

# CityBites

MARCH/APRIL 2013

TORONTO'S GUIDE TO GREAT FOOD & DRINK



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# Dig these terms

SOME DEFINITIONS TO TAKE TO HEART COME GARDEN PLANNING TIME

It's garden planning time and with that comes a host of confusing words and phrases that can mystify even the most earnest grower who is trying to do the eco-right thing in his or her garden. To help you sort through it all, we've created a mini-glossary of commonly used terms that often cause confusion.

**ORGANIC:** Simply put, organic means something is made of, pertaining to, or derived from living matter. It's alive; or, when

dead, will decompose. In the food world, organic refers to foods grown according to strict standards that encourage the use of natural fertilizers and limit the use of synthetic herbicides and pesticides. These practices promote biological pest control and the use of age-old disease control methods like crop rotation. The goal is to maintain the genetic integrity of plants and animals by avoiding the use of genetically modified organisms (GMO). Before the development of synthetic pesticides and herbicides, all growing was done organically.

**HEIRLOOM:** A solid definition appears on marthastewart.com: "Heirloom vegetables are open-pollinated plants that have been cultivated for at least 50 years. They are often more flavourful, colourful and interesting than hybrids." If variety is the spice of life, then heirloom seeds and plants are spicy.

**OPEN-POLLINATED:** This is a process whereby plants are pollinated through natural means such as by insects, birds or the wind. Many food crops are self-pollinating, which helps to keep the plant and its offspring consistent and predictable, generation after generation.

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**HYBRID:** A hybrid plant is one that has been created through intentional human intervention where two plants with different characteristics are cross-pollinated (bred with each other) in order to combine certain desirable properties. Many hybrids are used in large-scale farming as the plant's behaviour is easier to predict. Hybrids are fine for the backyard garden as well, as long as they are not of a GMO variety.

**GMO (Genetically Modified Organism):** There's a clearly anti-GMO article at [gmo-awareness.com](http://gmo-awareness.com) that states: "Genetic modification is the process of forcing genes from one species into another entirely unrelated species. Unlike cross breeding, which involves two related species and has been done without ill effects for centuries, genetic engineering forcefully breaches the naturally occurring barriers between species, causing both known and unknown/unintended consequences."

Genetically engineered plants were designed by mega-corporations to be pesticide and herbicide tolerant, allowing these companies (Monsanto leads the pack here) to promote the intensive use of synthetic chemicals on the plants, theoretically without negative consequence. Fact is, GMOs are a world of trouble and are leading to the destruction of our soil, poisoning our water, killing the family farm, limiting food crop biodiversity (a huge issue in itself), forcing insects to morph into new "superbugs" that are themselves pesticide resistant... and on and on and on.... GMOs are quickly destabilizing an already unstable food production process. **CB**

Marc Green and Arlene Hazzan Green run *The Backyard Urban Farm Company*. Visit them at [bufco.ca](http://bufco.ca).



**PRIZED POSSESSIONS** Heirloom tomatoes on the porch.

## Mezcal makes its mark

THE SPIRIT OF MEXICO GETS HIPPER

It's becoming tiresome to complain about the lack of interesting spirits available to Torontonians (cue the usual LCBO-bashing), so let's not even go there. Let's begin with the positive. **Fortuna Mezcal** is a new brand of mezcal that landed in Toronto last month (no thanks to the LCBO, which does not stock it yet) at enlightened bars around the city.

And it's good. Real good. Bad news is, if you want it, you'll have to buy a six-bottle case from the good people at On the Case, and you'll have to pay \$79.99 a bottle. Perhaps, once the LCBO gets up to speed, the price will come down a bit, but don't hold your breath.

Mezcal is the hipper, darker cousin of Tequila, favoured by connoisseurs in part because of its bad-ass reputation (artisan farmers, open-fired pits, massive stone crushers, etc.). Engine oil, as an aromatic descriptor, is not used much in the spirits category, but it kind of makes sense with mezcal. Fortuna has a bit of that quality on the nose, but it's so smooth and elegant on the palate you'd hardly notice. (I, for one, love the engine oil quality of mezcal, so Fortuna gives me the best of both worlds.)

The nose also delivers softer notes, some banana and tropical

fruits, bolder citrus, and that unmistakable whiff of cooked agave that makes you go "whoa!". There's a bit of smoke, some earthiness and

just enough funk to keep things interesting. The palate comes through with similar colours, and a long, warm finish that is clean and deliciously exotic.

Fortuna is not only a refined sipper, but has the ass-kick to make a cocktail sit up and take notice. It's pricey, but worth it. What else are you going to spend your cash on, anyway?



**MEZCAL MANIA** Fortuna (\$79.99) makes a smooth entrance.

On the Case, [cpapple@onthecasedistribution.com](mailto:cpapple@onthecasedistribution.com), 647-725-2444.