



# Heirloom: Notes from an Accidental Tomato Farmer

*Tim Stark*

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## Heirloom: Notes from an Accidental Tomato Farmer Tim Stark

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Fourteen years ago, Tim Stark was living in Brooklyn, working days as a management consultant, and writing unpublished short stories by night.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.

## Heirloom: Notes from an Accidental Tomato Farmer Details

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Author : Tim Stark

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## **From Reader Review Heirloom: Notes from an Accidental Tomato Farmer for online ebook**

### **Jennifer Miera says**

I skipped around reading bits and pieces. And though I liked how Stark became a farmer in a rather haphazard fashion, I couldn't stomach parts - like where he needlessly drowns a groundhog after catching it in a humane trap. Put the book down after that one. I know farm life can be harsh, but I guess I've maxed out on reading books on city slicker turned farmer...for now.

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### **Genene Murphy says**

Heirloom is perhaps best served in the hands of obsessed foodies who crave behind-the-scenes tours of small organic farms, beyond what Food & Wine magazine teases. For gardeners, Heirloom is welcome and amusing company of crazy.

Without pretense or rehearsed narrative, Stark recounts his humble initiations into organic farming (and supplying top chefs in NYC), knowing very little about it, other than what his obsessions demand. His misadventures amuse. It's not perfect writing, yet it is exactly those imperfections that endear this find.

Detours from the narrative will surprise and delight. Unexpected passages include how Mennonite neighbors coach Stark in farming, auction etiquette and small engine repair. (The last paragraph in that chapter is especially moving.) And vignettes give depth and color to an unlikely cast of characters who help Stark plant, pick, sell and save his crops. Best of all, Stark unearths a family history that gives context and perhaps motivation to his madness. While it is all true, it reads like fiction, a story that you'll surely recommend and remember.

A fantastic late-summer read and welcome winter remedy for gardening/foody obsessives that crave the first signs of Spring.

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### **Kris says**

This is a good book. Nice story, seems like a crafty and resourceful guy...

That was my partial review before the weekend. I finished the book over the weekend and it turned out to be an excellent read. The stories range from good to really good, but they are all seemingly tied together in the end when he really starts to get into the issue of farmland that seems to be disappearing by the day. i think the revelation of this book, is when he says that you don't see people "knocking down homes to build farms". he also mentions that many of the would be small farms are so expensive now that they really can't be farmed and still make any profit what so ever. Sad really what things are coming to.

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## **David MacTavish says**

Tim Stark is a wannabe writer, who ends up growing tomatoes when a career as a writer just isn't happening. Success at growing tomatoes, and the popularity of the heirloom movement puts Stark in the perfect position to tell us an insiders view of growing and selling heirlooms at farmers markets in NYC. And what do you know, he becomes an author as well. While the book is okay, I think he's probably better at selling heirloom tomatoes than he is at writing. Sure, there are some interesting stories and characters to discover in his book, but it just isn't engaging, you want to be reading a Cherokee Purple, but it tastes more like a Florida fast food slicing tomato. He never goes into the financial details very much, I wouldnt want all my customers knowing how much money I make selling tomatoes either, but it's a must have flavor that's missing from his story.

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## **Ashley says**

Alright. Quick read.

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## **Jen says**

I fell for the pretty cover, but the book itself was uninteresting and did not have a cohesive story.

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## **Rogue Reader says**

Start at the cover and gaze with wonder at the perfect globes of fruit, in all colors of the natural world. Stark's work to reinvent heritage seed is incredible especially as he had no idea what he was doing at first. And then to build relationships with Manhattan chefs and other growers to create a larger heritage agriculture community is amazing. He works so so hard. Wish I could taste his tomatoes.

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## **Blythe says**

I did not finish the book. This is almost unheard of for me to not stick with a book. Not sure what went wrong because it had all the signs of a book I would like; food, cultural and family history, a small business makes good plot. But I never felt pulled in or engaged. Finally I put it down and just stopped.

