

A Brief History of the Sweet Potato

When the Spanish explorers first came to the New World they were searching for an ocean route to India and its fabled treasures of gold, silver, spices and jewels. They found them on these two new continents, North and South America, but they found many other things far more valuable, including three of the world's most important food plants: corn, the white or Irish potato, and the sweet potato.

Being a tropical plant, the sweet potato probably was found before the Irish potato -- by Columbus in the West Indies, by Balboa in Central America, and by Pizarro in Peru. Like corn, it was not found growing wild, but it had been cultivated by the Incan and pre-Incan races for thousands of years. They had developed many varieties, as is shown by their ancient pottery. In most places in Latin America, the sweet potato is called "camote", but the Incans called it "batata" and that is apparently the origin of our word "potato".

The sweet potato was carried back to Spain and thence to Italy, from where it spread to Austria, Germany, Belgium and England before the first Irish potatoes arrived. It took 200 years for the English to accept Irish potatoes as being fit for human food, but the sweet potato immediately became a rare and expensive delicacy. Now it is widely grown in Asiatic lands, including Japan and southern Russia, in the warmer Pacific islands, in tropical America, and in the United States as far north as New Jersey.

Outside of the tropics, sweet potatoes thrive only in the warmer temperate climates, and do best in a loose sandy soil that is well drained. They produce seed only in the tropical climates. In northern climates, new plants are obtained by planting roots, or cuttings of the vines, in beds. The sprouts that form are pulled and transplanted to fields one sprout to a "hill". Once well started, they require little moisture and, unless attacked by the numerous diseases and insect pests to which they are subject, develop many potatoes in each hill.

Sweet potatoes produce more pounds of food per acre than any other cultivated plant, including corn and the Irish potato. More nourishing than Irish potatoes because they contain more sugars and fats, they are a universal food in tropical America, and in our southern states where they are baked, candied, boiled and even fried. Vast quantities are canned for consumption in the United States. Of the 200 or more varieties there are two main types. The "Jersey" and related varieties having dry mealy flesh are favored in the northern states. The other type, more watery but richer in sugar and more soft and gelatinous when cooked, is favored in our southern states where they are called "yams". The true yam, however, originated in China and is a different plant related to the lilies. The Irish potato, believe it or not, belongs to the Nighthshade Family.

The sweet potato botanically, belongs to the Morning Glory family. There is another member of this family, a native weed known in Illinois and Indiana as "wild potato vine", "wild sweet potato" or "man-of-the-earth", with an enormous fleshy root much esteemed as food by the Indians. Above ground, the sweet potato develops creeping twining vines with pink or purple blossoms like those of the morning glory. Its thick starchy roots develop into the tubers we call "sweet potatoes". These contain carotene, the chemical which produces the orange colors in autumn leaves and in carrots. The Indians in Latin America make a beautiful permanent red dye from the mixed juices of limes and sweet potatoes.

Said the sweet potato to the Irish potato: "You're no potato! I yam."

Source: <http://www.sweetpotatoes.com/About/BriefHistoryoftheSweetPotato.aspx>

COLUMBIAN EXCHANGE – WHERE DID I COME FROM? COMIC STRIP ASSIGNMENT

A Brief History of the Pumpkin

The word pumpkin originated from the Greek word *Pepōn* which means large melon. The word gradually morphed by the French, English and then Americans into the word "pumpkin." Pumpkins and squash are believed to have originated in the ancient Americas. These early pumpkins were not the traditional round orange upright Jack-O-Lantern fruit we think of today when you hear the word pumpkin. They were a crooked neck variety which stored well. Archeologists have determined that variations of squash and pumpkins were cultivated along river and creek banks along with sunflowers and beans. This took place long before the emergence of maize (corn). After maize was introduced, ancient farmers learned to grow squash with maize and beans using the "Three Sisters" tradition.

The Three Sisters are squash, corn and beans which grow and thrive together. Corn serves as the natural trellis for the beans to grow on. The beans roots set nitrogen in the soil to nourish the corn. The bean vines help to stabilize the corn stalks on windy days. The squash plants shelter the shallow roots of the corn and shade the ground to discourage weeds and preserve moisture. Truly a symbiotic relationship. I have read where it was a common practice to bury a small fish alongside the seeds at planting to nourish the "Three Sisters."

The early Native American farmers were practicing an early form of sustainable agriculture. How cool is that?!? We can learn many lessons today from them.

These early Native Americans roasted pumpkin strips over campfires and used them as a food source, long before the arrival of European explorers. Pumpkins helped The Native Americans make it through long cold winters. They used the sweet flesh in numerous ways: roasted, baked, parched, boiled and dried. They ate pumpkin seeds and also used them as a medicine. The blossoms were added to stews. Dried pumpkin could be stored and ground into flour.



