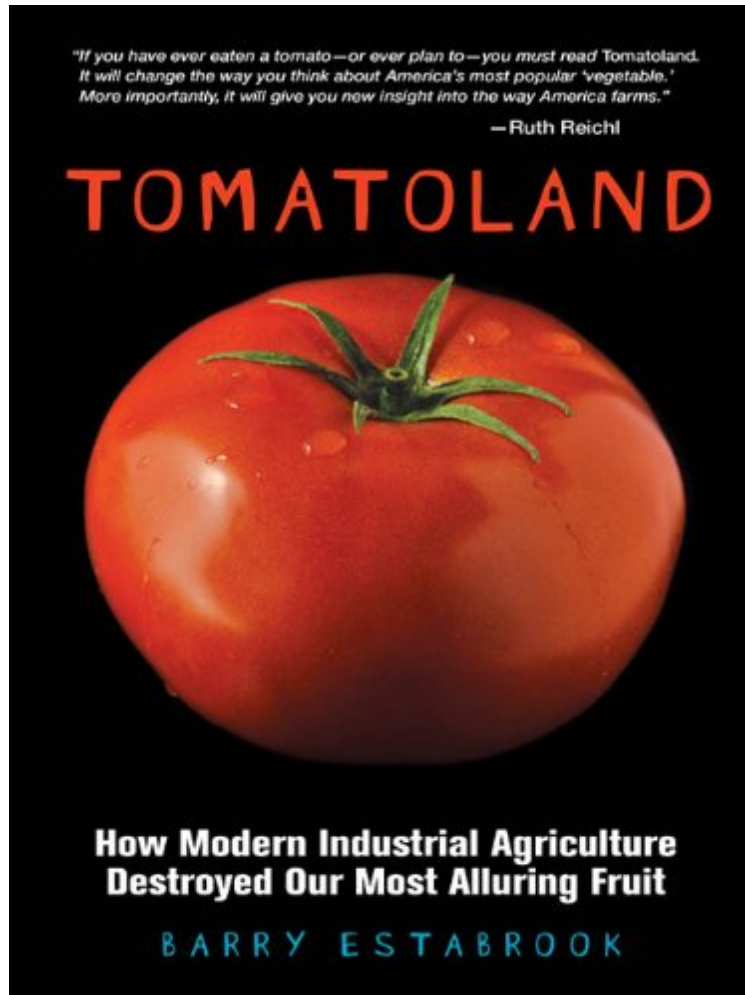


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# Tomatoland: How Modern Industrial Agriculture Destroyed Our Most Alluring Fruit

Barry Estabrook

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## Barry Estabrook : Tomatoland: How Modern Industrial Agriculture Destroyed Our Most Alluring Fruit

before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Tomatoland: How Modern Industrial Agriculture Destroyed Our Most Alluring Fruit:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I recommend this book to anyone who wants to understand the ...By Sally V. Smith This very informative book gives the reader a huge eye opener regarding how modern agriculture is producing food for markets. I understand now why tomatoes and other vegetables are so tasteless. I recommend this book to anyone who wants to understand the problems agriculture has with production and why so many farmers have given up farming. It also explains a lot about how unsafe so much of our produce is to eat. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great, important read for everyone By Emily This was a required book for a nutrition class at my university. I am highly interested in any topics related to the food industry, agriculture, large corporations, and

