



**Kevin Milaeger**

*Milaeger's*

## 2019 Tomatomania Review

Kevin Milaeger

**Tomatomania 2019 was another big success.** Thanks to all of you for participating in the tasting, and helping us select future offerings, based on your preferences. To

gardeners, this year brought some challenges because of the cooler spring and lack of heat in the summer. One seasoned gardener I know says his tomatoes are three weeks behind normal. Because of the late crop, about twenty-five varieties were not available for the taste test. If you are a gardener, you will understand. Fortunately, we still had over eighty varieties for you to try. I think that was plenty---only one guest asked me about a missing variety. As a result of the shortage, you may look at the results of the test



**Tomatomania 2019**

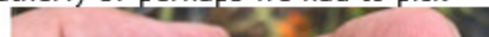


**tomato tasting**

(Again, low production because of the dang weather!) Or perhaps we had to pick fruit that was a little over or under ripe. We

and wonder why your favorite didn't make the list. Old favorites such as 'Wisconsin 55,' 'Brandywine,' and 'Husky Cherry Red,' for example. They weren't bearing the week of the event, so there was nothing we could do. Here are the taste test results ([Cumulative](#) or [Category](#)).

You may also wonder about the poor performance of some varieties. Two notable ones are 'Early Girl' and 'Celebrity.' These are both big sellers every spring so we will continue to offer them despite their poor showing. There could be a number of reasons for their poor results. We may have run out of fruit before the tasting was finished.



have a lot of people involved in this project, and sometimes things slip by. Anyway, each of those two varieties got only one vote. Hard to figure.

The overall winner of the blind taste test was 'Honeycomb,' a sweet, gold/orange cherry tomato. The top vote getters are always cherry or grape tomatoes, so we weren't surprised by this. We will likely have plants of 'Honeycomb' next year, but due to the high seed cost it will only be available in larger pots. Next in line was 'Braveheart,' a large red cherry. It's a compact grower, so it's good for pots. I have one at home and it's under 50" tall, much shorter than, say, 'Jasper,' a red cherry that is over 80" high. In the grape tomato category, 'Valentine' was the top performer. This newcomer has an interesting pedigree and it was discussed in a



**Honeycomb**

previous blog. [Here is a link](#) if you'd like to read about it.



**Ananas Noire**

In the large fruited red tomato category, 'Genuine Hybrid' was number one by a small margin. It was followed by 'Chef's Choice Pink,' a sweeter type. 'Burpee Big Boy,' 'Brandy Man,' and 'BHN589' were the next three finishers. It's hard to imagine that the last variety will ever become popular with a name like that. Apparently, it was bred for use by commercial greenhouse growers, not home gardeners.

I was glad to see my favorite novelty tomato did well. 'Ananas Noire' is a large tomato, mostly green, even when fully ripe. I sometimes suspect that some people don't even try it during the taste test, thinking the green color unappealing. It looks best when sliced. In addition to its being beautiful and tasty, it's very prolific. Many heirloom tomatoes are lacking in productivity. 'Gold Medal' was highest scoring novelty tomato. It's also large, and is mostly yellow with a red sunburst at the blossom end, and a beautifully dazzling red splash in the center of the fruit that is displayed when sliced.



**Gold Medal**

When our guests filled out their tomato ballots, we asked them for comments, to help us improve the event. My favorite was "Thanks for being in Racine." That was heart-warming to hear.





**tomato tasting**