

The Heirloom Vegetable Garden

Gardening in the 19th Century



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Gardening in the 19th Century

“That the labors of a garden do not amount to much is a supposition worthy of those who have never enjoyed its benefits.” (*The Genesee Farmer*, April 13, 1839.)

Plants were flourishing on this earth long before animal life appeared. The ancestors of vegetable crops familiar to us today were in existence long before our own human ancestors.

Human beings have always been indivisible from plants. Through the process of photosynthesis, plants produce the oxygen we breathe. From plants we harvest food, medicine, and material for clothing, and if plants do not produce these items directly, then our domestic animals convert plants to these necessities for human existence.

Domestic plants are among the most intimate belongings of humans. Ancient history of human travel can be traced by the plants that the travelers carried with them and left along the way. The sweet potato provides one of many examples. Early explorers found the sweet potato not only in South America where it originated, but also in Southeast Asia. Even the name had a similar sound in differ-

ent languages. This vegetative evidence suggests that some people in a primitive time successfully crossed the vast Pacific Ocean in small boats or rafts carrying sweet potatoes with them.

Each vegetable has its own region of origin, which we can determine by the ancestors to a particular plant that still live in that region, wild and undisturbed in nature. Professor Bob Adams of Cornell's Vegetable Crops Department wrote a few verses about it in 1925:

*Our garden crops have come from far
Where other climes and people are,
From mountain valleys of Peru
The snappy snap bean comes to you.
In Mexico sprang Indian corn,
In India the cuke was born.
The cabbage hails from Europe's sea land,
Hot weather spinach from New Zealand.*

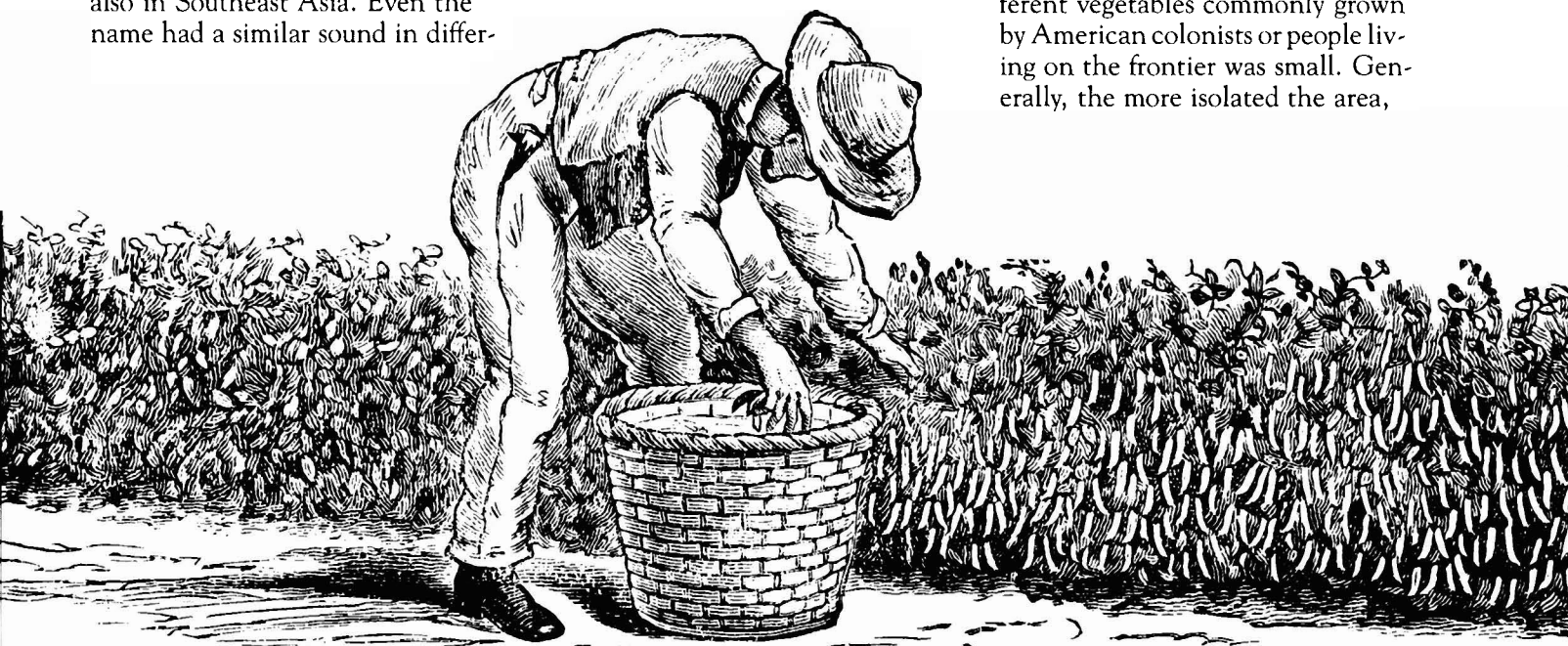
The first settlers to the land that is now the United States found the native people gardening. The Indians were growing crops that originated in the Americas, such as selections of corn, squash, gourds, beans, and pumpkins. European immigrants to America brought

seeds with them and wasted no time in developing their vegetable gardens. In a simple but informative piece of seventeenth century poetry, Governor William Bradford of the Plymouth Plantation listed the crops grown there:

*All sorts of roots and herbs in gardens
grow,
Parsnips, carrots, turnips or what you'll
sow,
Onions, melons, cucumber, radishes
Skirrets, beets, coleworts and fair cab-
bages.*
(Quoted in *Early American Gardens*)

Today vegetable gardening continues to be popular in the United States for numerous reasons, including exercise, hobby, improved taste and nutrition, uncommon vegetables, and economics. For the earliest founders of this nation, however, meeting day-to-day requirements for shelter, clothing, and food was of basic importance. The garden offered the family, if not survival, at least improved nutrition, a better quality of life, and a break in the monotony of their grain and meat diet.

On the whole, the number of different vegetables commonly grown by American colonists or people living on the frontier was small. Generally, the more isolated the area,





the less varied the diet. It is easy to imagine the bountiful harvest table of the nineteenth century farmer, but, in reality, most of the vegetable gardens of the early nineteenth century did not provide much variety. One horticulture writer complaining about the lack of adequate gardens wrote that farmers planted the land with "corn, potatoes, a few hills of cucumbers, and peradventure a squash or a melon . . . in some nook or corner; beyond these they do not venture" (*Genesee Farmer*, April 13, 1839). Near metropolitan areas where imported seed was more easily obtained, market gardens were operated by skilled growers and provided a diverse array of vegetables. Some vegetables such as onions, potatoes, and peas when not in season were imported from as far away as Bermuda and Charleston, South Carolina.

Early seed production

Before 1800 almost all vegetable seed was imported from Europe. However, it was a general practice of gardeners to save any seed their crops had produced for the following year's planting or for use in trade for other local seed. David Landreth, who started business in Philadelphia in 1784, is believed to have been the first commercial seedsman. The Shakers were probably the first to grow most of the seed they sold, and they originated the idea of selling seed in "papers" or packet envelopes. It was not

until about 1830 that seed catalogues and mail orders came into use.

The seed industry grew quickly during the first half of the nineteenth century, and seed production, especially of the large-seeded vegetables, took place in the eastern United States. Small vegetable seeds, such as cabbage, celery, radish, carrots, beets, and turnips, were still produced in Europe and imported until late in the century when the seed industry in America became largely independent. Even today some seed is imported from Europe and Japan. After 1850 it was a waste of time for gardeners to grow their own seed because commercially produced seed was available and usually reliable.

Seed production in the nineteenth century was by open pollination of flowers, and seed producers had to isolate varieties or closely related vegetables in separate fields to avoid cross pollination. Peas and beans were ideal crops from which to save seed because they are self-pollinated. Since each flower pollinates itself, the seed produced normally grows into a plant true to the original type. There is little chance of pollen from one type cross pollinating and contaminating another. The same is generally true for tomatoes and lettuce.

Corn, however, presented a problem for early seed producers. Corn drops its pollen from the tassels, and pollination is best accomplished if several rows or hills are planted adjacent to one another. Contamination occurs if different corn varieties are planted near one another. Thus, varieties had to be field isolated. Also, seed production of corn was an annual necessity because corn seed loses viability when stored for two seasons or more.

Insect-pollinated crop varieties also had to be isolated in separate fields. Radish, spinach, squash, pumpkins, and cucumbers produce flowers the same summer the crop is planted. Some variation in type may show up in the following year's seed if pollen from one plant or variety is carried to the flower of another of the same crop.

Biennial crops such as beets, carrots, parsnips, cabbage, turnips, and onions presented an even more complicated problem for early seed producers. These crops, which are insect pollinated, normally grow vegetatively during the first growing season. They are overwintered in cold storage or in a protected environment and allowed to flower the second year. Varieties of the same crop will cross pollinate and must be isolated from one another for pure seed production.

The easiest crop of all for nineteenth century gardeners to propagate was potato. No flower is necessary. Only a piece of the vegetative tuber is planted, and it produces a shoot and plant from its eye-bud.

Along with development of the seed industry, advances in horticultural practices and publication of farm journals such as *The Genesee*

Farmer, the *Cultivator*, *American Agriculturalist*, and the *Rural New Yorker* helped to increase vegetable production. *The Genesee Farmer*, for example, encouraged the farmer to "contribute more to the comfort and health of the family" by expanding the garden to include "carrots, beets, lettuce, spinach, onions, bush beans, pole beans, cabbages, asparagus, tomatoes, oyster [salsify] and pie [rhubarb] plant, strawberries, and peppers." With a well-tended and productive kitchen garden, the farmer was assured of a variety of foods at the family table.

