Wild Rice

SPRING 2001 GASTRONOMICA

lagniappe | a can of tomatoes and suggested “Tomato” as the name. During the discussion, a young woman happened to look at tomatoes in the general store to decide on a name. It’s said that when a baker, known for his pies, advertised his specialty with a big sign on the highway at this site. Although this small town probably isn’t large enough to have an elite class, one has a keen suspicion of what they would be called if it did. Alas, now there’s no filling or lower crust either, as pies are no longer being sold in Pie Town.

In order to be able to receive mail directly in their own community, the residents of what is now Tomato, AR, gathered in the general store to decide on a name. It’s said that during the discussion, a young woman happened to look at a can of tomatoes and suggested “Tomato” as the name. Local historians have no trouble accepting this story; as far as they are concerned, all of the controversy centers upon who the young woman was.

There are two principal theories on how Chewsville, MD, got its name. The first is that the town was named by Colonel Peregrine Fitzhugh for the Chew family. Fitzhugh was about as close to the family as he could get without being born into it—his wife was a Chew daughter. There are also strong proponents of the theory that “Chew” was a mistaken pronunciation of the name Fitzhugh. If so, one can imagine that the garbled version occurred when someone heard the name Fitzhugh from a person who was talking with their mouth full.

Graw Bone, IN, despite some of the colorful stories one could imagine, seems most likely to be named after the French city of Narbonne.


Food is an important part of a balanced diet.
—Fran Lebowitz

Looks can be deceiving—it’s eating that’s believing.
—James Thurber

Pie Town, NM, got its name because a baker, known for his pies, advertised his specialty with a big sign on the highway at this site. Although this small town probably isn’t large enough to have an elite class, one has a keen suspicion of what they would be called if it did. Alas, now there’s no filling or lower crust either, as pies are no longer being sold in Pie Town.

In order to be able to receive mail directly in their own community, the residents of what is now Tomato, AR, gathered in the general store to decide on a name. It’s said that during the discussion, a young woman happened to look at a can of tomatoes and suggested “Tomato” as the name.