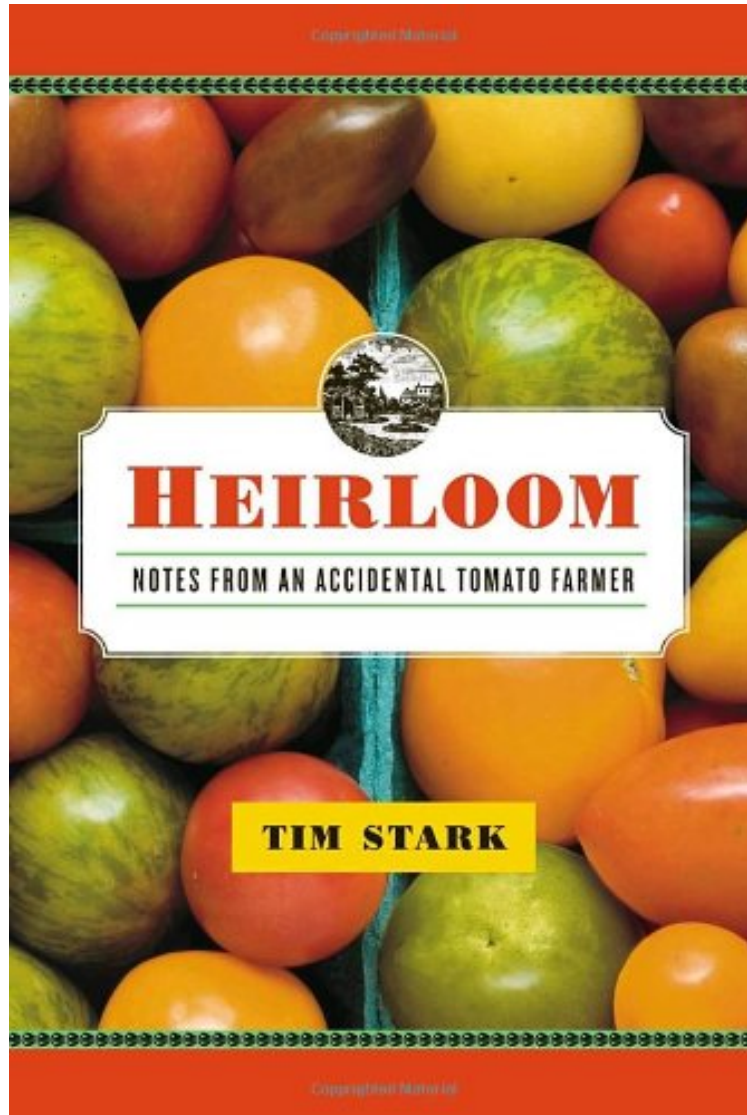


[PDF] Heirloom: Notes from an Accidental Tomato Farmer

## Heirloom: Notes from an Accidental Tomato Farmer

Tim Stark

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**Tim Stark : Heirloom: Notes from an Accidental Tomato Farmer** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Heirloom: Notes from an Accidental Tomato Farmer:

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. An interesting slice of contemporary Americana By R. M. Peterson Tim Stark was an aspiring author doing various makeweight jobs in New York City when he got preoccupied with trying to raise heirloom tomatoes in his Brooklyn apartment. When his landlord put his foot down, Stark relocated his tomatoes and himself to his boyhood home in Lenhartsville, in Berks County, Pennsylvania, which is within the farming region of the Pennsylvania Dutch and about a two-hour drive from NYC (assuming no traffic