Use and storage

Obviously, a succession of vegetables was eaten in season. Harvested early, spinach, lettuce, peas, and new potatoes ushered in the new season of fresh vegetables. Flint, dent, and flour corn, which were grown for corn meal, were often picked, cooked, and eaten while "green" or "milk stage" because true sweet corn was not widely grown until after 1850. Salads made of lettuce, cresses, and savoy cabbages were dressed with celery and radishes. Cucumbers grown for pickles were frequently cooked as zucchini squash is today. Whether this varied diet was only seasonal or year round depended on the keeping qualities of the vegetables, as well as the attention that was given to "putting the vegetable down."

Most of the garden produce that was stored was "put down" in cool, below-ground rooms for the winter.

The process of canning, or putting food "up," was developed in the early part of the nineteenth century, but did not become a common practice until much later. Stone-ware crocks, wooden casks, and barrels were filled with pickled beets, cucumbers, and cabbage. Fermented cabbage [sauerkraut] was especially important because it provided a vital winter source of vitamin C. When vinegar was scarce, cucumbers were likely to be pickled in whiskey. A Genesee Country settler, Simon Pierson, wrote in 1860 about his experience early in that century, "We used to get two gallons of whiskey, and put four gallons of water with it, put it in the pickle barrel and fill the barrel with cucumbers as fast as they grew."

Beets, carrots, parsnips, potatoes, turnips, and winter varieties of radishes could be stored in the root

cellar. Directions for preserving vegetables in the winter were printed in the 1843 edition of *The Gardener's Manual*, published by the United Society (Shakers). The method is similar to others of the nineteenth century, although the "circular" form described was unique to the Shakers:

Beets and carrots should be gathered before hard frost in the Fall, the tops cut off and the roots packed away in sand in a warm cellar. A good method of preserving Beets and Carrots fresh through the Winter is, to lay them in a circular form on the bottom of the cellar, with the roots in the centre and heads outward; cover the first course of roots with sand; then lay another course upon them, and cover with sand as before, and so on until all are packed and covered. The sand for Carrots should be very dry or they will rot; for Beets it may be moist, but not wet. Celery is preserved in the same way. Onions and Turnips keep well on scaffolds, or in barrels, in a dry cool cellar. (The Gardener's Manual, 1843)

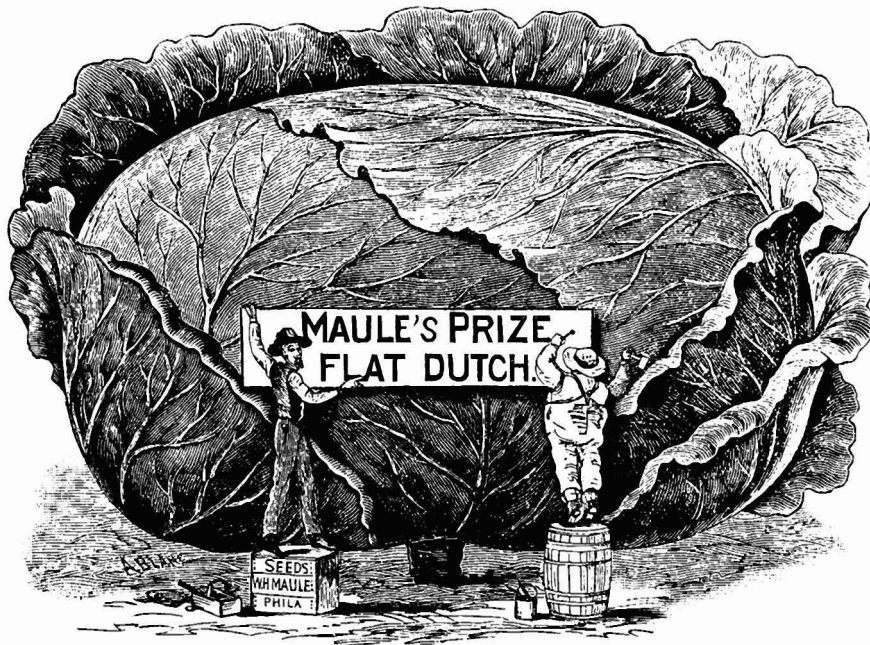
Squash and pumpkins were kept in a warm dry room, although they were also sliced and dried like apples. Snap beans and corn were dried for winter use. The dried mature seeds of peas and beans were kept in dry storage.

Cooking

Perhaps the peculiarities of heirloom vegetables can be better appreciated with an understanding of the tastes and cooking methods of the nineteenth century. In the early 1800s, most cooking was done in an open fireplace in kettles suspended from pothooks and cranes. Foods were most often boiled. Baking was accomplished in three ways: in a wood-fired brick oven; in a cast



Hoop-training of the Tomato



iron kettle covered with coals, called a Dutch oven; or in a tin reflector oven placed in front of the fireplace. Frying was an awkward procedure, carried out by piling coals under a three-legged frypan called a spider.

Ham, turkey, mutton, and bag puddings, as well as vegetables, were boiled. Lydia Child in *The American Frugal Housewife*, 1833, gave this advice for boiling vegetables:

Cabbages need to boil an hour; beets an hour and a half. The lower part of a Squash should be boiled half an hour; the neck pieces fifteen or twenty minutes longer. Parsnips should boil an hour, or an hour and a quarter, according to size. New potatoes should boil fifteen or twenty minutes; three quarters of an hour, or an hour is not too much for large old potatoes; common-sized ones, half an hour. . . . Asparagus should be boiled fifteen or twenty minutes; half an hour if old. Green peas

should be boiled from twenty minutes to sixty, according to their age; string beans the same. Corn should be boiled from twenty minutes to forty, according to age; dandelions half an hour, or three quarter. . . . Beet-tops should be boiled twenty minutes; and spinage three or four minutes.

Whether to peel turnips or not before boiling them was a point of some controversy. Proponents of both practices wrote the editor of *The Genesee Farmer* claiming that their method was the best way to insure sweet-flavored turnips. It must be added that boiling food in iron kettles greatly discolored the vegetables and in some cases imparted an unsavory flavor. Cooks were advised to use tin, brass, or tin-lined copper utensils to preserve the flavor and color of fresh vegetables.

Cookbooks

Recipes, or "receipts" as they were called, provide some interesting insights into the menus and tastes of the nineteenth century. But lest

it be presumed that a recipe printed in a book made it a common dish, be reminded of the number of recipes in a modern cookbook that are never used.

The quaint references to measurements, such as butter "the size of a walnut," "enough" flour, and a "quick" oven, are a challenge to the modern cook. The use of a standard measure was not introduced until 1861 in Isabella Beeton's *Book of Household Management*. She included 94 recipes for vegetables from boiled artichokes to boiled Indian wheat or maize (corn). An 1883 cookbook, *The Cook's Own Book*, says, "There is nothing in which the difference between an elegant and an ordinary table is more seen than in the dressing of vegetables."

In 1846, Catherine Beecher published *The Domestic Receipt Book* in which she described the virtues of various vegetables: ". . . almost all are palatable and healthful to a stomach that is strong. Peas, Beans, Onions, and cooked Cabbage and Turnips usually are not good for persons whose powers of digestion have been weakened." Later, in 1869, Miss Beecher wrote of vegetables in *The American Woman's Home*, ". . . their number and variety in America are so great that a table might almost be furnished by these alone. . . . If only they are not drenched with rancid butter, their own native excellence makes itself known in most of the ordinary modes of preparation."

By the middle of the century, the huge open fireplace had been replaced by a cast iron stove, much smaller in size than the later cast iron range. Flat-bottomed pans re-

placed the round-bottomed, footed kettles. Frying pans became popular, and baking could be done daily with the convenient stove oven. Even with the progress of cooking equipment and improved standardized recipes, preparation of vegetables changed very little.

Vegetables

Perhaps more than any other factor, improvements in the vegetables themselves made the difference on the table. The early small potato, for example, was replaced by a larger variety, and advances in farming practices helped improve potato production. Sweet corn became widely known, and the tomato became popular.

In the early part of the nineteenth century, many people considered the tomato to be of suspicious nature, to have little nutritional value, and perhaps to be poisonous. It was rarely eaten raw and was used chiefly in a sauce or as a condiment. When the tomato was finally found to be harmless and its flavor was experienced, its popularity soared, as Robert Buist wrote in 1847:

It [the tomato] is cultivated the length and breadth of the country. As a culinary dish it is on every table from July to October. It is brought to the table in an infinite variety of forms, being stewed and seasoned, stuffed and fried, roasted and raw, and in nearly every form, palatable to all. It is also made into pickles, catsup and salted in barrels for Winter use, so that with a few years more experience, we may expect to see it as an every day dish from January to January. (Quoted in Early American Gardens)

Some vegetables that were in fashion in the latter part of the nineteenth century are unfamiliar to most gardeners today. Among

them are corn salad, skirret, salsify, sea kale, chufa, vegetable marrow, scorzonera, leek, Jerusalem artichoke, cardoon, and burnet. Most of the unusual crops are still available today because they represent a distinct type of crop and have been preserved for their uniqueness. But many old varieties of common vegetable types were replaced by greatly improved, high quality varieties. A seventeenth century radish, for instance, was described to be as big as a man's arm. It is no wonder these were cooked or grated before eating. Today's flavorful, crisp, and delicate radish is a product of careful selection and breeding.

can be as exciting and rewarding as exploring an old attic, digging for bottles, or discovering one's genealogy.