It is said that Columbus carried pumpkin seeds back with him to Europe. There they were used to feed pigs, but not as a human food source.

One variety of squash we grow on our farm is named a Lakota. It was originally cultivated by the Sioux tribe and was long lost. A re-creation of them was developed. They are pear shaped with bright red, orange and green patterns reminiscent of a woven Indian blanket.

Indians introduced pumpkins and squashes to the Pilgrims. Pumpkins were an important food source for the pilgrims, as they stored well, which meant they would have a nutritious food source during the winter months. It is documented that pumpkins were served at the second Thanksgiving celebration.

When mentally picturing an early Thanksgiving, we usually think of a Pilgrim woman in a bleached starched white apron holding a pumpkin pie with a perfectly fluted crust. The truth is in fact, quite the opposite. The Pilgrims cut the top off of a pumpkin, scooped the seeds out, and filled the cavity with cream, honey, eggs and spices. They placed the top back on and carefully buried it in the hot ashes of a cooking fire. When finished cooking, they lifted this blackened item from the earth with no pastry shell whatsoever. They scooped the contents out along with the cooked flesh of the shell like a custard. Yumm!

Without pumpkins many of the early settlers might have died from starvation. In early colonies, pumpkin shells were used as a template for haircuts to ensure a round and uniform finished cut. As a result of this practice, New Englanders were sometimes nicknamed "pumpkinheads".

There are many theories as to the origins of Jack-o-lanterns and Halloween. Early Jack-o-lanterns were carved from turnips and potatoes by the Irish and Scottish and carried in Celtic celebrations. The English used beets. Lumps of coal were lit on fire and placed inside the hollow root vegetables. When European settlers arrived in America, they found that our American pumpkin varieties were well suited to being carved as a "Jack's" lanterns.

In America a traditional Jack-o-lantern refers to a variety of pumpkin grown for its suitability for carving. They are fairly large in size, have upright strong walls, and most importantly a large hollow cavity. In the late 1800s there was a movement to turn Halloween into a celebration emphasizing community and neighborhood activities and parties. This is the Halloween we know and celebrate today.

Source: <http://www.allaboutpumpkins.com/history.html>



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A Brief History of the Turkey

Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*), or "huexolotlin" in the ancient language of the Aztecs in Mexico was one of the first animals in the Americas to be domesticated. The Aztecs in Mexico considered "huexolotlin" so important, they dedicated two religious festivals a year to the birds. During the celebration, turkey eggshells which had been saved for months were strewn upon the streets to honor the god who favored them with such a plentiful source of food. The turkey was also one of the manifestations of Tezcatlipoca, the trickster god, who had been elevated to the highest position in the Aztec polytheistic pantheon. All year round, it was not uncommon for over 1000 turkeys a day to be sold in a busy Aztec market. There is evidence that turkeys were kept in pens for their plumage. The natives used turkey feathers for necklaces, head adornments, and arrows.

Appreciation for the turkey was also evident in the Mayan culture where parts of the bird were used in sacred ceremonies. Its popularity among other tribes grew, and the turkey population had spread far beyond Mexico by the time the first European explorers set foot there.

In North America, tribes like the Navajo first encountered wild turkeys after they had trouble keeping the hungry birds away from the scanty crops they had scratched out of the desert. Losing the battle to bar them from the cornfields, they decided instead to feed the turkeys and fence them in. By barging in and refusing to leave, the invading turkeys unwittingly provided a controlled source of protein and ornamental feathers. Instead of pests, they became symbols of friendship and providence.

The Eastern turkey subspecies, *Meleagris gallopavo silvestris*, spread to the Northeast where nomadic Indians did not bother to domesticate the bird who enjoyed the abundant vegetation and thrived without agricultural welfare. Tribes like the Wampanoags hunted wild turkeys with bows and arrows. The turkeys were "called up" by imitating their calls, and then grabbed by a child hiding behind some logs or in a pit, or shot with bow and arrow.

Some say Christopher Columbus named turkeys "tuka," the Tamil word for peacock. Considering Columbus thought he was in India at the time of the alleged naming, not in the New World where he actually was, this definition seems fairly plausible. Another suggestion is that Luis de Torres, a physician who served under Columbus, named the bird "tukki," which translates to "big bird" in Hebrew. Some say the North American Indians called the bird "firkee." If so, it's a word everyone else has mispronounced the past 508 years.

In 1519, Cortez and his fellow Spanish Conquistadors had found the Aztecs raising huexolotlin around their homes. The Aztec emperor, Montezuma, kept the turkeys in his famous zoo, it is said, as food for the other animals. Cortez might have been served turkey mole poblano (mole of the people.) Turkey mole poblano is traditionally prepared with chocolate and chile.

