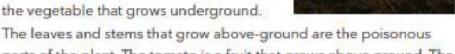


For Europeans, both plants were a novelty, something unknown to grow and display. They were not eaten, however, because most Europeans were convinced these plants would kill them. This is not so strange. Both belong to the Nightshade family of plants, many of which are poisonous. And so are parts of the potato

The part of the potato plant that we eat is the vegetable that grows underground.



parts of the plant. The tomato is a fruit that grows above ground. The fruit is good to eat. It is the tomato plant's vines and leaves that are poisonous.

But two cultures helped change people's minds, turning tomatoes and potatoes into foods loved round the world.

Italy gets the credit for first making the tomato popular in Europe. The Italians began growing and eating tomatoes in the mid-1500s and on, making it a major part of their **diet**. (It still is!) By the 1700s, the tomato had spread around the world.

It took a bit longer for the potato. The people of Ireland, realizing how cheap and easy the potato was to grow, began to depend on it by the late 1700s. By the 1800s, the potato, too, had spread around the world.





and tomato plants.

Potatoes and Tomatoes: From Poisonous to Popular

KEY VOCABULARY

- Andes (proper noun) Andes is the name of a mountain range.
- · region (noun) A region is an area.
- · cultivated (verb) To cultivate is to grow plants for a specific purpose.
- invaded (verb) To invade is to enter and try to take over a place.
- · conquer (verb) To conquer is to take control of.
- diet (noun) Diet is the variety of foods that a group usually eats.
- 1. Describe how potatoes and tomatoes were introduced.
- 2. Think about the most important facts from this passage and summarize what you read.
- 3. If people in Italy and Ireland did not discover that potatoes and tomatoes were safe to eat, how might your life be different?
- 4. Do you think the Conquistadors should have brought tomatoes and potatoe plants back to Europe? Why or why not?
- 5. What is the most interesting fact that you learned from this article?