The vegetable varieties described in this bulletin are typical of those grown in the nineteenth century, not just in type and variety name, but in form, growth habit, taste, and genetic makeup. They are authentic in their antiquity and even, for some crops, in their lack of quality and resistance to disease. It is possible that some of them if grown today will succumb to plant disease. These antique varieties need special care and protection to be brought to a bountiful harvest. Crop rota-



Old varieties that fell out of favor were often lost forever. It is difficult, for example, to locate seed of old pea, cucumber, or muskmelon varieties. Only two or three really old onion, carrot, and beet varieties have survived. However, many heirloom bean varieties are available. The pursuit of these old varieties

is an excellent practice for any garden and is especially recommended for the heirloom garden.

"In conclusion, if this little manual be the means of diffusing a knowledge of vegetable culture, of adding to the pleasures of rural life, of increasing the interest taken in horticultural pursuits, of guiding the gentlemen (and gentlewomen), farmer or student in the occupation of their leisure hours, it will have attained the objects of its authors."

(The Family Kitchen Gardener, 1866)



Heirloom Vegetable Varieties

The following brief histories of crops commonly grown in the nineteenth century explain how they came to be grown in the United States and give more familiarity with each crop.

Listed under each crop are some varieties that were grown regularly in nineteenth century gardens and that are still available today. Although popular then, old varieties of cucumbers, celery, and muskmelon are excluded from the list because they are susceptible to disease and difficult to grow.

The variety descriptions within quotation marks are as authentic as nineteenth century horticulturalists saw them. They are taken directly from last century's garden books and are identified by a number in parentheses indicating the source in the reference section.

Growing these varieties today allows modern gardeners to observe, touch, and taste a few nineteenth century vegetables. (For a list of seed sources for these varieties, see listing under *References for Further Reading*.)

BAKED BEANS

Pick over the beans the night before, and put them in warm water to soak, where they will be kept warm all night. Next morning pour off the water, and pour on boiling water, and let them stand and simmer till the beans are soft, putting in with them a nice piece of pork, the skin gashed. Put them into the deep dish in which they are to bake, having water just enough to cover them. Bury the pork in the middle, so that the top will be even with the sur-

face. All the garden beans are better for baking than the common field bean. They must bake in a moderately hot oven from two to three hours.

Beecher's Domestic Receipt Book, 1846, p. 77.

FRENCH BEANS TO DRESS— DRIED

Boil for more than two hours, in two quarts of water, a pound of the seeds or beans of scarlet runners; fill a pint basin with onions peeled or sliced, brown them in a saucepan, with rather more than a quarter of a pound of fresh butter; stir them constantly; strain the water from the beans, and mix them with the onions; add a teaspoonful of pepper, some salt, and a little gravy. Let them stew for ten minutes, and stir in the beaten yolks of two eggs, and a tablespoon of vinegar. Serve them hot.

The Cook's Own Book, 1833, p. 80.



Beans

Beans, a native American crop, were cultivated by the Indians of both North and South America for many centuries. Growth habit varies, as do seed size, color, and shape. Climbing pole beans are historically older than bush types. The Indians commonly planted beans and corn together, using the corn stalks as bean poles.

Scarlet Runner. This climbing variety was transported from South America to Europe and then to Colonial America sometime before 1750. Scarlet Runner beans are still popular in Great Britain. The pods can be picked in the young green stage and used as snap beans, or later the seeds can be used as green shell beans.

“The plants are twelve feet or more in height, with deep green foliage and brilliant scarlet flowers. The pods are six inches long, nearly an inch broad, somewhat hairy . . . light reddish brown when ripe and contain four or five seeds. The ripe seeds are lilac purple, variegated with black or deep-purplish brown” (2).

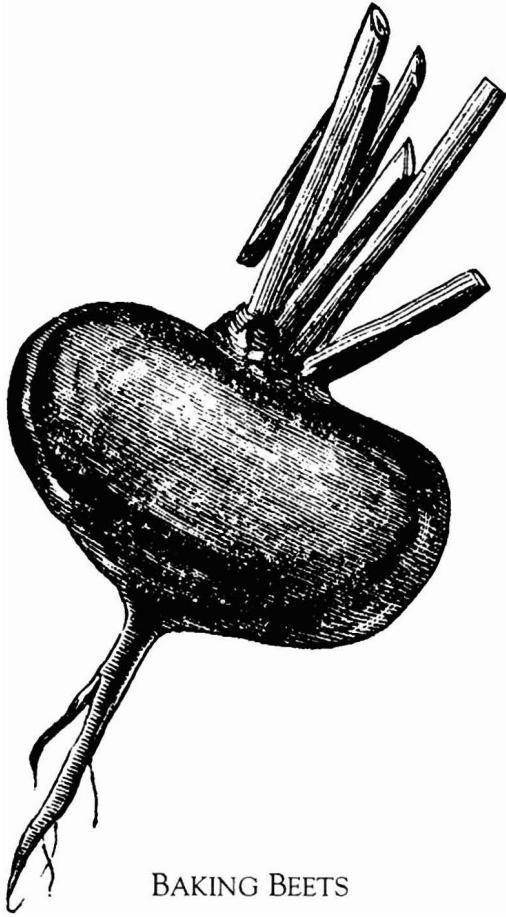
Dwarf Horticultural or Speckled Cranberry. This variety, along with others closely related to it, has a long history. It was cultivated in America in the early 1830s and in Europe before that. The pods in the green shell stage are splashed with red, and

the pod is swollen over the seeds. The seeds are used for green shell beans or dried beans.

“Stems (plants) sixteen inches high; pods five inches long, green while young, but changing to yellow, marbled and streaked with brilliant rose-red when sufficiently advanced for shelling in their green state . . . The ripe beans are flesh white, streaked and spotted with bright pink or red. They are egg-shaped” (3).

Jacobs Cattle. An old variety once extremely popular in northern New England where it was used primarily as a dried bean.

“Plants very dwarf . . . very uniform pods 4½ to 5 inches long . . . the surface centering irregularly about the hilum . . . is covered with a solid, irregularly margined blotch of brownish crimson, the remaining surface being white upon which are irregularly distributed round dots and spots of the same red” (8).



Beets

Beets apparently originated along the Mediterranean coasts of Europe and North Africa. Primitive types had long, hard roots, and only the leaves were eaten, as a potherb. Beets having edible roots probably did not evolve until the second or third century. There are several reports of the fleshy roots being used for food between 1400 and 1550 A.D.

Beets became a common vegetable in northern Europe and were brought to America by the early settlers. Until as late as 1800, beets had turnip-like, pointed roots. Flat-bottomed and round varieties are relatively recent.

Early Blood Turnip. An old, turnip-shaped variety, sold in the U.S. before 1840.

“The roots . . . are produced almost entirely within the earth. . . . Skin deep purplish red, flesh deep blood-red, sometimes circled and rayed with paler red, remarkably sweet and tender. Leaves erect, and of a deep-red color, sometimes inclining to green” (2).

Egyptian. A variety with a flat-shaped root that was introduced from Europe around 1865.

“This and the Eclipse variety are now almost the only kinds grown for the early market. . . . Tops small. Roots of a uniform deep blood color and of rapid growth” (6).

Long Season or Winter Keeper. This is a large, late storage beet. The history of this variety is obscure, but it is similar in appearance to nineteenth century winter beets. It is not very good looking, but in quality, tenderness, fine grain, and sweetness it was probably superior to any other kind for fall use and storage.

BAKING BEETS

Being washed, with as little of the skin cut as possible, we bake them until done, when the outer skin is removed and the beets served up according to taste. The sweet juices which inevitably escape while boiling, are retained and concentrated, and one who has never eaten them would be surprised at their superior flavor.

Genesee Farmer, 1856, p. 128.

PICKLED BEETS

Prepare three quarts of vinegar, half an ounce each of horseradish, ginger and mace. Having peeled and fashioned the beets (one peck) into any shapes you may fancy, boil them for one hour, then pour the liquor on them in glass jars. Close the jars well, when cold.

Sweet Home Cookbook, 1888, p. 197.

Cabbage

Although cabbage originated in the eastern Mediterranean or Asia Minor, the hard-headed varieties grown today were developed in northern Europe during the ninth and tenth centuries. Most of the varieties grown in America are descended from types developed in Germany, Denmark, or the low countries. Round-headed types are older than flat or egg-shaped varieties, which apparently did not evolve until as late as the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries.

Cabbage was introduced into America by the French explorer Jacques Cartier, who planted seed in Canada in 1541. Because cabbage was a commonly used vegetable in northern Europe, the early colonists brought it with them to America where the crop was adopted by the Indians.

Early Jersey Wakefield. The variety Early Wakefield was introduced into New Jersey

from England in 1840. It became a popular early-season variety on the New York City market.

“The heads of this variety are large and solid, conical in form, and of a fine texture. It will produce more marketable heads to the acre than any other early variety” (12).

Drumhead Savoy. Introduced into American gardens before 1860.

“Head large, and flattened at the top; leaves dark green. The Savoy is the best keepers and decidedly the finest flavored of all cabbages” (1).

Late Flat Dutch. An old Dutch variety that was brought to Colonial America. Flat varieties of this type were especially popular during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

“It is a large spreading cabbage, generally very broad and flat at the top; of a close and firm nature” (4).

