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Prevent Plagiarism Day: Promoting Integrity in Work

Prevent Plagiarism Day, observed annually on February 19, emphasizes the importance of originality and ethical practices in academics, media, and professional work. The day serves as a reminder that presenting others' ideas or text as one's own is a serious breach, often carrying legal or academic consequences. It encourages proper citation, paraphrasing, and acknowledgment of sources to uphold integrity. Schools, colleges, and workplaces observe the day through workshops, discussions, and awareness campaigns. By educating students, educators, and professionals on responsible content creation, Prevent Plagiarism Day fosters respect for intellectual property and promotes a culture of honesty and creativity.

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THURSDAY
19 February 2026
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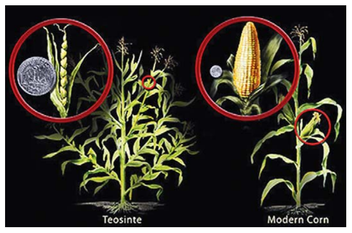
#CHANGED

They Didn't Look the Way They Do Today

Early versions of many common foods looked, tasted, and even grew very differently from their modern forms



The fruits and vegetables we see in markets today are the result of thousands of years of human cultivation and selective breeding. Early versions of many common foods looked, tasted, and even grew very differently from their modern forms. Through careful selection of desirable traits such as size, sweetness, colour, and yield, humans gradually transformed wild plants into the foods we recognize today. Tomatoes, corn, eggplants, carrots, and bananas are excellent examples of how dramatically food has changed over time.

Tomatoes: From Golden Apples to Red Staples

Tomatoes were originally small, yellow or golden in colour and were often referred to as 'golden apples.' Native to South America, early tomatoes resembled berries more than the large, juicy fruits we know today. When first introduced to Europe in the 16th century, they were grown mainly as ornamental plants because many people believed they were poisonous. Over centuries of cultivation, tomatoes were selectively bred for larger size, red colour, and improved flavour, becoming a key ingredient in cuisines worldwide.

Corn: From Wild Grass to Global Crop

Modern corn looks nothing like its ancient ancestor, teosinte, a wild grass native to Mexico. Teosinte had small, hard kernels encased in tough shells and grew in thin, branching stalks. Through thousands of years of selective breeding by early farmers, corn developed larger cobs, softer kernels, and higher yields. Today's corn is one of the most productive and widely grown crops in the world.

Eggplants: Bitter and Spiny Beginnings

Early eggplants were far from the smooth, purple vegetables commonly used today. Ancient varieties were small, round, and often yellow, white, or green, with bitter flesh and even spines on the stems.

Native to South and Southeast Asia, eggplants were gradually bred to reduce bitterness, eliminate spines, and develop the deep purple colour and tender texture favoured in modern cooking.

Carrots: From Purple and White to Orange

Carrots were originally purple, white, or yellow, not orange. Early carrots, first cultivated in Central Asia, were often thin, forked, and less sweet. The familiar orange carrot was developed much later, particularly in Europe, through selective breeding for colour and sweetness. Today, while orange carrots dominate, heirloom varieties in purple, red, and yellow still exist.

Bananas: Seed-Filled and Hard

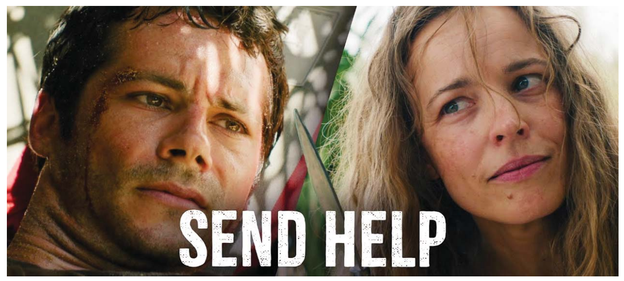
Wild bananas were very different from the soft, sweet, seedless fruit we eat today. Early bananas were filled with large, hard seeds and had very little edible flesh. Through selective breeding and hybridization, seedless varieties with more pulp and sweeter flavour were developed. Modern bananas are sterile and reproduce through cloning, making them uniform in appearance and taste.

Conclusion

The foods we take for granted today are the result of long-term human intervention in nature. Through selective breeding rather than modern genetic engineering, early farmers reshaped wild plants into reliable food sources. Understanding how tomatoes, corn, eggplants, carrots, and bananas have changed over time highlights the deep connection between agriculture, culture, and human innovation.

A Real-Life Robinson Crusoe to a Noblewoman Marooned With Her Lover

Selkirk was rescued by an English vessel called the Duke in 1709. Its captain later noted that while the castaway was overjoyed to be saved, his outlook suggested that perhaps "solitude and retirement from the world is not such an unsufferable state of life as most men imagine." Selkirk's experiences, the captain argued, "may likewise instruct us how much a plain and temperate way of living conduces to the health of the body and the vigor of the mind, both which we are apt to destroy by excess and plenty."



