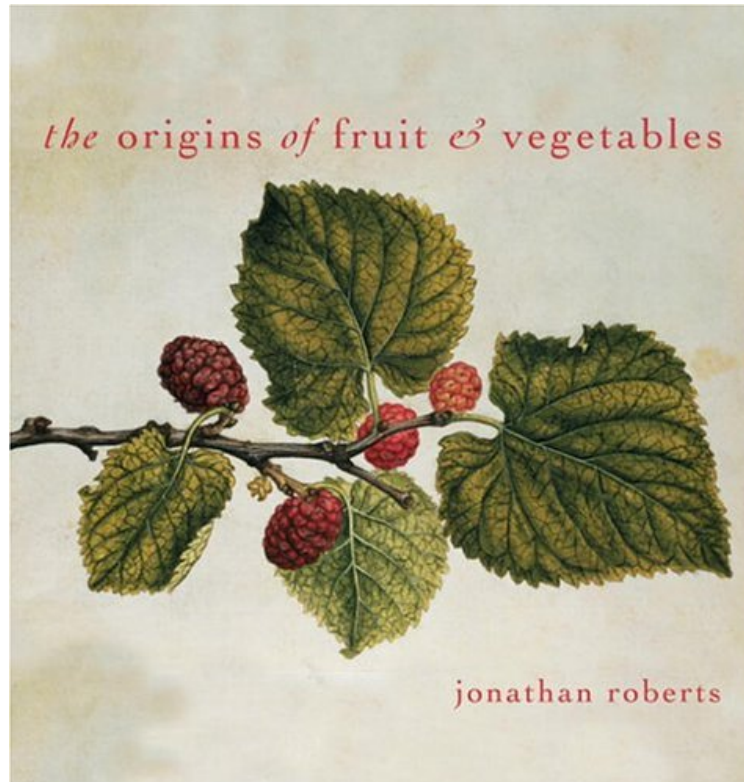


## The Origins of Fruit and Vegetables

*Jonathan Roberts*

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#973495 in Books universe 2001-12-07 2001-12-07Ingredients: Example IngredientsOriginal language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.40 x .90 x 8.00l, .0 #File Name: 0789306565192 pages | File size: 64.Mb

**Jonathan Roberts : The Origins of Fruit and Vegetables** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Origins of Fruit and Vegetables:

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Praise the Lord and pass the Sauce!By Roger McEvelly (the guilty bystander)This book is an excellent overview of the natural history of fruit and vegetables-where they originated, how they have changed and developed over time, and how they have influenced history. The first part details various aspects of our most common fruits (as least 29 main types are discussed), the second part that of vegetables (at least 25).It is interesting to trace the place of origin of our most cherished delicacies. Tomatoes (western South America), potatoes (western South America), strawberries (the modern is a hybrid from a Chilean variety and a Virginian variety), banana (SE Asia), apple (South East Asia and Eurasia), orange (SE Asia), cracked black peppercorns (Southern India), carrots (Eurasia-probably Afghanistan), maize/corn (America-possibly the Andes originally), fermented grapes (Eurasia-possibly even fermented by homo erectus), watermelon (Africa), cucumber (India), pumpkin (Americas), leek (Central Asia), onion (Central Asia), avocardo (modern types come from Central Amercia), lemons (Eastern Himalaya), kiwifruit (Southern China) and many others. Beetroot grows wild near the sea in the Mediterranean. A tomato native to the Galapagos Islands has evolved resistance to seawater, but the seeds must be digested and 'voided' by tortoises-giant ones-before they will germinate. Charles Darwin would have been impressed.Readers might be interested to know that the Romans and Greeks, for example, would have never even

heard of such delights as tomatoes, potatoes, and corn, as these were all native to the Americas. Oranges, which are a cross between a pumello and a mandarin, didn't reach Europe until the Dark Ages, and neither did our modern apple. With increase in trade and exploration over time many subspecies were crossed and produced vigorous hybrids, which in conjunction with selective breeding and vagaries of taste over time, has produced many of the modern forms we see today. It is interesting to note here that not all modern forms are necessarily the best -the Jonathan apple for example, became very popular simply because it is bright red and looks good in the supermarket-but it is not the best eating apple. Another interesting aspect is the carrying of many original types from the east by Islamic ventures, and to the east by Christians and various explorers. Cross-fertilisation thus eventuated by accident. Subsequently, many species were further cross-fertilised with North and South American types after the expansion into the Americas by Europeans after 1492. Not all fruit and veges stand the test of time. The ancestor of the bean appears to have gone extinct, and some apple varieties seem to be going that way, crowded out by the Golden Delicious, and the ever-red Jonathan. Others took a long time to get going-such as the tomatoe. For long its association with the poisonous Mandrake stifled its development in the European Middle Ages. Today it is one of the most versatile and most widespread fruits grown. (It is actually a fruit or berry, rather than a vegetable, as is commonly believed). This book is more than just an excursion into delectable dishes. The nature and origin of fruit and vegetables has profoundly affected culture and history. The potato famine of Europe and Ireland in the 1840s is described, (with at least 1.5 million deaths in Ireland alone, out of a population of 8 million). The development of agriculture in humans thousands of years ago was facilitated by mutant strains of such things as almonds, wheat, peas, and bananas (one of the oldest harvested fruit). Magnificent, and pass me the pepper! Don't underestimate the power of food on primates. Nations have risen and fallen on the vagaries of corn, potatoes, fermented grapes, grain and the like, and their resistance to disease, peoples taste and historical oddities. There are some beautiful paintings, inscriptions, and archeological illustrations throughout, inspired by some of history's greatest artists and cultures. Highly recommended for the lover of food and dining.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good read for the Summer  
By Rosemary Eiden  
I was a Horticulturist for the county where I live. This book had more information about the origins than the Audubon Field Guide that I have. I read about 2-3 fruits per day. That is enough information to feed my mind for the day.  
Definatly a good read for summer.