SOUR-CROUT

Cabbage is sliced up fine, and a layer of it is placed in the bottom of a barrel, which is plentifully salted; it is then well bruised with a heavy mull or pestle, or is trodden down by a pair of heavy boots, till the barrel is half filled with the froth that arises from the operation. Successive layers of

cabbage and salt are added in this manner, each receiving the same treatment, till the vessel is nearly full. Some cold water is then poured in, and the top of the barrel is pressed down with heavy stones. The contents undergo a brisk fermentation, which continues a week or two, during which

time the brine must be drawn off, and replaced by new, until it remains perfectly clear, when the process is finished. It must be kept covered with brine, and is thus simply a fermented, or half sour, salted mass of cabbage.

The Farmer's Everyday Book, 1850, p. 459.

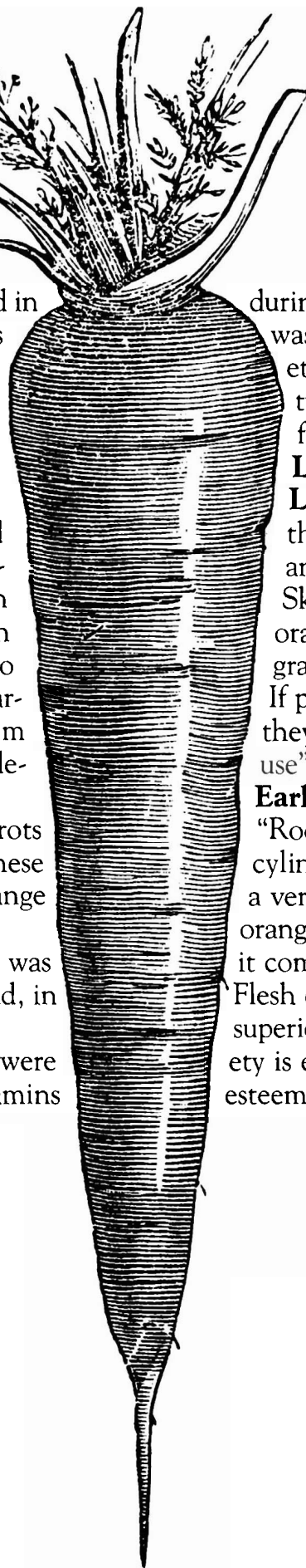


Carrots

It is believed that carrots originated in Europe and the adjoining portions of Asia. The wild types had thin, wiry roots that were white, yellow red, or purple. Orange-rooted carrots developed in the early part of the seventeenth century from yellow types. However, yellow- and white-rooted carrots were commonly grown in France until late in the eighteenth century, when orange-rooted carrots came into favor. Two major types of orange carrots seem to have evolved from which all modern varieties are descended:

- Large, long-rooted winter carrots evolved from long yellow types. These were selected until the Long Orange variety came into existence.
- A finer type, called Horn carrot, was developed around Utrecht, Holland, in about 1620.

Since carrots store well, they were once an important source of vitamins



during the winter months when it was impossible to obtain fresh vegetables. In the nineteenth century, carrots were also used to feed livestock.

Long Orange or Improved Long Orange. "Root long, thickest at or near the crown, and tapering regularly to a point. Skin smooth, of a reddish-orange color. Flesh close grained, succulent and tender . . . If pulled when young and small, they are mild, and good for table use" (3).

Early Horn or Early Scarlet Horn "Roots six inches in length, nearly cylindrical, and tapering abruptly to a very slender tap-root. Skin orange-red but green or brown where it comes to the surface of the ground. Flesh deep orange-yellow, and of superior flavor and delicacy. The variety is early, and as a table carrot much esteemed" (2).

CARROT FRITTERS

Beat two or three boiled carrots to a pulp with a spoon; add to them six eggs and a handful of flour; moisten them with either cream, milk or white wine, and sweeten them. Beat all together well, and fry them in boiling lard. When of a good color, take them off and squeeze on them the juice from a Seville orange, and strew over fine sugar.

The Cook's Own Book, 1833, p. 45.

CARROTS

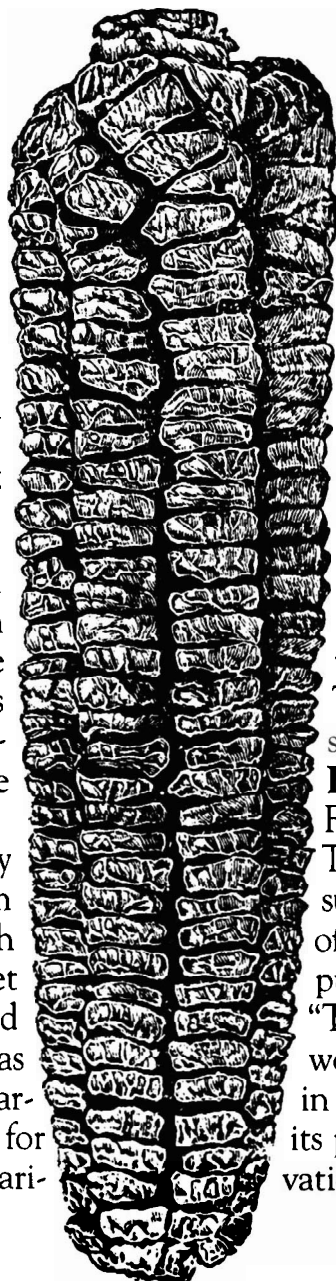
Carrots, if young, need only be wiped when boiled; if old, they must be scraped before boiling. Slice them into a dish, and pour melted butter over them.

The Housekeeper's Book, 1837, p. 109.

Sweet Corn

Although the Indians of North America raised sweet corn and dried the kernels for winter eating, sweet corn did not come into prominence as a vegetable until the middle of the nineteenth century. It is believed that the first sweet corn was brought to New England from the Susquehanna River Valley by one of the officers of the Sullivan Expedition in 1779. Sweet corn was first listed by an American seedsman in 1828. From 1850 to 1880 several varieties were developed, and by the end of this period sweet corn was well established as an important item in the diet.

Sweet corn is probably of fairly recent origin, having mutated from either dent or flint corn or from both types. Almost all of the early sweet corn varieties had white kernels, and it was not until Golden Bantam was introduced in 1902 that yellow varieties were generally considered fit for human consumption. The early vari-



eties had ears that were only 5–7 inches long; Stowell's Evergreen was the first variety that produced large ears.

Stowell's Evergreen. A variety named for its developer, Nathan Stowell of New Jersey, in about 1850. The present variety is an improved form but similar to the original.

"Stalk from six to seven feet high . . . ears six or seven inches long; kernels long, or deep, pure white when suitable for boiling. The variety is intermediate in its season" (3).

Black Mexican or Black Sweet. First sold by James Gregory in 1863. The variety's origin is unknown but suspected of being grown by Indians of the Southwest. The kernels are a purplish black when fully mature.

"The variety is sweet, tender, and well flavored, remains a long period in condition for use, and aside from its peculiar color is worthy of cultivation" (3).

SUCCATOSH

If you wish to make succatosh, boil the beans from half to three quarters of an hour, in water a little salt, meantime cutting off the corn and throwing the cobs to boil with the beans. Take care not to cut too close to the cob, as it imparts a bad taste. When the beans have boiled the time above mentioned, take out the cobs, and add the corn, and let the whole boil from fifteen to twenty minutes, for young corn, and longer for older corn. Make the proportions two-thirds corn and one third beans. Where you have a mess amounting

to two quarts of corn and one quart of beans, take two tablespoons of flour, wet it into a thin paste, and stir it into the succatosh, and let it boil up for five minutes. Then lay some butter in a dish, take it up into it, and add more salt if need be. Beecher's Domestic Receipt Book, 1846, p. 77.

CORN PUDDING

Grate two dozen ears of green corn—the sweet corn is best, although field corn will answer; then carefully scrape the cobs, so as not to get the hulls off; put in about a quart of cold milk, three eggs, two tablespoons of sugar, and a teaspoonful of salt. If desired sweeter, add more sugar; if not so thick, more milk; the consistency depending much on the state of the corn. Then bake.

The Farmer's Everyday Book, 1850, p. 570.



TO BOIL ALL KINDS OF GARDEN STUFF

In dressing all sorts of kitchen garden herbs, take care they are clean washed; that there be no small snails, or caterpillars between the leaves; and that all the coarse outer leaves, and the tops that have received any injury by the weather, be taken off; next wash them in a good deal of water, and put them into a cullender to drain, care must likewise be taken, that your pot or saucepan be clean, well tinned, and free from sand, or grease.

American Cookery, 1796, p. 80.

We wish not to interfere with the prerogatives of others, and hope that all of our readers will eat lettuce in the manner that is found most palatable, —whether with sharp vinegar applied to the crispy leaf, or

with cream and gravy, previously applied in a scalded state. Our method, however, varies a little from what we have seen elsewhere. We cut the lettuce fine and sprinkle it sufficiently with powdered sugar, (rejecting that which comes from unpaid labor). Cream is then poured on, and vinegar, just enough to impart zest. To our palate, this is delicious . . . Please try it.
Genesee Farmer, 1840, p. 82.

Lettuce

Lettuce originated in Asia Minor, Iran, and Turkistan, and its culture was widespread in ancient times. The crop was popular among the Romans. The earliest forms were loose, leafy plants, the heading forms coming later. Firm-headed varieties were well developed by the sixteenth century. Columbus is believed to have introduced lettuce into the New World; European colonists also brought lettuce seed with them to North America. The crisphead or Iceberg type popular today was not developed until almost 1900.