The Spaniards soon carried the savored "el pavo" back to Europe where they quickly became a popular fowl and a choice dish for state dinners. The turkey was little larger than the traditional goose, with a lot more meat and a refreshingly new taste. These exotic birds were introduced at a time when America was called The Spanish Indies or the New Indies, illustrating the confusion in people's minds about the true location of this new land that Columbus had found. As a result, the Spaniards mistakenly called them "Indian fowl." As the Indian fowl was eventually acquired and raised throughout Europe and Asia, many languages, as well as others like Arabic and Hebrew, called the "Indian fowl" names like the "bird of India."

Source: <http://www.wildturkeyzone.com/wildturkey/species.htm>

COLUMBIAN EXCHANGE – WHERE DID I COME FROM? COMIC STRIP ASSIGNMENT

A Brief History of Grapes

Grapes are said to be the oldest cultivated fruit. Grapes were found in Egyptian tombs and in the tombs of pre-Christ era as well. This proves the popularity of this fruit. The botanical name of grapes is 'namily vitaceae'. Grapes are natives of Western Asia and Central Europe. From there, grapes have made a long journey to reach all across the globe. The old world grapes, found in Europe and the near East, are botanically known as 'vitis vinifera'. This species has more than 10,000 varieties. South America and North Eastern America are the places of origin for other species, known as the New World species. Its botanical name is 'vitis rotundifolia'. The superior old world species is native to the area across the southeast coast of the Black Sea (near the south of the Caspian Sea) to Afghanistan and is still found in these regions.

The fox grapes, botanically named as 'vitis labrusca', were found by the Vikings who explored the eastern seaside of Northern America long before Columbus. Another species is muscadine grapes, found in the southeastern region of North America, because of which, this region was named as the New World "Vinland". After British colonization in America, grape cultivation got a real boost. But in the freezing winters of the North America, the vitis vinifera cuttings could not survive. So, the indigenous species were improved upon and cultivated again. This resulted in a new and more popular version called Concord grapes.

The Phoenicians took grapevines from Asia to Greece around 1000 BC. The Mediterranean climate suited grapes, so it started spreading throughout the Mediterranean region. The European grapes were brought to America by the Spanish and the Portuguese. In 1655, the Dutch took grapes along with them to Cape of Good Hope, where the 'vitis capensis' soon became a native species. Gradually grapes became a popular crop in Australia and South America too. Despite its popularity across the globe, the 'Vitis vinifera' suddenly disappeared from Europe around the 1860s. An aphid known as 'phylloxera vastatrix' had infested some vineyards in France. The disease spread across all of Europe like wildfire. It is normally a harmless aphid present on some indigenous American grapevines; but once it gets into the root system of 'vitis vinifera' the plant degenerates. Fortunately it was noticed by some people that not all the species were affected. So, they started grafting in order to save the remaining species.

Wild grapes were present in the Caucasus region in the Stone Age itself. This was the time when man learned fermentation and began to turn grapes into wine. It is a fact that the Egyptians were the first to make wine. But they made it only for the religious purposes and for their temple rituals. They didn't indulge in social drinking. It was the Greeks and the Romans who started growing grapes for the production of other things, mainly sugar substitutes, because sugar was virtually unknown to them. They prepared different kinds of syrups like sapa, defrutum, passum, etc.. These syrups were of different concentrations and were used to add taste in various dishes. Grape syrups are still prepared in Turkey and Levant regions. Verjuice was another product made out of unripened grapes which was mainly used as a substitute to vinegar.



In 1700, the Spanish introduced grape cultivation to California. Since then many different species have been ventured there. As a result California produces nearly 90% of total crop in America. Grapes also show a significant existence in the eastern parts of Canada and in British Columbia. In the nineteenth century, the Victorians were very excited about grapes. They experimented on different species in hothouses. At the same time, the grape spa or 'uvarium' was introduced in France. These were best used for slimming and medicinal purposes.

Basically; grapes are very nutritious. The grapevine is a climbing arbor which requires a strong support for its growth. They grow in clusters ranging from 6 to 300. They can be crimson, black, dark blue, pale yellow, purple, green or pink in color. Grapes contain natural sugar and dietary fiber along with potassium and iron. They taste sour when unripe because of the malic acid they contain. As the grapes ripen, the malic acid content reduces and they taste sweet. Grapes work as an astringent, anti-inflammatory antioxidant, anti-carcinogenic agent, anti-tumor agent, etc. They improve vascular activity and protect the liver. There are more than a thousand varieties, out of which only around 50 have the commercial significance. Some of them are- Alicante, Barsana, Alphonse Lavallee, Calmeria, Cardinal, Catawba, Chasselas/Golden Chasselas, Concord, Daleware, Emperor, Hanepoot(Honeypot), Italia, Kishmish, Malaga, Niagara, Ribier and many more...

