

YUMMY NORTHWEST

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FRUITS AND...NUTS, WHAT IS THAT??

The U.S. Supreme Court declared (1886) the tomato a vegetable to clarify standards for tariffs on imported food. The European Union Jam Directive (1979) proclaimed carrots could be considered fruit, allowing Portuguese jam makers to use them to stretch their product. If these august bodies of law say so, who are we to argue?

The question stubbornly remains: What is the difference between a fruit and a vegetable? The lawyers may have figured it out, but ordinary folks are not so sure.

Yummy Northwest dives into this mystery and concludes: If you like it, eat it.

Get your kids to eat their veggies: tell them it's fruit

Tomatoes, cucumbers, peas, zucchini, avocados, green peppers and pumpkins. Which of these are vegetables? OK, you already know a tomato is – or is it? Botanically speaking, these are all fruits.

When someone asks what is the difference between a fruit and a vegetable, the real question is: Who's asking? A botanist and a grocer define them differently. Although grocers seem confident in their traditions, botanists can get into heated arguments over the fine points. Still a few definite facts emerge.

Botanists don't use the word vegetable to mean a plant. They identify the vegetation we eat by parts: roots, stems, leaves, flowers, seeds, or fruit. The fruit, in fact, is the part of the plant that holds its seeds.

What lurks in the shadow of the vegetable patch?

*Wallace & Gromit:
The Curse of the
Were-Rabbit*

Opening October 7!

In their first full-length feature movie, Wallace and Gromit open a humane pest-control business called Anti-Pesto.

They soon find themselves entangled with villains, rabbits, and giant vegetables.

Nick Park, director, has described his film as "the world's first vegetarian horror movie."

See the movie now and prepare to applaud on Oscar night. Nick will probably pick up his fourth Academy Award.

GROMIT KEEPS AN EYE ON HIS FRUITS AND VEG. (RIGHT)

Because the fruit is often sweet (usually with a sugar content of 10 percent or more), we regular folks identify fruit by its sweetness.

Thus, we have grocers who mistakenly sort olives and green beans with the vegetables but ignore the idea that bananas, because of their non-reproductive seeds, could be put in the vegetable section, too (though yes, scientifically speaking, they are fruit). Nuts and grains are fruits, but you rarely see bags of flour next to the apples and plums.

It gets confusing. Hence the cases taken to court.

If you can't remember anything else, memorize this: A fruit could be a vegetable, but a vegetable could not be a fruit.

You gotta laugh

Let my words, like vegetables, be tender and sweet, for tomorrow I may have to eat them.

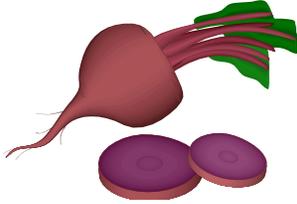
When is a cucumber like a strawberry?
When one is in a pickle and the other is in a jam.

What do you get if you divide the circumference of a pumpkin by its diameter?
Pumpkin pi.



Can you eat all that?

Imagine your mother saying you must eat all your vegetables. Now imagine that there are pieces of beet on your plate ...pieces that came from that 25-pound monster vegetable you had to water all summer. You are exhausted from garden chores, so you eat. And eat. Looks like your mother is canning the rest of that big beet to eat during the winter. It's going to be a very long winter.



Such a scene could have been common at the end of the nineteenth century in the Pacific Northwest. Vegetables just seemed to grow big back then. A woman who had traveled over the Oregon Trail wrote a letter from Marion County, Ore., in 1852, stating that "vegitable grow very large here...beats as large round as my waist..." Around 1846, Rev. Edward Parrish, also of Marion County, managed to grow a beet weighing 13.75 pounds. But that was, er, beet by the 25-pounder grown in Olympia, Wash., in 1854 by Mr. T. Chambers and verified by the editor of the "Columbian."

It might be easy to dismiss such stories as wishful thinking by hungry early pioneers – those same folks who named towns and land formations after foods and kitchen utensils – but there are several reasons why they can be believed.

Reliable people vouched for them: church leaders, newspaper editors, historians. Photographs and drawings appeared on post cards and in newspapers. And the sheer volume of accounts of giant vegetables almost seems to be its own proof.

In any case, records were kept, and a few statistics are included below for your consideration.

Cabbage

27.5 pounds, grown in the South Puget Sound area. 1852.
Current world record: 124 pounds (Wales).



Corny Squash Soup

An original recipe from Yummy Northwest.

Put in soup pot and simmer until soft (about 25 minutes):
1 pound butternut squash, peeled and cubed
1 regular-sized apple, cubed
3 cups chicken or vegetable broth

Meanwhile, in a skillet, sauté until soft:
1 average onion, chopped, in 1/2 stick butter

Add onion to broth mixture, cool, then puree in blender until smooth.

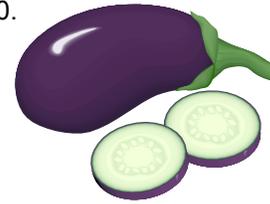
Add 2 cups raw or cooked corn (best if cut off three fresh ears of corn of ordinary size), 1/2 cup milk and about 1 teaspoon ground pepper.

Simmer until warm and serve.



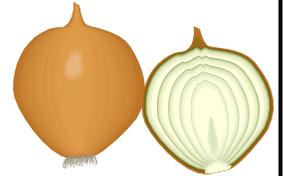
Eggplant

8 pounds, grown in Walla Walla, Wash. 1900.



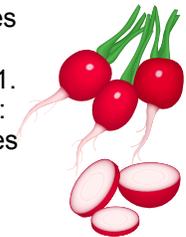
Onion

3.5 pounds, grown in Linn County, Ore. 1902.



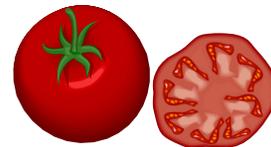
Radish

2.5 pounds, 17 inches around, grown in Palouse, Wash. 1891.
Current world record: 37 pounds, 15 ounces (South Africa).



Tomato

28 ounces, 17.5 inches around, grown in Hood River, Ore. 1924. Current world record: 7 pounds, 12 ounces (Oklahoma).



Where are the giants of today?

In 2003, Steve Daletas, Canby, Ore., grew the world's largest pumpkin at 1,385 pounds. As "National Geographic" pointed out, that's as big as a grizzly bear. In 2004, a new world record was set by a pumpkin weighing 1,446 pounds.



About Yummy Northwest

Each monthly issue highlights an edible delight available in the Pacific Northwest.

New Web address!

Online at www.rainydayrose.com.

Contact the editor

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