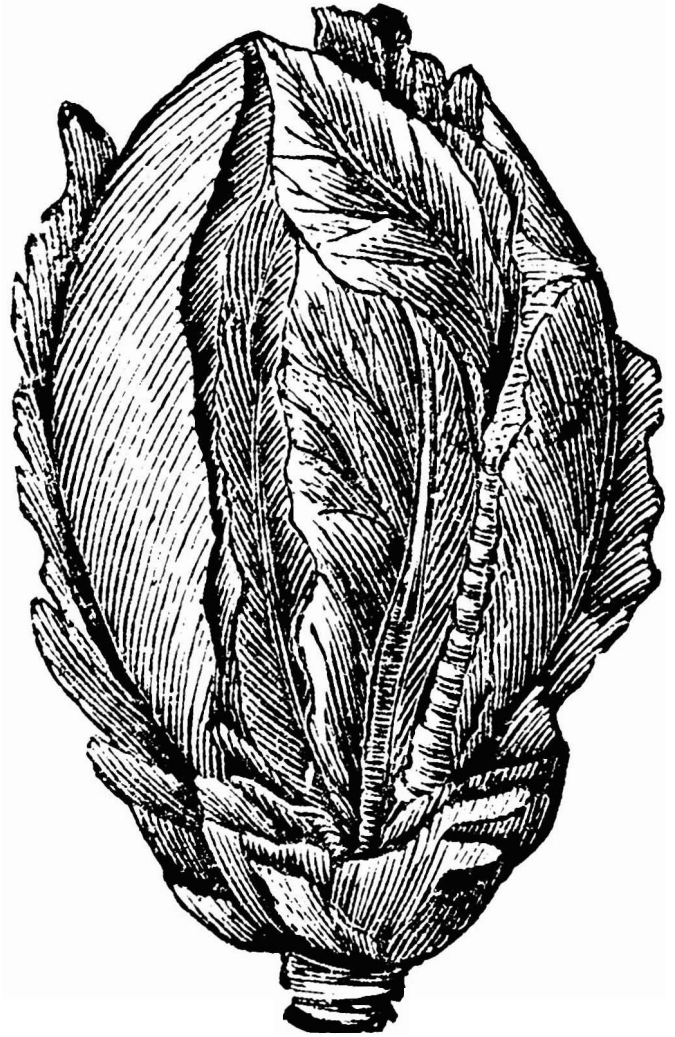
Cos or romaine lettuce forms an erect, compact rosette of elongated leaves. It is believed that this type of lettuce developed in southern Europe.

Green Boston (Green Tennis Ball). Tennis Ball was an old variety grown before 1830. Green Boston is a more modern variety descended from Tennis Ball.

“Young plants very deep green. . . . Mature plants eight to ten inches in diameter, of a peculiar deep, almost glaucous green, compact; outer leaves slightly waved, nearly smooth. . . . head well defined, roundish, solid when grown in cool weather” (10).

Parris White Cos. A variety planted in America by 1800.

“Cos lettuces [are] all very celebrated in Europe. . . . A fine variety, grown strong and upright, very crisp, and one of the best of the Cos” (4).



LETTUCE WITH GRAVY

Take fresh-gathered lettuce, wash and rinse it, mince it fine, put it in the saucepan with some good gravy, and stew ten minutes. Add a bit of butter and a little salt.

The American Practical Cookery-Book, 1859, p. 94

Onions

Onions originated in Asia and the land around the eastern Mediterranean. They were grown extensively by the Egyptians, and by the first century many forms were well known: long, flat, or round; red, yellow, or white; and strong or mild. Onions were grown across Europe and introduced into America by the earliest colonists.

Red Wethersfield. A variety bred in the Connecticut River Valley about 1800. It was a popular variety that kept well and could be shipped long distances.

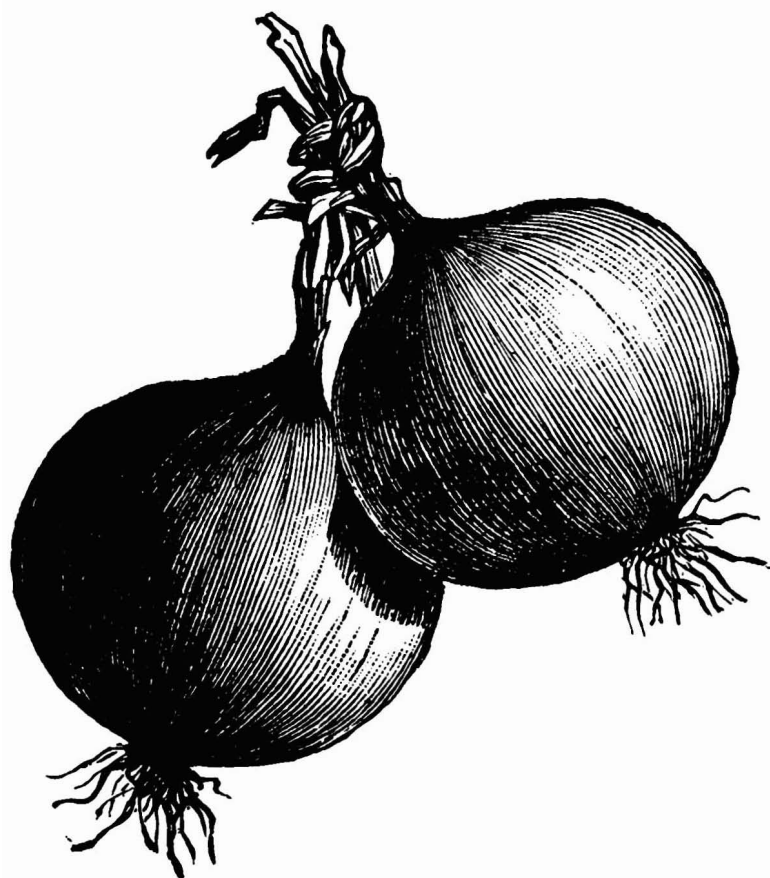
“It attains a large size—color dark red, rounding in shape, and has good keeping qualities” (12).

Southport Yellow Globe. An old variety developed before 1835 in Southport, Connecticut.

“Bulb spherical, or very slightly oblate . . . color light yellowish brown; inner coats pure white or faintly tinged green in the upper half; well developed samples 3 inches in diameter . . . bulb firm, keeps well; very productive and of excellent quality” (11).

White Portugal or White Silverskin. An old European variety that was grown in America before 1800.

“The leading ‘white’ variety. Does not keep well . . . Bulb round, broad, and flat; skin silvery white, sometimes tinged with pink” (1).



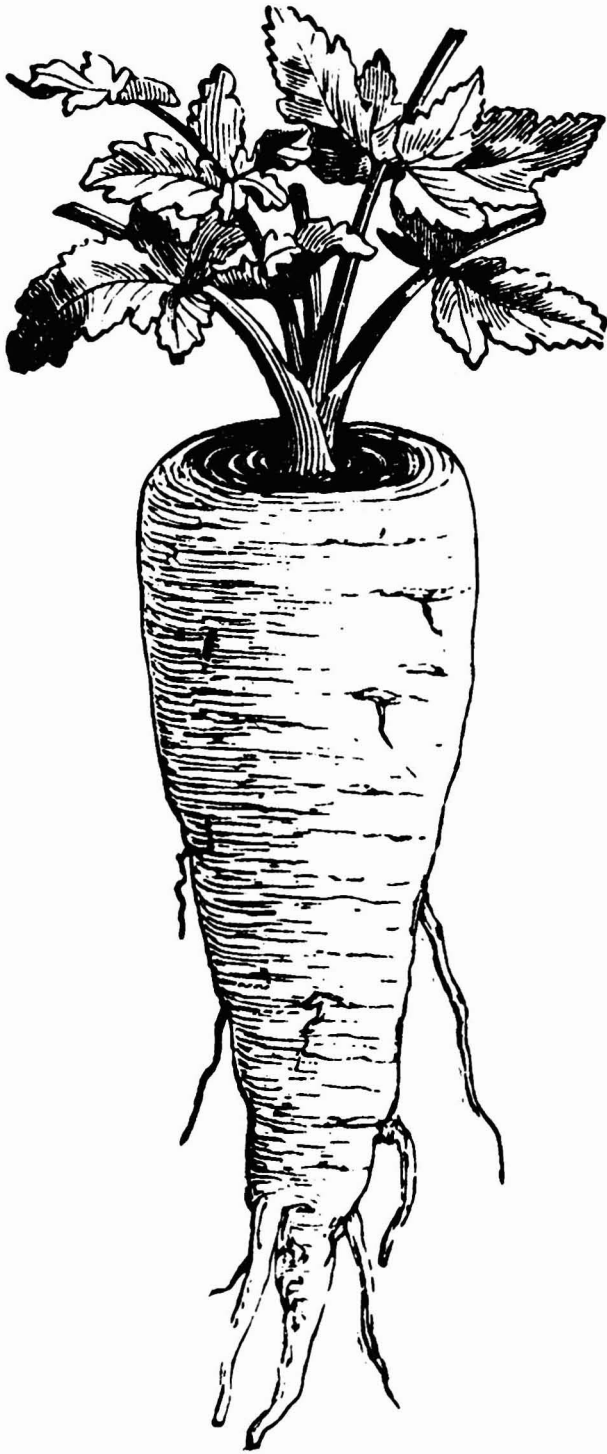
ONIONS STEWED

The large Portugal onions are the best. Take off the topcoats of half a dozen of these (taking care not to cut off the tops or tails too near, or the onions will go to pieces) and put them into a stewpan broad enough to hold them without laying them atop of one another, and just cover them with a good broth. Put them over a slow fire, and let them simmer about two hours; when you dish them, turn them upside down, and pour the sauce over.
The Cook's Own Book, 1833, p. 125.