jams). HEIRLOOM recounts Stark's ten or so years raising organic produce -- principally, heirloom tomatoes, but also chile peppers and sugar snap peas among many others -- on a few acres in Pennsylvania and then selling his produce at the Union Square Greenmarket and to some of the best restaurants in New York City. Stark confronts an endless succession of obstacles and problems -- ignorance, weather, inadequate and balky equipment, lack of ready cash, insufficient labor, an obstreperous jerk of a neighbor, and insects, deer, and gophers -- each of which he somehow overcomes, or circumvents, or, at a minimum, learns to live with. Thankfully (for me, at least), Stark does not dwell on tedious agricultural details. This is not a gardener's journal; if anything, it probably is of greater interest to the appreciative consumer of organic farming than the practitioner. Interesting subjects discussed at some length are the Amish and Mennonites of the area, the farmer/chef relationships that have developed and undergird some of the most noted restaurants in NYC, and the bleak future for similar agricultural operations catering to urban markets, due to shrinking affordable farmland. Stark's writing is above average, occasionally quite good, but it is uneven and at times a little disjointed and unnecessarily confusing. The last chapter in particular seems rushed. Stark should have given the book one more thorough review and revision, but I suspect that would have been asking too much of his rather restless personality. Still, HEIRLOOM is an enjoyable sketch of an interesting slice of contemporary Americana that can be read in a day or two.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. More than Tomatoes! By Aphrodite K. Konduros NOTHING beats a homegrown, in season tomato. If you agree, you will adore this book, but it is so much more. Lessons on perseverance and life. Hope the next few crops will still allow the author to continue writing. I ate a tomato salad in NYC a few years ago that had to be from this farm. Carnivore that I am, I ordered a SECOND salad!

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. More than you'll ever need to know about the frustrations ... By PB More than you'll ever need to know about the frustrations of tomato farming. But if you are into organic growing could be an enriching story.

Situated beautifully at the intersection of Michael Pollan, Ruth Reichl, and Barbara Kingsolver, Heirloom is an inspiring, elegiac, and gorgeously written memoir about rediscovering an older and still vital way of life. Fourteen years ago, Tim Stark was living in Brooklyn, working days as a management consultant, and writing unpublished short stories by night. One evening, chancing upon a Dumpster full of discarded lumber, he carried the lumber home and built a germination rack for thousands of heirloom tomato seedlings. His crop soon outgrew the brownstone in which it had sprouted, forcing him to cart the seedlings to his family's farm in Pennsylvania, where they were transplanted into the ground by hand. When favorable weather brought in a bumper crop, Tim hauled his unusual tomatoes to New York City's Union Square Greenmarket, at a time when the tomato was unanimously red. The rest is history. Today, Eckerton Hill Farm does a booming trade in heirloom tomatoes and obscure chile peppers. Tim's tomatoes are featured on the menus of New York City's most demanding chefs and have even made the cover of *Gourmet* magazine.

From Publishers Weekly In a back-to-nature move more than a decade ago, Stark uprooted a handful of heirloom tomato seedlings from his Brooklyn brownstone and returned to Eckerton Hill, his Pennsylvania boyhood home, to harvest two acres of multicolored oddities. From Mennonite country to New York City, using a rusted Toyota pickup, he transported his first auspicious crop of Hill Billies, Tiger Toms and Radiator Charlie's Mortgage Lifters to the Union Square Greenmarket, becoming the unlikely purveyor of apples to heirloom aficionados and Michelin-starred chefs. An amateur farmer with finite experience in organic farming and a rotating cast of weed-pulling hands, Stark takes on hornworms, groundhogs, cantankerous neighbors and route I-78, producing cover-worthy tomatoes for *Gourmet*, Brooklyn-bound sugar snaps and chocolate habaneros for discriminating farmers' market cognoscenti. With his produce and dogged perseverance, Stark bridges the gap between New York's posh kitchens and the sun-drenched fields of the rural countryside, commenting along the way on buzzwords like organic, the effects of urban sprawl, and farming's changing landscape. His recounting of fly-by-night agricultural tactics, stomach-turning worries and relief-inducing bumper crops paints a poignant picture of a dwindling form of American life. Through his urbane relationships with the Bouleys and Bouluds and pastoral friendships with the likes of fellow berry, pea shoot and haricot vert producers, he illustrates the unlikely bond between the tomato-laden farm and the urban table. (July) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "Lovingly crafted memoir about the author's days producing organic veggies on his small farm in Pennsylvania Dutch country. Stark's Eckerton Hill Farm provides fruits and vegetables for a discerning retail clientele at New York's Union Square Greenmarket. The author also delights the palates of sophisticated foodies via the kitchens of the great chefs at Gotham's priciest eateries. Readers get an introduction to regular farmers market customers and sellers and a field guide to the practices of Stark's affable Amish and Mennonite neighbors. Other aspects of the author's cultivation surface in references to diverse literary sources from Cheever to Crvecoeur. It all combines to make entertaining light fare. A fresh writer's salad garnished with an colorful dressing for foodies with a yen for sensual comestibles." --Kirkus s "Fourteen years ago, with zero farming experience, Tim Stark started 3,000 heirloom tomato plants in his Brooklyn apartment then transferred them to the family acreage in Pennsylvania. The multi-colored fruit of his labor...were a hit, snapped up by amateur and pro chefs at NYC's greenmarket. With succulent wit, he conveys the poetry of a well-grown tomato." --