Grapes have important medicinal as well as commercial significance. So, the next time when you buy grapes, just remember those who passionately cultivated this plant.

Source: <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/the-origin-and-history-of-grapes.html>

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A Brief History of the Coffee Bean

Coffee use can be traced at least to as early as the ninth century, when it appeared in the highlands of Ethiopia. According to legend, Ethiopian shepherds were the first to observe the influence of the caffeine in coffee beans when the goats appeared to "dance" and to have an increased level of energy after consuming wild coffee berries. The legend names the shepherd "Kaldi." Kaldi dutifully reported his findings to the abbot of the local monastery who made a drink with the berries and discovered that it kept him alert for the long hours of evening prayer. Soon the abbot had shared his discovery with the other monks at the monastery, and ever so slowly knowledge of the energizing effects of the berries began to spread. As word moved east and coffee reached the Arabian Peninsula, it began a journey which would spread its reputation the world over.

From Ethiopia, coffee spread to Egypt and Yemen. It was in Arabia that coffee beans were first roasted and brewed, similar to how it is done today. By the 15th century, it had reached the rest of the Middle East, Persia, Turkey, and northern Africa. From the Muslim world, coffee spread to Italy, then to the rest of Europe, to Indonesia, and to the Americas.

Coffee berries, which contain the coffee bean, are produced by several species of small evergreen bush of the genus *Coffea*. Once ripe, coffee berries are picked, processed, and dried. The seeds are then roasted, undergoing several physical and chemical changes. They are roasted to varying degrees, depending on the desired flavor. They are then ground and brewed to create coffee. Coffee can be prepared and presented in a variety of ways.

Coffee has played an important role in many societies throughout modern history. Noted as one of the world's largest, most valuable legally traded commodities (after oil), coffee has become a vital cash crop for many Third World countries. Over one hundred million people in developing countries have become dependent on coffee as their primary source of income. Coffee has become the primary export and backbone for African countries like Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, and Ethiopia as well as many Central American countries.

European travelers to the Near East brought back stories of the unusual dark black beverage. By the 17th century, coffee had made its way to Europe and was becoming popular across the continent. Opponents were overly cautious, calling the beverage the 'bitter invention of Satan.' With the coming of coffee to Venice in 1615, the local clergy condemned it. The controversy was so great that Pope Clement VIII was asked to intervene. Before making a decision however, he decided to taste the beverage for himself. He found the drink so satisfying that he gave it Papal approval.

Despite such controversy, in the major cities of England, Austria, France, Germany and Holland, coffee houses were quickly becoming centers of social activity and communication. In England 'penny universities' sprang up, so called because for the price of a penny one could purchase a cup of coffee and engage in stimulating conversation. By the mid-17th century, there were over 300 coffee houses in London, many of which attracted patrons with common interests, such as merchants, shippers, brokers and artists. Many businesses grew out of these specialized coffee houses. Lloyd's of London, for example, came into existence at the Edward Lloyd's Coffee House.

The New World

In the mid-1600's, coffee was brought to New Amsterdam, a location later called New York by the British. Though coffee houses rapidly began to appear, tea continued to be the favored drink in the New World until 1773 when the colonists revolted against a heavy tax on tea imposed by King George. The revolt, known as the Boston Tea Party, would forever change the American drinking preference to coffee.



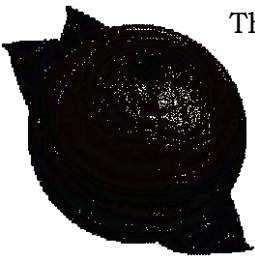
When coffee reached North America during the Colonial period, it was initially not as successful as it had been in Europe. During the Revolutionary War, however, the demand for coffee increased so much that dealers had to hoard their scarce supplies and raise prices dramatically; this was also due to the reduced availability of tea from British merchants. After the War of 1812, during which Britain temporarily cut off access to tea imports, the Americans' taste for coffee grew, and high demand during the American Civil War together with advances in brewing technology secured the position of coffee as an everyday commodity in the United States.

Source: <http://www.spillingthebeanschicago.com/history>

A Brief History of the Orange

Orange, the delectable pulpy fruit, belongs to the genus citrus, the other famous members of which include the lemon, lime and grapefruit. The scientific name of the sweet variety of orange is citrus sinensis, while the bitter variety is called citrus aurantium. The name of the fruit is presumably derived from the Sanskrit Nāraṅgaḥ and Telugu Naringa, which after moving through different languages such as Persian, Armenian, Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, Latin, Italian and French, ultimately become orange in English. The fruit is covered by a bright yellow to orange-colored skin, known as the epicarp and a thick, spongy mesocarp that lies beneath the epicarp. The internal part is called the pulp, which is divided into several individual segments, that contain the actual pulp and the juicy fruit.