ONION SAUCE

The onions must be peeled, and then boiled till they are tender; then squeeze the water from them; chop them, and add to them butter that has been melted rich and smooth, with a little good milk instead of water; give it one boil, and serve it for boiled rabbits, partridges, or knuckle or veal, or roast mutton. A turnip boiled with onion draws out their strength.
The Housekeeper's Book, 1837, p. 121

Parsnips



The parsnip, a close relative to the carrot, is probably native to the eastern Mediterranean area. Wild parsnips were eaten by the Greeks and Romans, who believed they also had medicinal value. By the sixteenth century, parsnips were a common European vegetable and a staple of the poorer people. They were grown in Virginia in 1609 and in Massachusetts 20 years later. The Indians readily adopted the crop, and when General Sullivan's troops marched through western New York in 1779, parsnips were found growing in the Iroquois villages. **Hollow Crown.** A variety grown before 1850.

"This is the best variety for garden culture" (4).

"Roots handsome, and very clean-skinned; crown depressed or hollow" (6).

PARSNIPS AND CARROTS

Parsnips and carrots must be split, or else the outside is done too much before the inside is cooked sufficiently. Salt and water, and boil them when young half an hour, and two hours when old. Boil enough to have some to slice and dry for the next day's dinner or breakfast, as they are much the best cooked in this way.
Miss Beecher's Domestic Receipt Book, 1846, p. 75.

FRICASSEE OF PARSNIPS

Boil a few parsnips in milk until they are soft; then cut them lengthwise into bits two or three inches long, and simmer in a white sauce, made of two spoonfuls of broth and half a cupful of cream, a bit of butter, some flour and salt.

A Manual of Homeopathic Cookery, 1846, p. 88.

Peas

Garden or English peas originated in the area of northwest India and Afghanistan. There are two major groups:

- Shelling peas—only the berry is eaten,
- Edible podded or sugar peas—the entire pod is eaten.

Before the mid-seventeenth century, peas were grown almost exclusively for the dried seed. However, during the latter part of the seventeenth century, fresh green peas became the rage of the French court and soon were a popular garden vegetable. High-sugar, wrinkled-seeded varieties came into common use at this time, replacing the older smooth-seeded, starchy peas. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, Thomas Knight, an Englishman, started to breed wrinkled-seeded peas, and by 1800 Knight's Wrinkled Marrow peas (a series of varieties) were very popular. Modern garden peas are largely descended from Knight's varieties.

All peas probably had long vines until about 1700, when semi-dwarf types emerged. True dwarf varieties, common today, probably did not develop until as late as 1850.

Peas were introduced into North America by the first colonists. The Indians quickly adopted the crop and grew it widely.

Alaska. An American variety developed

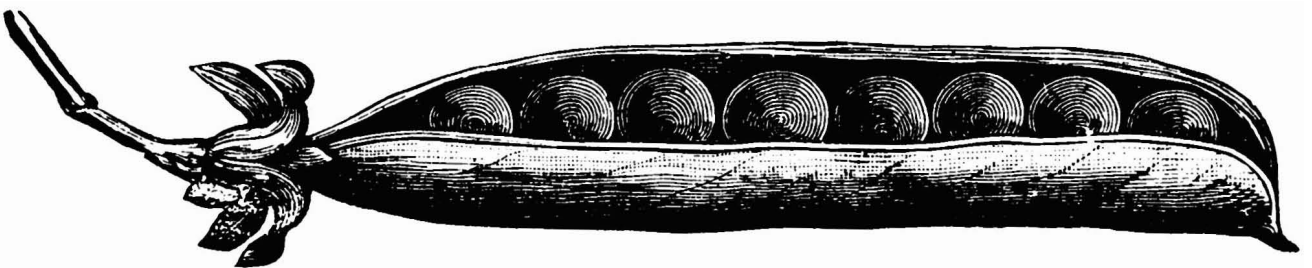
about 1880 and descended from the older variety Nonpareil. The dried seed is smooth and starchy.

“Foliage abundant, medium green color . . . flowers cream white, usually borne singly . . . The light green pods are from 2 to 2¾ inches long . . . They contain from 5 to 7 peas and hold their freshness moderately well. The peas . . . are smooth, round, and light green to whitish green in color. They are of excellent canning quality” (7).

Alderman. This pea was developed late in the nineteenth century. It has large wrinkled seeds, green to cream color. Its characteristics are similar to the once popular variety Champion of England, which was grown in the United States by 1850.

Dwarf Sugar. (White- or purple-flowered.) The pods of this variety lack the fibrous, inner, parchmentlike lining found in most peas. Thus the entire pod can be eaten, but they should be consumed while they are quite young. Sugar peas are known to have been eaten as early as 1536.

“These varieties (Tall and Dwarf Sugar) are excellent to use in the green state, in the same way as string beans, retaining almost the identical flavor of the pea . . . As the name implies (they are) particularly sweet” (9).



Potatoes

PEAS SOUP, OLD

Put a pound and a half of split peas on in four quarts of water, with roast beef or mutton bones, and a ham bone, two heads of celery, and four onions, let them boil till the peas be sufficiently soft to pulp through a sieve, strain it, put it into the pot with pepper and salt, and boil it nearly an hour. Two or three handfuls of spinach, well washed and cut a little, added when the soup is strained, is a great improvement; and in the summer young green peas in place of the spinach. A teaspoonful of celery seed, or essence of celery, if celery is not to be had.

The Cook's Own Book, 1833, p. 210.

COOKING POTATOES

Select the potatoes you desire for dinner the day previous; pare them, and throw them into cold water, and let them stand three or four hours; then at a proper time before dinner, put them into boiling water; and when they have sufficiently boiled, turn off all the water, leave off the cover, and hang them over the fire to dry. When the steam has passed off, they will be in the best possible condition for eating. By this mode, potatoes even of the watery and inferior quality become mealy and good.

The Economical Housekeeper, 1845, p. 61.

POTATO SOUP WITHOUT MEAT

Take four large mealy potatoes, peel and cut them into small slices, boil them in three pints of water until tender, and then pulp them through a cullender; add a small piece of butter and a little salt, and just before the soup is served two spoonfuls of good cream. The soup should not be allowed to boil after the cream has been put into it.

A Manual of Homoeopathic Cookery, 1846, p. 36.

A BAKED POTATO PUDDING

Mix twelve ounces of potatoes boiled, skimmed and mashed, 1 oz. of suet, quarter of a pint of milk, and 1 oz. of cheese grated fine; add as much boiling water as is necessary to produce a due consistence and bake it in a earthen pan.

MacKenzie's Universal Receipt Book, p. 170.

Potatoes originated in the Andes Mountains of South America. The plant was depicted on pottery by early people of Peru before the third century. European explorers first introduced the potato into Spain by the sixteenth century. Potatoes eventually became a favorite food crop of the Irish who introduced it into Londonderry, New Hampshire, in 1719.

Lady Finger. An old German variety brought to America by early German immigrants. Widely grown before 1850.

"The Lady Finger is esteemed for baking; an elegant variety, and might be considered a fancy potato" (5).

Seed of at least three other older potato varieties is still available:

Irish Cobbler (1876). "Tubers nearly round, large; skin russet, finely netted; flesh white . . . Extra Early" (13).

Green Mountain (1885). "Foliage heavy; tubers large, short-oblong to oblong, broad, flattened; skin creamy white to buff white, occasionally splashed with russet toward the end, generally well netted" (13).

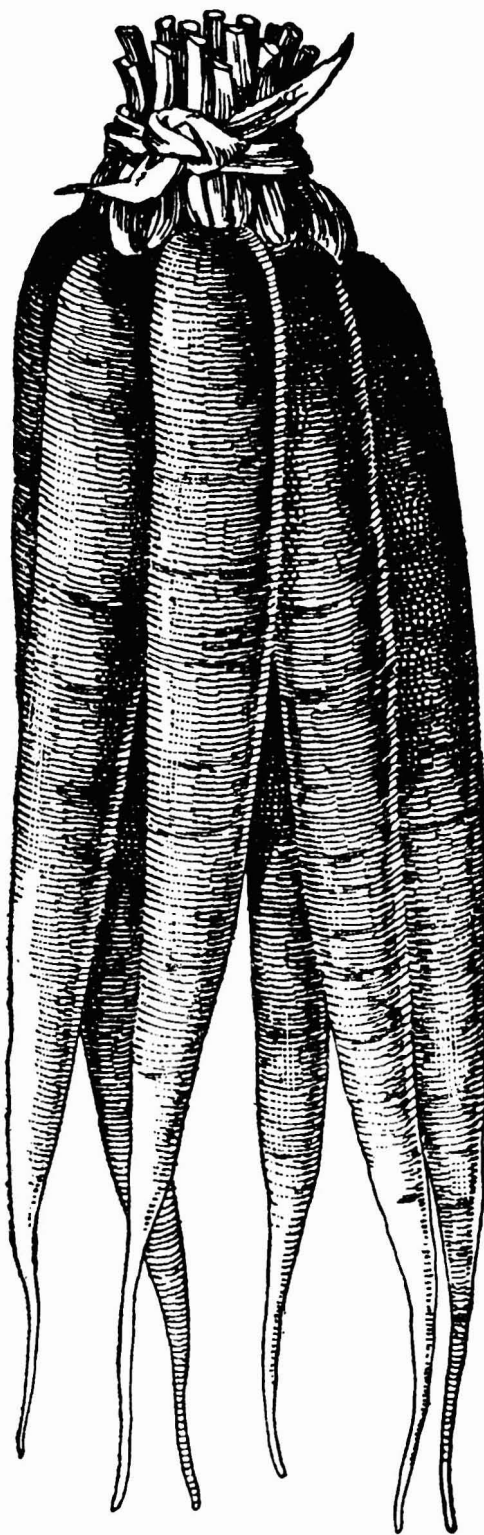
Russet Burbank (1876). "In quality it is firm, fine grained, of excellent flavor. Tubers large, long, round; skin is very deeply netted or russeted, white. Medium late" (13).



