reason why tomatoes were only eaten by poor people until the 1800's, especially Italians.

Like so many things, the tomato became popular in North America during times of increased immigration, where cultures began to gather and share traditions and recipes. And throughout the years, the tomato has become embraced as one of the world's most beloved ingredients.

Today, our Ontario Greenhouse farmers grow a wide variety of tomatoes that feed Ontario families and continue the history of the tomato here at home. Our growers have introduced many new varieties with different sizes, shapes, colors and flavor profiles.



THE ADVENTURES OF

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Did you know that the tomato is actually a fruit? Botanically, tomatoes are a fruit, because a fruit is defined as the edible part of the plant that contains seeds, while a vegetable is the edible stems, leaves and roots of the plant.



Commodity Spotlight

Cherry Tomatoes

Cherry tomatoes get their name because they're the size and shape of cherries. These little round tomatoes are juicy, sweet, and have thin skins. Since they have a high water content, cherry tomatoes are notorious for squirting when you bite into them!

Cherry tomatoes are sweet like candy and are a great healthy snack to balance all the Halloween treats.



A Friendly reminder:

As the days grow shorter, and the weather begins to get colder and wetter, we want to remind all members of our community to be mindful of sharing our roads with our biking community. If driving, be mindful and courteous to keep cyclists safe. If biking, make yourself as visible as possible. Wear bright colours, add a flag to the back of your bike, use your lights, even during the day, make sure you have plenty of reflectors, and throw on a fluorescent safety vest if you want to be extra cautious.

OGVG and our member farms thank the community for keeping our roads safe for everyone.