Historical Facts about Oranges



The orange plant is believed to be a native of Southeast Asia, mainly in southeast and northeast India. Different varieties were grown in both the regions of India, which dates back almost 7000 years. The fruit was mainly used in various dishes, for the excellent flavor that it imparts. Many historians are of the opinion that it was grown in the orchards of China by the beginning of the 1st century millennium. Soon, the nobility grew fond of this delightful fruit, which gave rise to a growing competition among cultivators to produce larger and tastier oranges in order to please them.

Among the Europeans, Romans were the first to taste this juicy fruit. It reached the Roman empire around the 1st century BC. The credit for introducing this fruit to the Roman empire, goes to the Persian traders, who had trade relations with India and Ceylon. It became quite popular among the nobility and military classes of the empire. The Romans developed the first orchard of oranges in North Africa, in around the 1st century AD. The oranges grown in North Africa were mainly supplied across the Mediterranean. However, the 6th century witnessed the decline of the Roman empire and the rise of the Islamic Caliphate. North Africa came under the domination of the Islamic Caliphate in the 7th century, which led to the closure of trade routes to Mediterranean countries. The Islamic rulers instead started trade routes towards the Middle East and thus, oranges reached the Middle East countries. But, a revival of the orange trade to Europe took place in the 11th century.

However, its sweet variety reached Europe in the 16th century BC, by Portuguese traders. In many Mediterranean languages, this sweet variety is known as the Portugal orange, probably as a sign of acknowledgment. Then it was introduced to America, by Spanish explorers and conquerors. The Spanish explorers arrived in South America in the 15th century AD, and probably initiated orange cultivation in Cananeia, an island off the Sao Paulo coast, in around the 16th century. Today, the South American country, Brazil, is the leading producer of oranges, Sao Paulo being the main center of production. Brazil accounts for almost half of the world's total production of oranges.

Today, they are of the most sought after fruits of the world, not only for its great taste but also for its nutritional value. It is a rich source of vitamin C, or ascorbic acid, folic acid, vitamin B6, flavonoids, pectin and dietary fiber. Besides, it also contains a significant amount of minerals like potassium salt, calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, copper, etc. It does not contain harmful cholesterol and fats. It can be of immense help in many ailments like high blood pressure, hardening of arteries, constipation, heart disease and stomach ulcer. Besides, it contains antioxidants, which are effective in protecting the body from harmful free radicals. So, the regular consumption of this nutritious fruit will definitely help you to remain healthy and fit.

COLUMBIAN EXCHANGE – WHERE DID I COME FROM? COMIC STRIP ASSIGNMENT

A Brief History of Corn (Maize)

Mesoamerica is a region straddling the southern part of North America and the northern part of Central America. Long obscured by modern day political boundaries it roughly encompasses the southern half of Mexico and the northwestern section of Central America. It was a cradle of Pre-Columbian (before Columbus) civilization and was home to the renowned Maya and Aztec Indians, amongst others. Sadly, as with the North American continent, the cultural richness of these peoples, not to mention their way of life, was all but destroyed by the European imperialists, in this particularly tragic case, the Spanish. But all the European might could not vanquish some of the timeless gifts these people left to mankind; one of the most amazing being maize, otherwise known as corn in the United States.

The term maize is a derivative of an early American Indian word mahiz. “Corn” originally was an English term used to denote small particles, particular grains. Corned beef received it’s moniker from the small grains (corns) of salt used to preserve it. What we now call corn the early American colonists called Indian corn which was eventually lexicalized to corn. Today, “Indian Corn” refers to the ornamental corn of Halloween and Thanksgiving fame.

But the term “corn” is not the only aspect of this munificent vegetable to be morphed over the ages. The plant itself is a transmutation. Although the exact seminal plant species is uncertain, what you and I refer to as “corn” in the modern day supermarket aisle, is not what first sprouted in the New World. The progenitor of today’s corn began somewhere in the Andes. The Andean Indians introduced it to Central America where it eventually made its way to Mexico. There are an array of theories outlining the specific ontogenesis but basically, sometime between 10,000 and 5,500 B.C. the first corn plants became hybridized and domesticated. Sometime between 8,000 and 5,000 B.C. maize was flourishing in Mesoamerica. Archaeological evidence confirms at least 3,600 B.C. but it is inescapable that the process was in motion before that.

Strangely, despite thousands of years of cultivation in the lower Americas, corn didn’t find its way to the modern day United States until around A.D. By A.D. 600, a number of North American Indians were extensively growing it. Corn’s journey to the Old World began with Christopher Columbus who ferried it back to Spain. By 1500 it was under cultivation in Spain and by the 17th century it was a major crop for a number of European countries. The Portuguese introduced it to East Africa and Asia and from there it was just a matter of time until it arrived in India and China through established trade routes. It was flourishing in China in the 18th century and reached Korea and Japan soon after. Corn is now one of the most widely grown vegetables on Earth, especially in the Americas. The United States and China lead world production.