RADISHES IN BROTH

Take some young radishes, pick and scald them, cut them into halves or quarters according to their size, and boil them with a slice of bacon in some stock. In a little time take them out, drain, put them into another stew-pan, with consomme, or veal gravy, and a bit of butter rolled in flour. Let them stew gently in this till they are flavored, of good color, and the sauce pretty thick; then serve them.

The Cook's Own Book, 1833, p. 172



Radishes

Radishes were eaten by the ancients of China, Japan, and the area around the eastern Mediterranean. Nearly 2,000 years ago, Roman writers described various kinds of radishes: small- and large-rooted, long and round, sharp and mild. Large-rooted types were grown commonly across northern Europe during the Middle Ages, but small-rooted varieties were probably not grown in that area until the sixteenth century. Radishes were planted in Haiti before 1565 and in Massachusetts as early as 1629.

Long Scarlet. A spring or summer variety that was introduced shortly after 1850.

“Root long, a considerable portion growing above the surface of the ground, outside of a beautiful, deep pink color, becoming paler towards the lower extremity; flesh white, transparent, crisp and of good flavor” (2).

French Breakfast. A spring or summer variety that was introduced in about 1879.

“Root obovate (olive shaped), growing $\frac{1}{3}$ or more out of the ground; deep red except toward the tap root, where it shades abruptly to white; well developed samples 2 inches long . . . Flesh white . . . very tender, moderately piquant . . . Very early” (11).

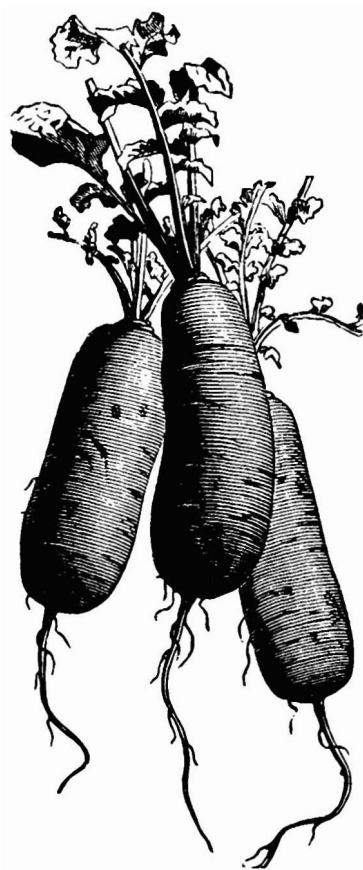
China Rose or Rose-Colored Chinese. A large-rooted variety planted in midsummer,

harvested in late fall, and stored for winter use. Introduced in the U.S. about 1850.

“A valuable variety; color pink or rose; skin smooth; of sharp but agreeable flavor. Keeps as well as any” (9).

Black Spanish. An old radish variety that probably was brought to America by the early colonists. Grown for fall and winter use.

“A winter radish of very large size, turnip form. It should be sown in August and September, lifted in October or November, and stored in sand in the cellar for supplying the table in winter” (4).



Squash and Pumpkin

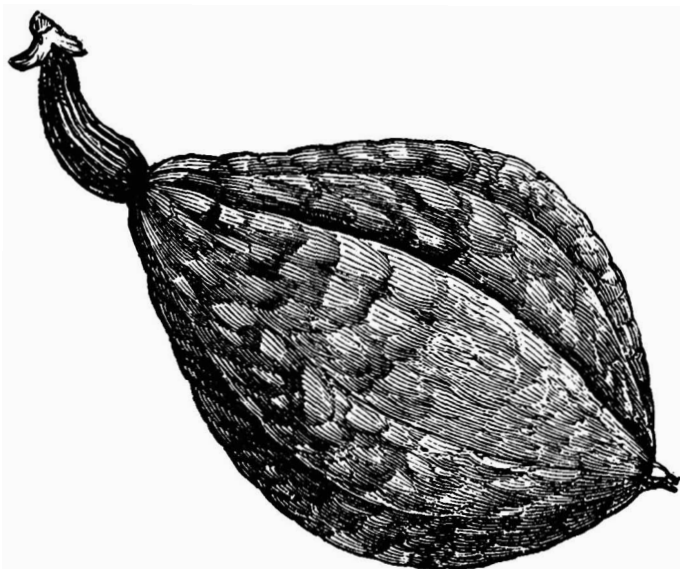
Squash and pumpkin are native to the New World, and the Indians of both North and South America used them extensively for food.

Summer Crookneck or Warty Crookneck. A bush variety of squash that is listed in the earliest garden seed catalogs and probably was grown in the eighteenth century.

“An old favorite variety for summer use. The vines are compact and bear abundantly. The fruit is yellow, covered thickly with warty excrescences, and grows eight or nine inches long” (12).



EARLY BUSH SCOLLOP SQUASH



BOSTON MARROW

White Bush Scallop or White Patty-Pan.

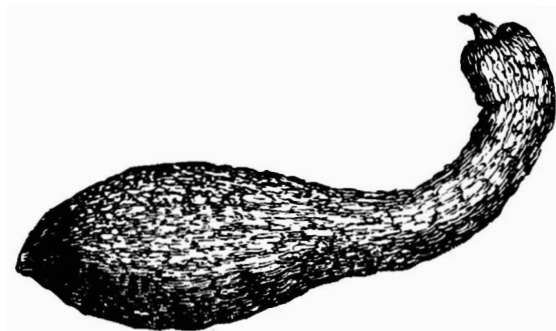
A summer variety of squash with a bush growth habit, believed to have been grown by the North American Indians. The variety was described as early as 1722.

“From its dwarf habit and productiveness is preferred for early crops. It is of a yellowish white color, round and pan-shaped. Many acres of them are grown for our markets” (4).

Boston Marrow. A winter squash probably introduced from South America by an American sea captain early in the nineteenth century.

“A popular variety for fall and winter use. With careful treatment it can be kept until the first of January. The color of the flesh is orange, it is of a fine grain, and cooks as dry as a potato” (12).

Green Hubbard. Introduced in 1857 by the seedsman James Gregory, who obtained seeds from a Mrs. Hubbard. Probably the variety was brought to New England from South America around 1800.



EARLY CROOKNECK SQUASH

“This is a fall and winter variety equal, if not superior, in quality to the Boston Marrow. The skin being very hard, it keeps better. With care it can be kept until May. It is a good variety for the garden” (12).

Connecticut Field. Pumpkins were important items in the diet of the Indians living in the northeastern part of what is now the United States. The earliest colonists adopted the pumpkin as a source of food and later grew it extensively for livestock feed. This variety is probably typical of pumpkins grown by the Indians.

“A large, yellow field variety, not unlike the Common Yellow in form but with a softer skin or shell. One of the best for cultivating for stock” (3).

“They are used extensively for pies. They are generally planted among corn” (12).

DRIED PUMPKIN

Boil and sift the pumpkin, spread it out thin on tin plates, and dry hard in a warm oven. It will keep good the year round; when wanted for use, it may be soaked in milk.

The Economical Housekeeper, 1845, p. 42

PUMPKIN PIE

Take out the seeds and pare the pumpkin; stew, and strain it through a coarse sieve. Take two quarts of scalded milk and eight eggs, and stir your pumpkin into it; sweeten it with sugar or molasses. Salt it, and season with ginger, cinnamon, or grated lemon-peel, to your taste. Bake with a bottom crust. Crackers, bounded fine, are a good substitute for eggs. Less eggs will do.

The Economical Housekeeper, 1845, p. 42.

WINTER SQUASHES

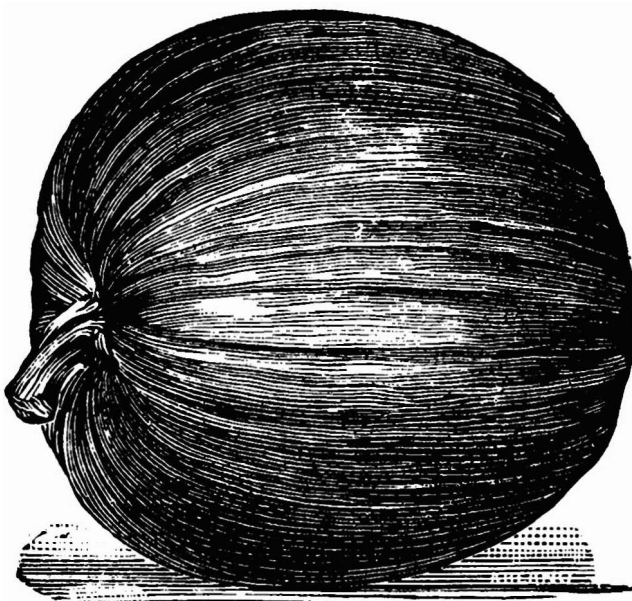
The marrow squash is best, and usually brings a higher price. The neck part of the common winter squash is preferable to the other parts. Cut it in slices, peel it, and boil it in salted water till tender. Draw off the water, wring the squash in a cloth, and add butter, pepper and salt, if to eat with meat.

