



# Mr. Tomato's Yummy Ideas

A Full English translation is available.

番茄先生的美味配方

**Author:** Rihsuei **Illustrator:** Shiau Jing Huang **Publisher:** Kang Hsuan Educational Publishing Group

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**Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

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**BFT2.0 Translator:** Michelle Kuo

Little Pine hates eating tomatoes. But when the famous Mr. Tomato hosts a special fan meeting just for her, she discovers the magic of tomatoes in a whole new way!

This playful picture book brings to life the foods children often refuse to eat. With colorful illustrations and empathetic storytelling, it helps young readers explore their own food dislikes. By showing how foods grow and can be prepared, the book turns once-feared foods into friendly, familiar, and even welcome companions at the table.

This book is perfect for families, helping children discover the wonders and joys of fruits and vegetables.



Author **Rihsuei**

Rihsuei enjoys birdwatching and growing plants. Her dream is to live in a home where she can plant enormous trees. She is the author of the picture book *I Don't Want to Eat Broccoli*.



Illustrator **Shiau Jing Huang**

Shiau Jing Huang studied information management in college and worked for several years as a web designer before switching careers to illustration. She primarily creates artwork for children's publications and travel magazines. Her work *The Very Tired Zoo* was selected for the 2nd Kaohsiung Public Library Picture Books Sprouting Awards.

# A Gentle Food Adventure: A Picture Book Inviting Children to Explore, Touch, and Taste Foods They Dislike

by Shan-Chung Yang

At many Asian family tables, a quiet but tense battle often takes place. Parents insist that no food should be left uneaten, while children protest, “I don’t want to eat this!” Parents worry about nutrition and growth, while children feel pressured, overwhelmed, and assaulted by unwanted flavors. This daily conflict is almost universal among Asian households. Food becomes a battleground of emotions, where love, responsibility, control, and rebellion are all wrapped up in a single bite.

According to nutrition experts, children typically need to try a new food 15 to 30 times before their fear begins to fade. In *Mr. Tomato's Yummy Ideas*, the sisters Little Nan and Little Pine represent two extremes: Little Nan loves tomatoes, while Little Pine is terrified of them.

Tomatoes appear everywhere—hidden in salads, placed inside hamburgers, mixed into countless delicious dishes. Their sourness, juiciness, and strange smell make them deeply intimidating for Little Pine.

In this picture book, author Rihsuei gently transforms the typical battles at dinner into a tender, empathetic story. Mr. Tomato does not force children to eat or scold them. Instead, he uses an enlightened approach. He warmly invites Little Nan and Little Pine to his tomato garden and, from harvesting to cooking, he encourages them to join every step of his process. After picking tomatoes, they mix mushrooms, onions, ground meat, and different spices together. They place the mixture inside hollowed-out tomatoes, cover them with cheese, and put them in

the oven. Together, they create delicious “toamto treautres” whose aroma fills the room.

In other words, Mr. Tomato welcomes the children into the cooking process and lets them touch, smell, and participate. Through hands-on involvement and exposure to different forms of preparation, the children gradually overcome their fear of tomatoes. Mr. Tomato succeeds in creating familiarity, curiosity, and trust toward food.

When Little Pine sees the tomatoes in the orchard with her own eyes, touches them with her hands, and becomes part of their transformation through cooking, tomatoes cease to exist as sour, strange-smelling enemies. They become friends—something she can interact with, shape, and understand. Her fear is not argued away; it is acknowledged, softened, and eventually transformed.

The story subtly reminds us that children’s resistance to food is rarely about “being picky” or “disobedient.” Often, there is a specific taste, smell, or texture that triggers discomfort or fear. When adults insist on forcing food into a child’s mouth, the child may feel unheard, misunderstood, and even less willing to try. But when adults take a moment to listen and to understand what lies beneath the refusal, food becomes less of a battlefield and more of a conversation.

So at your next mealtime, pause before pushing your spoon at a reluctant child. Rather than letting conflict erupt, instead try asking them what part of the food feels scary or unpleasant. Consider inviting the child to join the cooking process—washing vegetables, mixing ingredients, or sprinkling a pinch of seasoning. Together, you might discover the magic that makes food delicious, crafting not only a meal but also shared moments of growth, connection, and affection.

*Mr. Tomato's Yummy Ideas* is ultimately a story about empathy, exploration, and transformation. It shows how understanding a child’s fear, inviting participation, and celebrating tiny steps forward can reshape the entire atmosphere of the family table. Through patience and shared creativity, every meal can become an opportunity to rediscover flavors—and to rediscover each other.

*Shan-Chung Yang graduated from the department of history at National Taiwan University and has worked as a teacher and a literary event planner. Born in the subtropical winter of a humid island, she loves the trees and climate of the temperate zone. She is a devoted bear enthusiast, and her life idol is the Adélie penguin.*

A few days later, music drifted out from a lovely tomato garden.

Mr. Tomato donned his favorite suit.

Today was his fan meeting!

He wished to thank his fans for their support.

And, on top of that, he had invited...



“Hello, Mr. Tomato!”  
Little Nan waved to Mr. Tomato.  
Her face lit up with joy,  
like she had just spotted a shooting star.





“Hello,”  
Little Pine said nervously.

“Hi! I’m so happy to see you,  
Little Nan and Little Pine.”  
Mr. Tomato smiled and  
waved back.