



The Carrot Purple and Other Curious Stories of the Food We Eat (Rowman & Littlefield Studies in Food and Gastronomy)

Joel S. Denker

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How many otherwise well-educated readers know that the familiar orange carrot was once a novelty? It is a little more than 400 years old. Domesticated in Afghanistan in 900 AD, the purple carrot, in fact, was the dominant variety until Dutch gardeners bred the young upstart in the seventeenth century. After surveying paintings from this era in the Louvre and other museums, Dutch agronomist Otto Banga discovered this stunning transformation.

The story of the carrot is just one of the hidden tales this book recounts. Through portraits of a wide range of foods we eat and love, from artichokes to strawberries, *The Carrot Purple* traces the path of foods from obscurity to familiarity. Joel Denker explores how these edible plants were, in diverse settings, invested with new meaning. They acquired not only culinary significance but also ceremonial, medicinal, and economic importance. Foods were variously savored, revered, and reviled.

This entertaining history will enhance the reader's appreciation of a wide array of foods we take for granted. From the carrot to the cabbage, from cinnamon to coffee, from the peanut to the pistachio, the plants, beans, nuts, and spices we eat have little-known stories that are unearthed and served here with relish.

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