

Created by: Debra C. Argen and Edward F. Nesta

Tomatoes: Fruits or Vegetables

Recalling the Gershwin lyrics, "you say *tomato*, and I say *tomahto*" but is the tomato a fruit or a vegetable? Luxury Experience Magazine travels to [Skåne, Sweden](#) to learn the tomato facts at [Vikentomater](#).

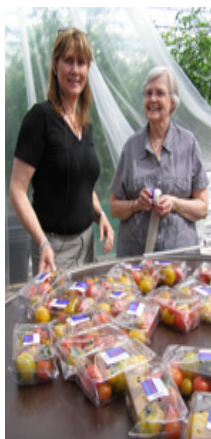
Tomatoes, a rich source of vitamin C as well as lycopene an antioxidant, are nature's perfect bounty of summer and the essence of so many countries' gastronomy. Imagine what a caprese salad would be without tomatoes, reduced to mere mozzarella and a few basil leaves. Rich sauces, spicy salsas, chunky gazpacho, gumbo, the classic Bloody Mary, pizza, ketchup, and so much more, all require the tomato's delectable presence.



Oskar Corianne and Green Tomatoes



So, when we wanted to learn more about tomatoes, we decided to visit **Vikentomater** to speak directly with the farmer who grows an astonishing number of 82 varieties of tomatoes. Before visiting Vikentomater, we had no idea that there are so many varieties of tomatoes. Walking through the greenhouse, Owner **Mats Olofsson** shared his wealth of tomato knowledge as he explained about the many different varieties of tomatoes numbering over 300, as we ate our way through our delicious tomato education. We know, it is a tough job, but someone has to do it!



Vikentomater is family-run and operated by Mats, his father, Kjell, his mother, Gunnel, and fiancée Susanne. His aunt, a darling who is 80 years young, also works there. Kjell Olofsson started farming in 1964, and in 1980, started planting tomatoes. By 1996, Mats and his parents were only planting tomatoes.



In Sweden, the tomato-picking season runs from mid-March until the end of October, and in a season they can produce 250 tons of special tomatoes. Watching Kjell and the Vikentomater workers picking tomatoes while sitting on a trolley that moved along a track between the rows was very interesting, especially when we realized how many tomatoes that they grow. Like the character "Tom Sawyer," when Mats saw that we were fascinated by the picking process, he invited us to use the trolley and pick a few tomatoes, which naturally we had to try.

Although we had seen tomatoes in all shapes and sizes in colors of red, yellow, and orange before, we were surprised to learn that there are multi-color, white, pink, green, black, and purple tomatoes as well. When it comes to large tomatoes, we were definitely impressed with the hefty tomatoes named Biff Tomato German Stripe that had a color of orange and yellow, and Biff Tomato White Beauty that was yellow in color, was the size of a man's hand and were slightly odd-shaped.



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Biff Tomato White Beauty

A few of the red varieties we saw and of course sampled, included Majorita, Oskar "Corianne", Brandywine, Marzanino, and Mini Charm; yellow tomatoes included Acx 200 (a yellow plum tomato), and Jelona; orange tomatoes included Stor "Plommontomat Orange "Organza," Orangino, Orange Plommonkörsbärstomat, and Tiger, which was a pretty reddish orange with gold striped tomato.



Orange Plum Tomato Organza



After spending time with the Olafsson family, we learned that there is definitely a tomato for every taste, although after sampling many different types of tomatoes during our visit, our new favorite was definitely the Zebra tomato that was dark green in color with red stripes that rather resembled a cherry pepper. With its thicker skin and meaty texture we were dreaming of how wonderful the Zebra tomato would taste cooked on a grill.



As we were leaving, we noticed a pile of discarded tomato leaves, which had us wondering as to why the tomato leaves could not be used in salads, and discovered that tomato leaves are toxic. Okay, so much for the idea of throwing in a few leaves in culinary recipes. Mats did tell us that rubbing tomato leaves on the skin will keep mosquitoes away, but Susanna readily disagreed with him on that idea, so as they say, the jury is still out, as we have not tried this for ourselves.

As to the answer of the question as to whether the tomato is a fruit or a vegetable, it is actually quite

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interesting, as botanically the tomato is classified as a fruit as its has ovaries and seeds, however in the United States, it is classified as a vegetable, not due to scientific reasons but rather one of economics that dates back to the tariffs of 1887 that stated that duty was imposed on vegetables but not fruits. So, yes, the tomato is a fruit, but in the United States, it is officially a vegetable as declared by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1893.



Orange Plummonkorsbärstomat

Vikentomater is open Monday - Friday from 7:00 am - 6:00 pm, and Saturday from 9:00 am - 2:00 pm. On Saturday, other farmers bring their products including vegetables, apples, cider, chutneys, cheese, and much more to sell at Vikentomater.



Kjell and Mats Olofsson



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