JASAT

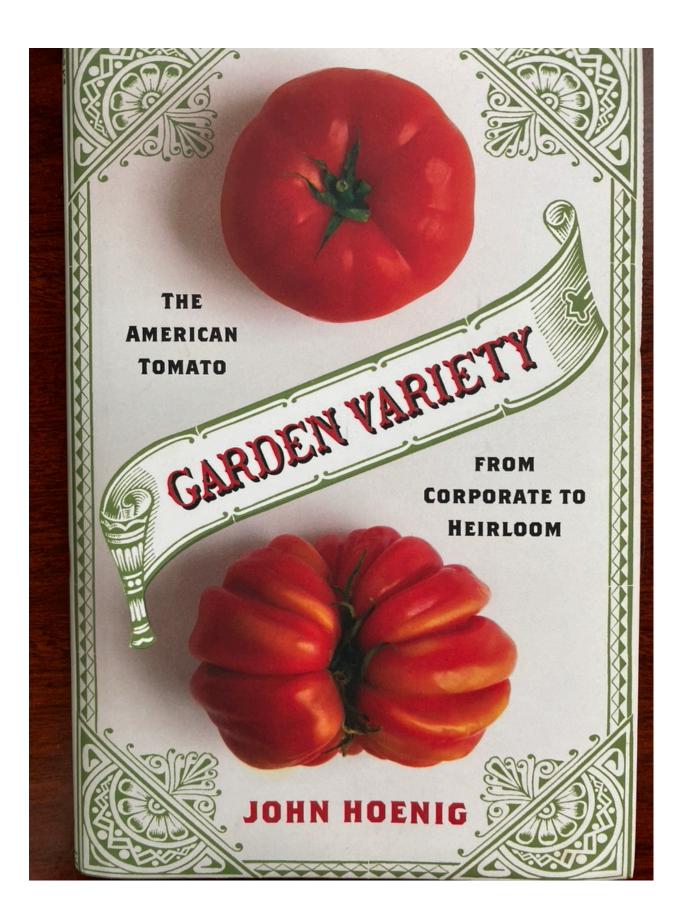


Journal of the American Studies Association of Texas



November 2019

Volume 50



timing of the book is refreshing because Carlson provides an updated foundation for understanding today's news without discussing the 2016 U.S. election, "fake news," or disinformation campaigns. This allows readers to easily apply his arguments to our new cultural landscape. As such, Carlson makes a significant contribution to the academic conversation that is also accessible to serious students.

W. SCOTT CHENEY

Collin College

Hoenig, John. *Garden Variety*. New York: Columbia UP, 2017. 288 pages. \$35.00 paper. ISBN 9780231179089.

As a chef who has embraced the home garden lifestyle for years, I welcomed the opportunity to review this handsome volume about the history of the tomato, and I was not disappointed. I soon discovered that this book addresses a great deal more than the history of this one soft fruit, placing the tomato at the center of the debate about the virtues and vices of corporate farming in America. It also examines the eating habits of Americans today while speculating about how those habits are evolving.

Hoenig opens with a description of the tomato's introduction into European diets. Originating in either Ecuador or Peru, the tomato traveled first to the Caribbean and then to Europe with explorers in the 1600s, but it was not well suited to the frontier lifestyle in America and not widely consumed here until the early 1800s. By the mid-19th century, however, the tomato was widely consumed in North America as both fresh and preserved.

As corporate farming methods increasingly influenced the American diet, consumption of the tomato inspired the commercial development of mass production methods to process tomato-based condiments, soups, and sauces; however, "minimally" processed whole tomatoes never lost their appeal for cooks who preferred to adapt them to their own recipes.

The desire for consumer accessibility to fresh tomatoes year-round drove farmers to find increasingly creative ways of extending their growing season. However, because small and middle-sized growers and canneries proliferated, the homogenization of the tomato was not really complete until the 1960s with the advent of canned spaghetti sauces and frozen pizzas.

Despite the convenience of canned or jarred products that run from budget friendly to Italian import, a preference by many for fresh, vine-ripened tomatoes continues, hence a rising number of successful

JASAT

53

organic farm operations across the U.S. Hoenig concludes by suggesting that, "The history of the tomato in America represents the diversity and complexity of American food culture."