The American Practical Cookery-Book, 1859, p. 90.

A CROOKNECK OR WINTER SQUASH PUDDING

Core, boil and skin a good squash, and bruise it well; take six large apples, pared, cored, and stewed tender, mix together; add six or seven spoonfuls of dry bread or biscuit, rendered fine as meal, one pint milk or cream, two spoons of rose water, two of wine, five or six eggs beaten and strained, nutmeg, salt and sugar to your taste, one spoon flour, beat all smartly together, bake one hour.

American Cookery, 1812, p. 38.



LARGE FIELD PUMPKIN

Tomato

TOMATOES FRIED (Very nice)

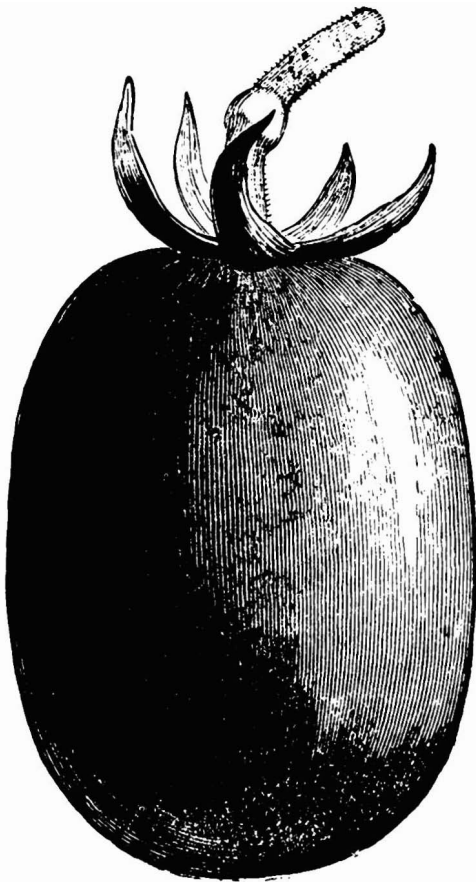
Do not pure them, but cut in slices as an apple; dip in cracker, pounded and sifted; and fry in a little good butter.

Sweet Home Cookbook, 1888, p. 45.

TOMATA CATSUP

Boil tomatas, full ripe, in their juice, to nearly the consistence of a pulp. Pass them through a hair sieve, and add salt to the taste. Aromatize it sufficiently with clove, pepper and nutmeg.

MacKenzie's Universal Receipt Book, p. 176.



The tomato's place of origin is the Peru-Ecuador-Bolivia area of the Andes. By the time the Spanish explorers arrived, tomatoes had been spread across South and Central America; they were a major food crop in Mexico. The Spaniards took tomatoes to Europe, and by 1550 they were being eaten in Spain and Italy. Although tomatoes became a popular food in southern Europe, for many years they were considered poisonous in northern Europe and England, where they were commonly called "love apples".

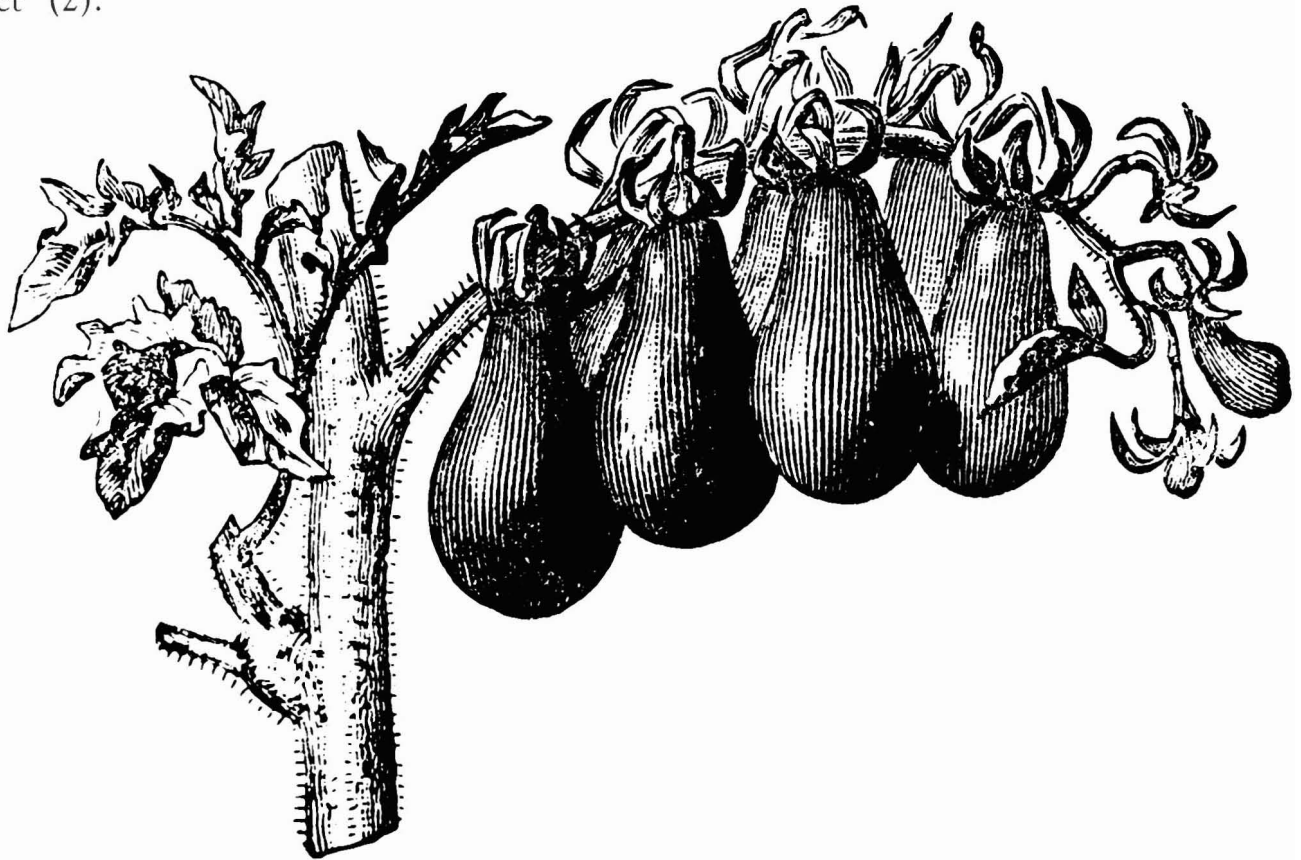
Tomatoes were introduced into the United States during the eighteenth century but were grown only for ornamental purposes. Thomas Jefferson grew tomatoes in 1781, but it was not until after 1830 that the crop was grown to any extent for human food. By mid-century, tomatoes had become quite common and were used in soups, stews, and catsup. They were often pickled. **Ponderosa.** Introduced in 1891 by the seedsman Peter Henderson.

"A large purple fruited variety valued by many home gardeners on account of the few seeds and extremely solid flesh. The quality is excellent but the fruits are ill-shaped" (14). **Red Pear.** Grown before 1850; red and yellow pear types were probably grown by the Indians of Mexico and Central America.

“This variety is of a reddish-pink color, very fleshy, contains fewer seeds than . . . [Large Red and Smooth Red], equally as good for stewing, and preferable for pickling, being more firm and of a better shape” (4).

Yellow Plum. An old variety, in use by 1865 and probably earlier.

“Fruit oval, solid . . . color of its skin is fine clear, transparent yellow. It is used principally for preserving. When the two varieties [Red and Yellow Plums] are inter-mixed, the colors present a fine contrast and a basket of the fruit is quite a beautiful object” (2).



Turnips

Turnips, a native European crop, were important in the diet during the Middle Ages and were grown extensively. The French explorer, Cartier, planted turnips in Canada in 1540, and they were grown in Virginia as early as 1609.

Flat-shaped varieties were commonly grown in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but there were also long, carrot-shaped varieties. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, turnips were grown for livestock as well as for humans.

Purple Top Strap Leaf. An old, popular variety developed before 1865.

“A variety mainly grown for the early crop. . . . It is a firm solid variety, free from sponginess, a very handsome appearance; the lower two thirds of the root is white, while the upper portion has a well defined line of purple” (9).



SOUP—WINTER VEGETABLE

To every gallon of water allow, when cut down very small, a quart of the following vegetables; equal quantities of turnips, carrots, and potatoes, three onions, two heads of celery, and a bunch of sweet herbs; fry them brown in a quarter of a pound of butter, add the water with the salt and pepper, and boil it till reduced to three quarts, and serve it with toasted bread.
The Cook's Own Book, 1833, p. 213.

TURNIPS TO BOIL, YELLOW OR LARGE WHITE

Wash, pare, and throw them into cold water; put them on in boiling water with a little salt, and boil them from two hours or two and a half, drain them in a cullender, put them into a saucepan, and mixing in a bit of butter, with a beater mash them very smoothly, add half a pint of milk, mix it well with the turnips, and make them quite hot before serving. If they are to be served plain, dish them as soon as the water is drained off.
The Cook's Own Book, 1833, p. 228.

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