What is truly amazing about corn is its versatility and seemingly innumerable uses. Not even considering the culinary uses, the list is impressive. The Indians wove the husks into clothing, sleeping mats, baskets, and children’s toys. Most of the corn grown in the United States and Canada is used as animal fodder. There are also many industrial uses of corn including ethanol, cosmetics, ink, glue, laundry starch, shoe polish, medicines, fabrics, corncob pipes, and ornaments.

There are many different types of corn. The most notable include Sweet Corn. This is the traditional favorite, eaten off the cob with butter and salt, and found in supermarkets and roadside stands everywhere. Sweet corn is so named because of its high sugar content. It is seldom used for purposes other than direct human consumption. Dent Corn, also known as Field Corn is the corn of choice for livestock feed and industrial products. Flint Corn, also known as the aforementioned ornamental Indian Corn sports a range of colors and is primarily grown in Central and South America. A sub variety of Flint Corn is used to make popcorn. Its soft starchy center facilitates the “pop” into the fluffy, movie-snacking favorite.

Source: <http://www.foodreference.com/html/art-corn-history.html>

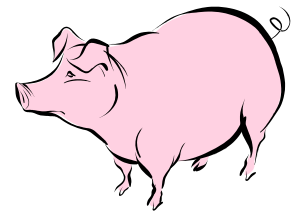
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A Brief History of the Pig

The pig dates back 40 million years to fossils which indicate that wild porcine animals roamed forests and swamps in Europe and Asia. Remains of the earliest known North American peccary, *Perchoerus*, are from late Eocene sediments dating from 37 million years ago in North America. But it's the domesticated pig that holds our interest. Pigs were domesticated in China around 4900BC (although some experts claim 7000 to 6000BC in Western Asia) and were being raised in Europe by 1500BC. The Romans improved pig breeding and spread pork production throughout their empire. Two main types were developed: one breed was large, with floppy ears, and produced copious amounts of lard, while the other was of a smaller frame, with erect ears, used primarily for meat.

Jewish religious law banned the eating of pork before 1000BC, based on a belief that pigs were unclean since they ate waste, and there was the fear of disease (no doubt associated with contracting trichinosis from eating improperly cooked pork or the belief that pork meat didn't last long before "going off"); don't forget that nomadic cultures are not as suited to pigs as they are to cattle, sheep, or camels. Early Christians also shunned pork, but by around AD50 those restrictions were relaxed. Muhammad also banned the consumption of pork, resulting in a severe decline in the pig population of the Middle East and Western Asia. Europe, being principally Christian, embraced the pig: Swine ate anything, reproduced prodigiously, and their meat was easily preserved. By the 1500's in Europe, the Celtic people in the north were breeding large-bodied, well-muscled pigs, while in Southern Europe, the Iberians had developed smaller-framed, lard-type pigs. All of the pigs of this time period were dark-colored.

At Queen Isabella's insistence, Christopher Columbus took eight pigs on his voyage to Cuba in 1493. They were tough and could survive the voyage with minimal care, they supplied an emergency food source if needed, and those that escaped provided meat for hunting on return trips. But Hernando de Soto was the true "father of the American pork industry." He brought America's first 13 pigs to Tampa Bay, Fla., in 1539. As the herds grew, explorers used the pigs not only for eating as fresh meat but for salt pork and preserved pork. American Indians were reportedly so fond of the taste of pork that attacks to acquire it resulted in some of the worst assaults on the expedition. By the time de Soto died three years later, his original herd of 13 pigs had grown to 700 – a very conservative estimate. This number doesn't include the pigs eaten by his troops, those that escaped and became wild pigs (the ancestors of today's feral pigs), and those given to the American Indians to keep the peace. The pork industry in America had begun.



Pig production spread rapidly through the new colonies. Cortés introduced hogs to New Mexico in 1600 while Sir Walter Raleigh brought sows to Jamestown colony in 1607. Semiwild pigs ravaged New York colonists' grain fields to the extent that every pig 14 inches in height that was owned by a colonist was required to have a ring in its nose to make it easier to control. On Manhattan Island, a long solid wall to exclude rampaging pigs was constructed on the northern edge of the colony; it created the name for the area now known as Wall Street. By 1660 the pig population of Pennsylvania Colony numbered in the thousands. By the end of the 1600s, the typical farmer owned four or five pigs, supplying salt pork, ham, and bacon for his table; any surplus was sold as "barreled pork" (pork meat preserved in salted brine, contained in wooden barrels). Finishing pigs before slaughter on American Indian corn became popular in Pennsylvania, setting the new standard for fattening before the late fall pork harvest.

