

NEWSLETTER

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NO JANUARY MEETING

There will be no January general meeting, as Jan 26th is public holiday. Bill did speak to the Hall Keepers, see if we could have another day.

No bookings to be taken for Shire Hall for 2022. City Hall booked out for maintenance works during the month of January.

Our next meeting will be Wednesday February 23rd in the CITY HALL.

MEMBERS SUBSCRIPTIONS

Still a few members have not paid their yearly subscription! We hope to see you at the February meeting.

TOMATO LONG HISTORY



The Tomato, one of the most popular fruits in the entire world, and yes, it is technically botanically a fruit. Over 180 million tons are produced worldwide each year. In many modern countries they can be found everywhere, being consumed

in so many ways that it would take far too long to list them all out.

However, the Tomato was not always held in such esteem. When Europeans first discovered them, they were not immediately popular, and among many even gained a sinister reputation for toxicity, earning the nickname "The Poison Apple".

When we think of tomatoes, many of us think spaghetti, lasagne, pizza, Italian food. It must come from Italy, but in fact it does not, Julius Caesar never saw a tomato in his life.

The tomato originally came from the Americas, specifically the area of modern-day northern Peru and southern Ecuador. This is where its ancestors came from, but not where it was domesticated. It is not known exactly how, but over time, the species spread north and would first be domesticated in Mesoamerica. It is not known when exactly this happened, but it seems to have occurred by about 500 BC. Both the Maya and Aztec grew and improved upon the tomato. In the Aztec language it was Nahuatl, which is kind of where we get our word for it. The Spanish under Hernán Cortés were like with the first Europeans to encounter tomatoes during their visit and eventual conquest of the great Aztec city of Tenochtitlán, modern day Mexico city in 1519.

They may also have been the first to bring seeds back to Europe. The Spanish would also later introduce them to them to Asia, bringing them to the Philippines.



Pietro Andrea Mattioli

A few decades later in 1544, the Italian writer Pietro Andrea Mattioli produced the first known European writing about tomatoes, calling them in medieval Italian, pomodoro "Golden Apples". He wrote that they were green at first, and when ripe of a golden colour. This suggests that some of the first kinds encountered by Europeans were more of a yellow colour. In fact, European travellers and eventual colonists of Mexico itself would report many kinds of tomatoes, including yellow and red.



Many people believed it was a new type of egg plant. Evidently, the Chinese thought the same thing. In fact, the Chinese word for Tomato remains as Fānqié or the Barbarians Eggplant. Egg plants are indeed a distant old world relative of the tomato, but tomatoes are not egg plants. Both tomatoes and tomatillo were referred to as tomatos by early Spanish writers.

This confusion stems from a misunderstanding of the Aztec language, their word for tomato "xitomatl" and tomatillo "miltomatl" were both derived from the word tomatl, which prefer to round and plump fruits, though both coming from the same botanical family and with some resemblance in appearance, especially with green tomatoes. Tomatillo and tomatoes belong to completely separate genera.



The Spanish were thus naturally the first Europeans to grow and consume tomatoes, although records of it are scarce in the sixteenth century. It probably did not take long to reach Portugal as well, although records there are even scarcer. The first known recipe book, including tomatoes, was written by Antonio Latini in 1692, a southern Italian.

Meanwhile the Ottomans likely encountered tomatoes at Italian

ports in this time and spread them throughout the Balkans and near East, though tomatoes would become a central part of Italian cuisine. The north in this time appears to have thought more along the lines of the rest of Europe, as is discussed in the book Pomodoro, a history of the tomato in Italy by David Gentilcore. There are still parts of Italy where it is not popular. Many Europeans were not immediately fond of the tomato, while some Europeans called them "golden apples" or "love apples", others called them things like "poison apples" and "stinking apples".



A belief emerged in many parts of Europe that they were poisonous. There was an assumption on the part of botanists. The tomato is a member of the night-shade family, which includes plants like the poisonous belladonna and mandrake. The unpleasant smell of the plant may also have contributed. There were also likely actually certain inedible and even toxic varieties which hadn't been weeded out yet. Furthermore, it may have been an ingredient in a coincidental but fatal combination. It is often believed that certain unfortunate aristocrats did die from eating tomatoes not because of the fruit itself, but because of the dishes on which they were consumed. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries many plates were made from pewter, which was then an alloy of tin and lead. When consuming the tomato the acid juice from the fruit could have then leached lead from the plate, causing lead poisoning.

Though the belief that the Tomato was poisonous was common, especially in the seventeenth century Northern Europe. It seems that the extent to which people believed that Tomato was poisonous and the length of time that this rumour persisted may be slightly exaggerated by historians. Many experts of the day saying it was bad for the health, often because of its acidity.

Ironically, others would promote it for its supposed medicinal properties. Secondly, tomatoes, like warm summers, which were not the norm in northern Europe, thus slowing their spread. Finally, it seems that there were a noteworthy number of people who simply didn't like them. Thus, when they were grown by people such as the English in this time, it was often for ornamental purposes. It seems ridiculed to us today that people would think that they were poisonous, but it seems overall they were not very well known at the same time.



