



Rooted In America: Foodlore Popular Fruits Vegetables

David Scofield Wilson

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From the exotic appeal of oranges to the joy of home-grown tomatoes, many fruits and vegetables have come to play key roles in our gardening, cooking, and eating habits. This book explores ten familiar cultivars—apples, bananas, corn, cranberries, peppers, oranges, pumpkins, tobacco, tomatoes, and watermelons—to show how they have become intimately entwined with the American way of life.

Through recipes and superstitions, jokes and urban legends, history and advertising, these foods have become unmistakably part of our popular culture. We might attend a county fair and see a blue ribbon awarded to a prize pumpkin, then take in a movie that evening where we see a cigarette dangling from Humphrey Bogart's lips or even witness *The Attack of the Killer Tomatoes*. Whether native or exotic, consumed daily or associated with festivities, these common comestibles have become food for thought as well as for sustenance.

Rooted in America examines how these foods express our cultural values and carry meanings that derive from the contexts in which we place them. It offers a tour of the apple in American history and consciousness, from Johnny Appleseed to mass production; tells how fruit companies taught North Americans to eat bananas while teaching Central Americans to grow them; examines differing social status attached to eating corn; explores the aesthetic contribution of cranberries to plate and landscape; and reveals how hot peppers separate men from boys—and also European from non-European cultures. All of the essays show how these foods have slipped into our minds and hearts as symbols of what we value about ourselves and the places we live. *Rooted in America* will delight readers with its insights into favorite foods—proving that, no matter what their origins, all are as American as apple pie.

David Scofield Wilson is emeritus professor and former director of American studies at the University of California, Davis, and author of *In the Presence of Nature*.

Angus Kress Gillespie is associate professor of American studies at Rutgers University and coeditor of *American Wildlife in Symbol and Story*, also from Tennessee.

Contributors: Angus Kress Gillespie, Virginia S. Jenkins, Jay Mechling, Theresa Meléndez, Boria Sax, C. W. Sullivan III, Tad Tuleja, Patricia Turner, David Scofield Wilson.

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