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## **Jennifer Rilstone says**

I read this book for obvious reasons--obvious to anyone who knows me between the months of March and October. The writing is not great, and I struggled to stay engaged. This is a shame, because he's giving invaluable insight into one of my passions. I can only say that his casual mentions of Taxi ripening earlier than expected, or that amazing Striped German that thrilled me through 2016 like no fruit ever has, made me feel a little less alone in this vast world of people who think tomatoes are red.

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### **Michelle says**

I heard a review of this book on NPR and, as someone who has sometimes daydreamed about becoming something like an "accidental tomato farmer" myself, decided it would be a good book for me to read. It had its moments, but overall was pretty disappointing.

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### **Christina says**

I *liked* Heirloom a lot because I buy 95 percent organic food so I'm impressed with the dedication and hard work it takes to bring produce to a Greenmarket.

Along with Heirloom, I recommend It's a Long Road to a Tomato by Keith Stewart: also a veteran of the Union Square Greenmarket.

The book I'm set to read now is From Farm to Fork by Emeril Lagasse.

I wholeheartedly embrace the locavore's eating plan and I also embrace buying any kind of organic food even it's not always locally grown.

You have to admire a guy who goes from growing tomatoes from his apartment in Brooklyn to setting off for a farm and making it work.

Tim Stark's labor of love and for money and his memoir Heirloom are as rich as the soil, as evergreen as the seasons.

What's not to love about a tale of hard work and devotion to a healthful lifestyle?

Heirloom planted in me the seed to buy organic food. The book deserves an attentive read.

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### **Erika says**

my friend tim wrote this book...its amazing! if you've ever visited me, or even not, you've heard me talk about his tomatoes...its not just about farming, this is an amazing book.

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### **LeAnn says**

I was interested to read this book after I heard about Mr. Stark on NPR. It was an easy read that I mostly enjoyed, but he goes into long stories about other farmers and how they came to be, which wasn't that engaging to me. I would often skip several pages to get back to the story of Mr. Stark and his farm. Also, if you are like me and don't know much about the culinary scene in New York City, it can get dry during those stories as well.

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## **Sarah says**

Tim Stark is a crazy person, I think. But he has a beautiful writing style, and I have nothing but respect for the type of passionate madness that makes someone scratch out a living growing amazing tomatoes. The book is both touching and humorous.

Stark seems to choose his words with the same kind of intuition that lets him pick a ripe tomato at its ideal moment. His writing has a rich fullness that had me reading some passages out loud to myself in appreciation. This book will make you salivate if you have even the slightest appreciation for a really beautiful fresh fruit or vegetable. It reads a bit more like a collection of essays than a book written in one chunk, and a couple of the sections have appeared in other venues, but everything flows very nicely without necessarily being chronological or carefully segued.

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## **J. says**

Tim Stark is living my dream. For the last year, my husband and I have been throwing around the idea of getting a little farm- blueberries though because as much as I love, love, love tomatoes, my last few years of attempts have resulted in either A. Lots of green unripe tomatoes on frostbitten vines, or B. One nice tomato per vine that my baby picks and eats. Tim's success with tomatoes had me wishing I could be "the neighbor" (the real one hates the tomatoes and their messy, disorganized fields.)

I loved reading about the restaurants he provides tomatoes for and the mouth watering creations they serve. He makes having a twenty hour work day worth while if it means feasting on delicious fresh and unique meals through out the delivery route.

I was in sympathy with his dilemma about the groundhog- I always was one to live with a little less production from my garden in exchange for wildlife in my yard. That is, until this spring when a bunch of squirrel hoodlum punks decided to eat the tips of every single bean, pea and sunflower seedling and then uproot the rest of my seedlings in search for seeds I might have hidden from them. And then chewed on every single piece of my brand new five piece wood patio set. I asked my husband to go buy a gun but then found out we actually have a squirrel hunting season where we live and it's not until the winter.

Again his comments about organic farming, the ups and downs, struck a chord. I want my yard to be pesticide free but what do I do about the fire ants that take over, driving out native species of ants and then bite my children when they go out to play.

Overall I actually learned a lot about growing tomatoes and small scale farming. Tim's story added a dose of reality to my dreams of owning a farm some day but didn't turn me off of the idea. In fact it makes me feel confident that I too could turn my dream into a reality.

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