Entertainment Weekly "In a back-to-nature move more than a decade ago, Stark uprooted a handful of heirloom tomato seedlings from his Brooklyn brownstone and returned to Eckerton Hill, his Pennsylvanian boyhood home, to harvest two acres of multicolored oddities. With his produce and dogged perseverance, Stark bridges the gap between New York's posh kitchens and the sun-drenched fields of the rural countryside, commenting along the way on buzzwords like organic, the effects of urban sprawl, and farming's changing landscape. His recounting of fly-by-night agricultural tactics, stomach-turning worries and relief-inducing bumper crops paints a poignant picture of a dwindling form of American life. Through his urbane relationships with the Bouleys and Bouluds and pastoral friendships with the likes of fellow berry, pea shoot and haricot vert producers, he illustrates the unlikely bond between the tomato-laden farm and the urban table." --Publishers Weekly "Get a down-to-earth look at the farm fresh fad in this delicious and revealing memoir from a greenmarket superstar whose famous tomatoes are coveted by top chefs." --Good Housekeeping Advance Praise for Heirloom Like a vine-ripened tomato still warm from the sun, Heirloom is a most satisfying experience. Tim Stark is a natural-born storyteller funny, poignant, and unerringly authentic. Charming with a capital C. John Grogan, author of Marley Me and former editor of Organic Gardening Every year, Tim Stark's gorgeous tomatoes serve as the sign that summer has arrived. Tim has put as much craft into this book as he puts into his annual harvests. Daniel Boulud, Chef / Restaurateur Tim Stark is the poet laureate of the nightshade and of Eastern Pennsylvania; his tomatoes and peppers burst on the mind's palate as his native landscape comes to shaley, fecund life under his hands. Heirloom is clearly descended from Montaigne and M. F. K. Fisher; it takes its place grandly among the literature of passionate obsessives. Kate Christensen, author of The Great Man This is the Tim Stark I've known for more than a decade: one-fourth farmer, one-fourth storyteller, and half mad. He tells it like it is. Dave Pasternack, Chef / Owner of Esca and author of The Young Man and the Sea Successful farming in the twenty-first century is about connecting with all sorts of people, and Tim Stark's gift is his ability to convey these connections. Whether he is bantering with a farmer's market customer or accepting a free meal from a five-star chef, the spark of necessary human interaction comes through effortlessly in his prose. Dan Sullivan, senior editor of The Rodale Institute About the Author Tim Stark is the proprietor of Eckerton Hill Farm in Lenhartsville, Pennsylvania. His writing has appeared on National Public Radio as well as in Gourmet, Cond Nast Traveler, Washington Post, Missouri, Alimentary, and Organic Gardening. Tim and his farm have been profiled on National Public Radio.