nutrition. This book had so much good information, and the way it was written really helped to engage me as a reader. It is told more as a narrative, and I kept wanting to read more and more. It really opened my eyes to a lot of the terrible, unfortunate conditions that many members of the American workforce are subjected to, and how this is blinded from the public. I would really recommend this to anyone who is interested in current problems in our global food system. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. In the Best Tradition of American Journalism. But WARNING: May Cause Foodie/Gardener Geekness. Probably Insufferable. By Michael J. Gardner Writer Barry Estabrook with "Tomatoland" follows a simple recipe: Take a marble sized fruit from South America, add humans. The result is astonishingly complex and memorable. From early domestication by the Mayans, and then by nearly everyone else, the tomato in human hands nurtures, sustains, corrupts, poisons, maims, murders, enslaves--and yet inspires. Not your typical book on food or gardening, the faint of heart are advised to set this book down and back away. While I was delighted to learn about origins and some developments in tomato breeding, I also learned that very likely, my most loved ones and I have enjoyed sauces made from tomatoes picked by slaves. Sorry to suggest it, but you probably have too. Not merely indentured servants, or poor, vulnerable people living in squalid conditions, but actual slaves. In a few riveting chapters on the working conditions of migrant field workers, Estabrook uncovers matters about the human heart, both awful and wonderful. How these lowly workers finally affected huge corporations such as McDonalds, and Taco Bell made for fascinating reading. Estabrook chronicles the incremental steps farm owners, government, and corporate America reluctantly made before dramatic, about-face from policies that supported worker exploitation. Somebody somewhere has said that great writing leaves marks on a reader's spirit; after the book is closed, the reader is left changed. Tomatoland seems to have left two marks on me. First, I seem to be naturally more inquisitive regarding the origins of what I procure for the family table. Where did this food come from? How far away did it have to travel? What is there to know about the people who grew or made it? Second, while I've acquired several notable gardening books over the years and often dream over them during the cold, dark months, I doubt if I've ever been read a more motivating book before a growing season. For example, after the chapters on organic growers supplying highend restaurants, Estabrook has inspired me to again grow Brandywine, a heirloom tomato variety with a reputation for superb flavor but modest production. Many experienced tomato growers know that there are several strains of Brandywine. The folks of Johnny's Selected Seeds believe their pink Sudduth strain is the best. Lisa VonSaunders of Amishland Heirloom Seeds gushes that her Glick strain is the best of the best. Famed tomato grower, Carolyn Male seems to give the nod in her book, "100 Heirloom Tomatoes for the American Garden," toward the Red Brandywine with the regular-leaf foliage. Gary Ibsen ("The Great Tomato Book") on his stupendous website offers eight varieties of Brandywine--and seems to favor either the red Landis Valley strain, or the OTV strain, or maybe the pink, potato-leaf, Sudduth strain. Not kidding, please be forewarned. Reading "Tomatoland" may cause you to decompensate into a serious food geek or probably insufferable garden nerd. You will know if you find yourself planning to grow several strains of Brandywine for your own taste test.

Supermarket produce sections bulging with a year-round supply of perfectly round, bright red-orange tomatoes have become all but a national birthright. But in Tomatoland, which is based on his James Beard Award-winning article, The Price of Tomatoes, investigative food journalist Barry Estabrook reveals the huge human and environmental cost of the \$5 billion fresh tomato industry. Fields are sprayed with more than one hundred different herbicides and pesticides. Tomatoes are picked hard and green and artificially gassed until their skins acquire a marketable hue. Modern plant breeding has tripled yields, but has also produced fruits with dramatically reduced amounts of calcium, vitamin A, and vitamin C, and tomatoes that have fourteen times more sodium than the tomatoes our parents enjoyed. The relentless drive for low costs has fostered a thriving modern-day slave trade in the United States. How have we come to this point? Estabrook traces the supermarket tomato from its birthplace in the deserts of Peru to the impoverished town of Immokalee, Florida, a.k.a. the tomato capital of the United States. He visits the laboratories of seedsmen trying to develop varieties that can withstand the rigors of agribusiness and still taste like a garden tomato, and then moves on to commercial growers who operate on tens of thousands of acres, and eventually to a hillside field in Pennsylvania, where he meets an obsessed farmer who produces delectable tomatoes for the nation's top restaurants. Throughout Tomatoland Estabrook presents a who's who cast of characters in the tomato industry: the avuncular octogenarian whose conglomerate grows one out of every eight tomatoes eaten in the United States; the ex-Marine who heads the group that dictates the size, color, and shape of every tomato shipped out of Florida; the U.S. attorney who has doggedly prosecuted human traffickers for the past decade; and the Guatemalan peasant who came north to earn money for his parents' medical bills and found himself enslaved for two years. Tomatoland reads like a suspenseful whodunit as well episode; of today's agribusiness systems and the price we pay as a society when we take taste and thought out of our food purchases.