At the end of the 1700s, pioneers started heading west, taking their utilitarian pigs with them. Wooden crates filled with young pigs often hung from the axles of prairie schooner wagons. As western herds increased, processing and packing facilities began to spring up in major cities. Pigs were first commercially slaughtered in Cincinnati, which became known as "Porkopolis"; by the mid 1800s Cincinnati led the nation in pig processing. Getting the pigs to market in the 1850s was no small task. Drovers herded their pigs along trails, with the aid of drivers who handled up to 100 pigs each. It is estimated that between 40,000 and 70,000 pigs were driven from Ohio to eastern markets in any given year. A herd could travel 5-8 miles a day and covered total distances up to 700 miles.

In 1887 Swift & Co. introduced the refrigerated railroad car, chilled by a solution of ice and salt (mechanical refrigeration wouldn't appear until 1947). It created a revolution in pig farming: Slaughterhouses could be centralized near production centers since processed pork meat could be shipped instead of live hogs. Large terminal markets developed in Chicago; Kansas City, Mo; St. Joseph, Mo.; and Sioux City, Iowa. Centralized packing plants were located adjacent to the stockyards. The natural progression was for the pork industry to relocate to the Upper Midwest, where the majority of the grain was raised; Corn Belt morphed into Hog Belt. Today Iowa is still the top pork producer in the States.

Source: <http://www.austinchronicle.com/food/2009-04-10/764573/>

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A Brief History of Sheep

Early domestication

Sheep were domesticated 10,000 years ago in Central Asia, but it wasn't until 3,500 B.C. that man learned to spin wool. Sheep helped to make the spread of civilization possible. Sheep production was well-established during Biblical times. There are many references to sheep in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament. Sheep production is man's oldest organized industry. Wool was the first commodity of sufficient value to warrant international trade.

Sheep in the New World

In the 1400's, Queen Isabella of Spain used money derived from the wool industry to finance Columbus and other conquistadors' voyages. In 1493 on his second voyage to the New World, Columbus took sheep with him as a "walking food supply." He left some sheep in Cuba and Santo Domingo.

In 1519, Cortez began his exploration of Mexico and the Western United States. He took with him sheep that were offspring of Columbus' sheep. These sheep are believed to be the descendants of what are now called "Churros." The Navajo Churro is the oldest breed of sheep in the U.S. Despite efforts by the U.S. government to eradicate the breed, Navajo Churros are still raised by Navajo Indians.

The Gulf Coast (or Florida) Native is another breed of sheep believed to be directly descended from sheep brought to the New World by Spanish and French explorers. Feral until the early 20th century, Gulf Coast Native sheep are known for their natural resistance to worm parasites.

Early American history

During the 16th and 17th centuries, England tried to discourage the wool industry in the American colonies. Nonetheless, colonists quickly smuggled sheep into the States and developed a wool industry. By 1664, there were 10,000 sheep in the colonies and the General Court of Massachusetts passed a law requiring youth to learn to spin and weave.

By 1698, America was exporting wool goods. England became outraged and outlawed wool trade, making it punishable by cutting off a person's right hand. The restrictions on sheep raising and wool manufacturing, along with the Stamp Act, led to the American Revolutionary War. Thus, spinning and weaving were considered patriotic acts. Even after the war, England enacted a law forbidding the export of any sheep.

Presidential shepherds

George Washington raised sheep on his Mt. Vernon estate. Thomas Jefferson kept sheep at Monticello. Presidents Washington and Jefferson were both inaugurated in suits made of American wool. James Madison's inaugural jacket was woven from wool of sheep raised in his home in Virginia. President Woodrow Wilson grazed sheep on the White House lawn.

In conflict

Sheep raising has played a role in several historical conflicts such as the "Highland Clearance," American range wars, and the English "enclosing of the commons." The Highland Clearances consisted of the replacement of an almost feudal system of land tenure in Scotland with the rearing of sheep. Thousands of people were forced to leave their homes.

In the U.S. range wars, violent conflicts erupted between cattle ranchers and sheep herders as both competed for land to graze their livestock. Britain's close of the commons was similar to the Highland clearance; open fields were enclosed into individually-owned fields for sheep farming, displacing many subsistence farmers.

Source: <http://www.sheep101.info/history.html>

A Brief History of the Tomato

The Tomato History has origins traced back to the early Aztecs around 700 A.D; therefore it is believed that the tomato is native to the Americas. It was not until around the 16th century that Europeans were introduced to this fruit when the early explorers set sail to discover new lands. Throughout Southern Europe, the tomato was quickly accepted into the kitchen, yet as it moved north, more resistance was apparent. The British, for example, admired the tomato for its beauty, but believe that it was poisonous, as its appearance was similar to that of the wolf peach.

"...most 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 of 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.

