**Tomatoes trivia…**

Tomatoes are thought to originate in Peru. The name comes from the Aztec “xitomatl,” which means “plump thing with a navel”.

When the tomato was introduced to Europe in the 1500s, The French called it “the apple of love.” The Germans called it “the apple of paradise.”

Tomatoes were thought to be poisonous when Robert Gibbon Johnson brought them to Salem, New Jersey, from Europe in the early 1800s. To disprove that notion, Johnson, a wealthy local landowner, ate an entire basket of them in front of a shocked crowd on the courthouse steps on September 26, 1820.

A tomato is technically a fruit because it is a ripened ovary of a plant. But for trade purposes a tomato is considered a vegetable. The identity crisis stems from an 1893 Supreme Court ruling that classified the tomato as a vegetable so it could be taxed under tariff law.

The 1978 low-budget cult movie *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes!* inspired three sequels, the first of which starred George Clooney.

The largest tomato on record―a whopping seven pounds, 12 ounces―was picked in Edmond, Oklahoma, in 1986.

93% American gardening households grow tomatoes.

The largest worldwide producer of tomatoes is China, followed by USA, Turkey, India and Egypt.

California produces 96% of the tomatoes processed in the U.S.

Florida is the number one producer of fresh market tomatoes (except in 2008).

The heaviest tomato on record weighed in at 3.51 kg (7 pounds 12 ounces). A “delicious” variety, it was grown by Gordon Graham of Edmond, Oklahoma in 1986. Gordon sliced the tomato to make sandwiches for 21 family members.

The largest tomato plant (a “Sungold” variety), recorded in 2000, reached 19.8 meters (65 feet) in length and was grown by Nutriculture Ltd. of Mawdesley, Lancashire, UK.

According to the *Guinness Book of World Records*, the largest tomato tree grows at Walt Disney World Resort’s experimental greenhouse and yields a harvest of more than 32,000 tomatoes and weighs 1,151.84 pounds (522 kg). The plant was discovered in Beijing, China, by Yong Huang, Epcot's manager of agricultural science, who took its seeds and grew them in the experimental greenhouse. Today, the plant produces thousands of golf ball-sized tomatoes that are served at Walt Disney World's restaurants, and can be seen by tourists riding the "Living With the Land" boat ride at the Epcot Center.

The tomato serves as both the official state vegetable and the official state fruit of Arkansas, in honor of the South Arkansas Vine Ripe Pink Tomato, sometimes known as “Bradley Pink.”

Tomato juice is the official state beverage of Ohio.

La Tomatina festival in Valencia, Spain, held annually on the last Wednesday in August, attracts tens of thousands of visitors. The highlight is the tomato fight, in which 30,000+ participants throw an estimated 150,000 overripe tomatoes (100 metric tons) at each other.

Bradley County Pink Tomato Festival (Arkansas) was founded in 1954 as a one-day event and now grown to a week-long celebration with dozens of activities from contests to pageants to entertainment, attracting more than 30,000 visitors.