"In this eye-opening exposeacute;, Vermont journalist Estabrook traces the sad, tasteless life of the mass-produced tomato, from its chemical-saturated beginnings in south Florida to far-flung supermarkets. Expanding on his 2010 James Beard Award-winning article in Gourmet magazine, Estabrook first looks at the tomato's ancestors in Peru,

grown naturally in coastal deserts and Andean foothills, with fruit the size of large peas. Crossbreeding produced bigger, juicier varieties, and by the late 19th century, Florida had muscled in on the U.S. market, later benefiting from the embargo on Cuban tomatoes; the Sunshine State now produces one-third of the fresh tomatoes in this country. To combat sandy soil devoid of nutrients, and weather that breeds at least 27 insect species and 29 diseases that prey on the plants, Florida growers bombard tomato plants with a dizzying cocktail of herbicides and pesticides, then gas the "mature greens" (fruit plucked so early from the vines that they bounce without a scratch) with ethylene. Behind the scenes, moreover, there exists a horrendous culture of exploitation of Hispanic laborers in places like Immokalee, where pesticide exposure has led to birth defects and long-term medical ailments. Estabrook concludes this thought-provoking book with some ideas from innovators trying to build a better tomato." --Publisher's Weekly"With great skill and compassion, Estabrook explores the science, ingenuity, and human misery behind the modern American tomato. Once again, the true cost is too high to pay." --Eric Schlosser, author of *Fast Food Nation*"In my ten years as editor of *Gourmet* magazine, the article I am proudest to have published was Barry Estabrook's 'The Price of Tomatoes.' Now he's expanded that into this astonishingly moving and important book. If you have ever eaten a tomato--or ever plan to--you must read *Tomatoland*. It will change the way you think about America's most popular 'vegetable.' More importantly, it will give you new insight into the way America farms." --Ruth Reichl, author of *Garlic and Sapphires*"If you worry, as I do, about the sad and sorry state of the tomato today, and want to know what a tomato used to be like and what it could hopefully become again, read Barry Estabrook's *Tomatoland*. This book is a fascinating history of the peregrination of the tomato throughout the centuries." --Jacques Pépin, author of the forthcoming *Essential Pepin*"In fast-moving, tautly narrated scenes, Barry Estabrook tells the startling story of labor conditions that should not exist in this country or this century, and makes sure you won't look at a supermarket or fast-food tomato the same way again. But he also gives hope for a better future--and a better tomato. Anyone who cares about social justice should read *Tomatoland*. Also anyone who cares about finding a good tomato you can feel good about eating." --Corby Kummer, senior editor at *The Atlantic* and author of *The Pleasures of Slow Food*"`Tomatoland' (is) in the tradition of the best muckraking journalism, from Upton Sinclair's `The Jungle' to Eric Schlosser's `Fast Food Nation.'" ----Jane Black, *The Washington Post*"Masterful." ----Mark Bittman, *New York Times* Opinion blog"If you care about social justice--or eat tomatoes--read this account of the past, present, and future of a ubiquitous fruit." ----Corby Kummer, *TheAtlantic.com*"Eye-opening exposeacute;...thought-provoking." ----Publishers Weekly"Estabrook adds some new dimensions to the outrageous...story of an industry that touches nearly every one of us living in fast-food nation." ----David Von Drehle, *Time Magazine* blog "Swampland""You can really stop at any point during the narrative and decide that you've bought your last supermarket tomato, but Estabrook is just warming up...a brisk read, engrossing as it is enraging." --*TheDailyGreen.com*"Corruption, deception, slavery, chemical and biological warfare, courtroom dramas, undercover sting operations and murder: *Tomatoland* is not your typical book on fruit." --*Macleans.ca*About the AuthorJames Beard Award-winning journalist Barry Estabrook was a contributing editor at *Gourmet* magazine for eight years, writing investigative articles about where food comes from. He was the founding editor of *Eating Well* magazine and has written for the *New York Times Magazine*, *Reader's Digest*, *Men's Health*, *Audubon*, and the *Washington Post*, and contributes regularly to *The Atlantic Monthly's* website. His work has been anthologized in the *Best American Food Writing* series, and he has been interviewed on numerous television and radio shows. He lives and grows tomatoes in his garden in Vermont.