Sir Hans Sloane

It seems that by the middle of the eighteenth century the British people had begun to accept them. The Anglo-Irish botanist Sir Hans Sloane is credited with transporting the word "Tomato" from Spanish to English, replacing names like "Love Apples" throughout the subsequent century.

It was a word which he picked up from Jamaica, which was transferred from the Spanish to the British in 1655, ironically, though originating in Mezo America. It was the Europeans who introduced the "Tomato" to the British North American colonies that would become the U.S. and Canada by the early eighteenth century.

President Thomas Jefferson, was known to have grown some at his home of Monticello and may have influenced the spread of certain unknown varieties in Virginia, which he obtained the seeds for during his time and France, and, by importing them from Mexico.



According to Andrew F. Smith in his book *The Tomato in America*, the Tomato slowly became popular across the U.S. in the first half of the nineteenth century. Also, according to Smith, in 1841, a horticulturalist named J. W. Russell from Massachusetts, stated that the tomato was an indispensable dish for every table during the summer months.

The Tomato was known to mutate easily, allowing growers to easily produce new varieties, which they actively did in the nineteenth and twentieth century's. Perhaps the most prodigious of Tomato breeders was a man named Alexander W. Livingstone from Reynoldsburg, Ohio, from 1870 to 1893, he produced 17 new varieties because of his efforts. Reynoldsberg considers itself the home of the commercial Tomato, and in fact holds a Tomato festival

each year. It is one of many Tomato centred events held around the world.



Alexander W. Livingstone

The tomato continues to be a largely popular food. However, despite its popularity, it isn't quite what it used to be, modern varieties common in stores, and even most sold for growing in gardens were bred for size, durability and appearance.

However, the selection for these traits seems to have had a negative effect on taste, and so the quality of the taste of the common tomato has declined in the past century. Some geneticists and farmers have recognized this issue and some have even taken to solving it, although in truth gardeners are often able to obtain and grow these heirloom varieties on their own. The story of the tomato is fascinating and complex and clearly not over yet.



LARGEST TREE



Location is the Giant Forest of Sequoia National Park in Tulare County, California, USA. The General Sherman Tree is the world's largest tree, measured by volume. It stands 83 mts tall, and is over 11 mts in diameter at the base. Sequoia trunks remain wide high up. At 18 mts above the base, the Sherman Tree is 5.3 mts in diameter. It is estimated to be around 2,300 to 2,700 years old.



EGGLESS BREAD ROLLS



These delicious eggless bread rolls do not need an oven to be baked. They are crispy on the outside and the inside is soft. They are easy to make and super delicious. In a large bowl, add 120ml of warm milk then add white sugar and dry yeast then mix well. Add 200 grams of sifted flour with a pinch of salt then start mixing with a spatula until the dough comes together.

Microwave unsalted butter for 15 seconds then pour into the dough and continue kneading the dough for about 5 minutes until the dough is smooth. Cover the dough in a bowl for 10 minutes then roll the dough into a log shape and flatten it. Using a rolling pin, roll out the dough into a rectangle then spread a layer of peanut butter on the dough.

You can substitute peanut butter with jam. Once the surface is well covered with jam, roll the dough starting from the short end, once rolled, cut the dough into equal parts, about 1.5 cm in width. Line the cut dough on a parchment-lined pan then cover them for 1 hour to proof.

Brush oil in a pan and fry them on medium-low heat for 2 minutes. Flip over after 2 minutes, cover the pan and fry them for another 2 minutes. Remove from the pan and fry the rest until you are done. Serve them warm for a weekend breakfast and enjoy.

Ingredients;

120ml Warm milk

12g(1tbsp) White sugar

2g (3/4tsp) Active dry yeast

15g (1tbsp) Melted unsalted butter
200g/ 7Oz (1 1/3cups) All-purpose or bread flour
1.5g(1/4tsp)Salt
Peanut butter

Use medium-low heat, fry for 2 minutes, then fry for another 2-3 minutes after flip over.

CHERYL WARNER



Photo- Cheryl and Nigella

We received a message last month (December) from Gavin Warner of the passing away of his wife Cheryl in hospital on 15th December 2021. Cheryl over a number of years had suffered from medical problems. Cheryl in 2011 took on the role as our Club's Secretary. A job she had under control in maintaining meeting minutes, correspondence and anything else she was called upon to help the Club and members.

Our condolences go to Gavin and family. A memorial service for Cheryl will be held this month.

MEMBERS NEWS

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU

January: Dorothy Berrill, Barbara Duggan, Glenda Edgar, Lorena Felicetti, Barbara Lee, Desiree Mathie, Noelene Park, Jaswant Singh.

We wish you all a wonderful celebration.

FIND THE WORD

Well, how did you go with finding the word in the last newsletter? The word is –

DEFLATED

The word this month has 8 letters. What could it be?

Look at the four pictures for the clue. Answer next newsletter.



MONTHLY COMPETITION

February 23rd: One Container Marigolds, 3-6 stems, One Variety, C.V.A.

MONTHLY MEETING

February 23rd: Chris Clarke - Victorian Alpine Flora.