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Fruits and vegetables in art and history  
By Dennis Littrell  
The origins of food plants is a fascinating subject in its own right while the light it shines on human history is a splendid bonus. Knowing that barley and wheat came from the Fertile Crescent of Mesopotamia in the Middle East helps to explain why civilization first arose there and not somewhere else. Those foods helped to sustain a "surplus" population that could devote itself to the arts and invention, leading to the modern world. Indeed all wealth has as its base the growth and storage of food in excess of that which is needed for the sustenance of the food producers, resulting in non-food producing people who can devote themselves to competing schemes of how to steal the wealth and how to protect it (i.e., war). Looking at the history of art through still life and other works of art centering on fruits and vegetables is also fascinating. Essentially this is what Jonathan Roberts has done in this very attractive, richly illustrated book. To give you some idea of his intent consider pages 122 and 123. On the right-handed page there is a photograph of "Banana Skin c. 1500" from the "Museum of London Evacuations, London Bridge, Southwark, U.K., 1999" showing the black skin of a banana with the obvious import that the banana had already reached the London produce market in c. 1500, just eight years after Columbus's first voyage. Remarkable. Then on the left-handed page there is an image of the oil on canvas painting, "Bananas, 1952" by Lucian Freud, showing an entire stock of bananas still on the tree. Roberts employs a number of famous works such as Van Gogh's "The Potato Eaters" and Botticelli's "Madonna of the Pomegranate" to illustrate the text; indeed there is art work from the Twelfth Egyptian Dynasty through Greek and Roman times to the still lives of the Renaissance to William Hooker, Gauguin, Cezanne, etc., to moderns like Edward Burra and even examples of Russian propaganda art and American advertizing. The text is a little repetitive and there are some boilerplate phrases that appear several times, but there are only a few typos and I noticed no errors of fact (which isn't always the case in books like this: Roberts himself notes copious errors in, for example, Gerard's "Herball" 1597). Still, I think Roberts did a good job of going beyond the normal range of "coffee table" text while not being too technical. What really appeals, though, is the artwork. I enjoyed this book although as always I would like more information; indeed an entire book devoted to each and every fruit and vegetable featured here (there are at least sixty, from apples and avocados and pears to beans, carrots, melons, to peppers both black and red, to pumpkins and zucchini, the latter not mentioned in the text, but there is an unmistakable illustration on page 141)--and more--would be ideal.

Cherry trees, well known in America from the George Washington legend, actually originated in China, but were not domestically cultivated until the first century b.c. in Greece, and are closely related to peaches, plums, and almonds. Fava beans, or broad beans, have been cultivated since at least biblical times. In classical Greece, funerals ended in bean feasts, and beans were used to exorcise haunted houses. Roman high priests were forbidden from eating or even mentioning beans because they were considered so inauspicious. The Scots believed that witches rode around on beanstalks and the Celts held bean feasts to honor the fairies. For the gardener or foodie who wants a little history in

their book diet, *The Origins of Fruit and Vegetables* traces the rich history of more than forty different types of fruit and vegetables. Accompanying this authoritative history are a wealth of illustrations, from ancient maps and Renaissance works of art to botanical illustrations and illuminated manuscripts, from Chinese paintings and American folk art to contemporary photography and graphics. This thoroughly researched and highly accessible book contains Latin names of the fruits and vegetables, historical information on when the item first appeared, its country of origin, its first recorded use, and even classical and biblical literary references. It also includes information about the medicinal and nutritional properties of the profiled fruits and vegetables, and how these properties were first discovered. Beautifully designed and illustrated, *The Origins of Fruit and Vegetables* will appeal to anyone who enjoys art, history, and food.

From Publishers Weekly Botanical engravings, Dutch still lifes, paintings by Renaissance and modernist masters and 16th-century altar cloths illustrate this beautifully designed investigation of the provenance of our produce. Jonathan Roberts, a former Scotland trout farmer, economically and elegantly details how kiwifruit hailed from China (its Chinese name was "monkey-peach"); how preserved "garlands of celery" decorate 3,000 year-old Egyptian mummies; and how the eggplant is the sole edible member of the nightshade family (which includes tomatoes) originating outside the New World. *The Origins of Fruit Vegetables* is as lush as a summer garden, and as hard to resist. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. About the Author Jonathan Roberts is a farmer and writer living on a hill farm in Dorset, southwest England. He farmed trout in Scotland for twenty-three years before moving to his current home. He has written for *Country Life* and *Reader's Digest*, and is currently working on a study of John Ray, the seventeenth-century Cambridge botanist.