

# TOMATO FACTS & FANCIES

## A Saucy Festival That Celebrates The Tomato

(NAPSA)—Each September, a few thousand rabid tomato devotees—many of whom are also wine fans—descend on California's Sonoma County Wine Country, for a day of tomato love and appreciation.

Some 200 varieties of heirloom tomatoes grown in the Kendall-Jackson gardens are available for tasting, along with wine pairing seminars and a celebrity chef cook-off. In celebration of the approaching tomato season, the winery offers these fun facts:

- The tomato is a member of the nightshade family, making it a cousin of the eggplant, the red pepper, the potato, the ground cherry, the tomatillo, and the highly toxic belladonna, also known as deadly nightshade.

- All tomatoes belong to the genus *lycopersicon*, meaning "wolf peach."

- Wild cherry tomatoes are indigenous to tropical South America, although they were first domesticated in Mexico.

- The tomato is viewed by most people as a vegetable, but, by the botanical definition, the tomato is technically a fruit, "the ripened ovary of a seed plant and its contents." In 1893, the United States Supreme Court ruled that, legally speaking, the tomato is a vegetable. The rationale was that fruits are generally served as dessert, while tomatoes are usually served during the main course of the meal.

- As a rule, ripe tomatoes are best kept out of the refrigerator. Cold temperatures are the kiss of death to their flavor.

- Tomatoes may be a significant tool in the fight against cancer, according to a recent report in the "Journal of the National



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Cancer Institute."

The report says a review of 72 studies indicated that eating tomatoes and tomato-based products reduced the risk of cancer, perhaps because of the antioxidant lycopene, a pigment predominantly found in this fruit.

The strongest evidence was for protection against cancer of the prostate, lung and stomach, though there was evidence of benefit for the pancreas, colon, rectum, esophagus, oral cavity, breast and cervix.

- Tomatoes are not only a good source of lycopene, but also contain beneficial amounts of vitamins A and C, folic acid and potassium.

- Forty percent of Americans who raise their own tomatoes do it for taste, not health.

The 8th Annual Kendall-Jackson Heirloom Tomato Festival will be held on Saturday, September 11, 2004, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tickets are \$45 per person. For more information, call (800) 769-3649 or go to [www.kj.com](http://www.kj.com).