What changed in the 1800's? First, and most significantly, was the mass immigration from Europe to America and the traditional blending of cultures. Many Italian-Americans ate tomatoes and brought that food with them. But also, and perhaps equally as important, was the invention of pizza. There is no pizza without tomato sauce, and pizza was invented around Naples in the late 1880's. The story goes that it was created by one restaurateur in Naples to celebrate the visit of Queen Margarine, the first Italian monarch since Napoleon conquered Italy. The restaurateur made the pizza from three ingredients that represented the colors of the new Italian flag: red, white, and green. The red is the tomato sauce, the white was the mozzarella cheese, and the green was the basil topping. Hence, Pizza Margarine was born, and is still the standard for pizza. And what could have led more to the popularity of the tomato than pizza!" It was not regarded as a kitchen vegetable until the times preceding The Civil War Period in the United States. From this point forward, tomatoes have become a staple item in the kitchen throughout the world. Each area of the world has its own tomato history and how it is used in everyday dining. It appears though that tomatoes have had the largest impact on American eating habits, as they are responsible for enjoying over 12 million tons of tomatoes each year.

Fruit or Vegetable?

An interesting aspect of tomato history is the classic debate: Is the Tomato a Fruit or Vegetable? I guess that depends on whom you are asking. By definition, a fruit is the edible plant structure of a mature ovary of a flowering plant, usually eaten raw; some are sweet like apples, but the ones that are not sweet such as tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, etc. are commonly called vegetables. Botanists claim that a fruit is any fleshy material that covers a seed or seeds where as a horticulturists point of view would pose that the tomato is a vegetable plant. Until the late 1800's the tomato was classified as a fruit to avoid taxation, but this was changed after a Supreme Court ruling that the tomato is a vegetable and should be taxed accordingly.

When it is all said and done, the history of the tomato has classified as a poisonous beautiful plant, a tax-avoiding fruit, and a taxable vegetable. Nonetheless, the tomato is the most popular vegetable in America and enjoyed by millions all over the world.

Source: <http://www.tomato-cages.com/tomato-history.html>

COLUMBIAN EXCHANGE – WHERE DID I COME FROM? COMIC STRIP ASSIGNMENT

A Brief History of the Horse

The horse (*Equus caballus*) has made many dramatic and significant journeys. During the Pleistocene (Ice Age), more than 20,000 years ago, wild horses that had evolved in America migrated to the Old World, Eurasia and Africa. More than 6,000 year ago in the Volga basin of Eastern Europe horses were domesticated and in the subsequent millennia spread to other parts of Asia, Europe, and Africa.

Horses were hybridized as draft animals, for hunting, and for war. Some horses remained quite small, about the size of zebras, while others were bred to be quite large. In Iberia (Spain) the initial domestic horse was brought by Celtic peoples and was a medium, sturdy, and shaggy horse built to pull chariots in battle. In the second century B.C. Romans brought Asian and African breeds of horses that were somewhat larger and smooth coated; which had been bred for racing and war. These Roman horses were successfully crossbred with the older Iberian horses to produce four traits that are regarded as typical of American horses: short distance speed, larger size, and contrasting patterns in the coat.

Subsequently, these traits will come to the New World, since the Spanish will return the horse to its place of origin, America. There were three main types of Iberian horses that were brought to America.

Type	Use	Characteristics
Villano, Garraño	war, games, racing	close-coupled, round-bodied, high-arched neck, broad head, all colors & patterns
Jinete, Jennet	draft, work	gaited, small, short back arched neck w/ wavy mane
Gallego (Gallic horse)	peasant work horse	small, less gaited, coarse hair

Columbus brought stock on his second voyage (1493), but the major impact with horses came with the various conquistadors, like Cortez in 1519 when more horses from Caribbean breed stock were brought into Mexico to invade the Aztec Empire. Subsequent conquistadors also bring horses, but it is not until the later colonial system of tribute and labor, called *encomienda*, that Native Americans will escape with stock to more remote areas like the North American plains, the Venezuelan llanos and the Argentinean pampas. In these areas we see the spread of thousands of head of feral mustangs.



Many more breeds of horses, donkeys, cattle, goats and sheep are brought to America but the role of the horse in conquest, with new pastoral tribes, and in sheer economics for breeding and labor makes the horse the greatest influence in the Columbian Exchange. For the Plains Indian people, who were mainly displaced from the Eastern Woodlands, horses will provide an edge in bison hunting, economics, and warfare from about A.D. 1750 to 1890. In fact Plains Indian culture is still the predominate stereotypical image of all American Indians. Horses will continue making their mark on the American landscape as the primary source of transportation until the early 20th century. Even today, we continue to measure of engines, including the automobile, in terms of horsepower.

Source: <http://www2.palomar.edu/users/scrouthamel/colexc.htm>