● Verna Mohon

Countless books, movies and television shows chronicle the adventures (or misadventures) of people stranded on remote islands.

Consider, for example, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, the beloved Tom Hanks movie *Cast Away* and the classic 1960s sitcom 'Gilligan's Island.' Now *Send Help*, a new Sam Raimi horror-thriller about a woman (played by Rachel McAdams) stuck with her overbearing boss (Dylan O'Brien) after a plane crash, is set to join the ranks of these survivalist stories. Narratives about deserted islands often depict the ingenuity required to build shelter and acquire food and water, as well as the mental fortitude needed to patiently wait for rescue. Many of these storylines are exaggerated and sensationalized for dramatic effect. Still, the challenge of being pitted against nature, secluded from civilization and forced to live with only the barest essentials taps into themes of resilience and adventure that have always fascinated humans.

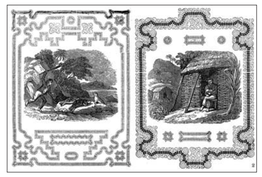
When real-life stories of people somehow surviving on uninhabited islands emerge, the castaways quickly become celebrities. The public wants to know every detail of their experience, especially what it took for them to endure not just a handful of days but sometimes months, years or even decades of isolation. To mark Send Help's release on January 30, read seven stories of people who found themselves stuck on remote islands and learn how they survived long enough to be rescued.

#UNREAL

SEVEN SURVIVALS

1. Alexander Selkirk

It's only fitting to start with Scotsman Alexander Selkirk, whose tale of being marooned for four years and four months on



Más a Tierra, an island 416 miles off the coast of the Chilean mainland, is widely cited as an inspiration for Defoe's 1719 novel, Robinson Crusoe. Born in the fishing village of Fife in 1676, Selkirk reportedly attracted the ire of local church authorities for assaulting his father, his brother and his sister-in-law. Afterward, he decided to leave home, finding work on various ships. One of the vessels was the Cinque Ports, which Selkirk believed was unfit to sail. Upon arriving on Más a Tierra, one of three landmasses that make up the Juan Fernández Islands, in 1704, he boldly proclaimed that he'd rather stay behind than get back onto the leaky ship. Expecting the other sailors to make the same declaration, Selkirk was shocked when the Cinque Ports proceeded to sail off without him. "The ship itself was in poor condition, and he believed it would sink, which indeed it did," Andrew Lambert, a naval historian at King's College London, told National Geographic in 2016. "So, his basis for putting himself ashore was quite sound. The ship sank, and half the crew drowned."

Initially, Selkirk eked out a living with only a musket, a hatchet, a knife, a Bible, a cooking pot, bedding and some clothing left behind by the crew. After mating sea lions on the shore forced him inland, he survived by milking and butchering goats, whose skin he turned into clothing. He also found wild turnips, plants and fruits to supplement his diet. Selkirk was rescued by an English vessel called the Duke in 1709. Its captain later noted that while the castaway was overjoyed to be saved, his outlook suggested that perhaps "solitude and retirement from the world is not such an unsufferable state of life as most men imagine." Selkirk's experiences, the captain argued, "may likewise instruct us how much a plain and temperate way of living conduces to the health of the body and the vigor of the mind, both which we are apt to destroy by excess and plenty." When Selkirk returned to England in 1711, he attracted a great deal of media attention. He eventually sailed to West Africa in hopes of fighting pirates but soon caught a disease, likely yellow fever or typhoid, and died on December 13, 1721.

2. Tongan castaways

In 1966, a real-life parallel to William Golding's 1954 novel, *Lord of the Flies*, captivated the world. In June 1965, six teenage boys had run away from their boarding school in the Polynesian nation of Tonga, stolen a boat and set sail for Fiji. On the night of the group's departure, however, a storm

destroyed the rope they'd used to anchor the vessel, as well as its sail and rudder. Over the next eight days, the boys drifted some 100 miles south. Upon spotting the deserted island of 'Ata, they abandoned their sinking ship and swam to land.

At first, the teens survived on fish, coconuts and birds. Then, they discovered traces of the island's previous inhabitants, who'd been kidnapped and sold into slavery in 1863. These individuals had planted taro and bananas and raised chickens whose descendants still wandered the area a century later.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, slave traders forced tens of thousands of Pacific Islanders to work on cotton and sugar plantations in Fiji and Australia. In some cases, the slave traders kidnapped their victims outright; in others, they employed coercive tactics to lure the islanders into slavery. The onetime residents of 'Ata were victims of this practice, which was known as "blackbirding" because of the slave traders' dark clothing and late-night raids.

The boys built a makeshift house and "started organizing everything in a roster: how to keep the fire, how to say our prayers, along with taking care of the banana palms," recalled Sione Filipe Totau, one of the six boys, in a 2021 interview with Vice. Unlike the characters in Lord of the Flies, Totau added, "We all worked together as though we'd live on the island for a long time." Speaking with the Australian Broadcasting Company in 2020, Tongan storyteller Meleika Gesa-Fatafehi attributed the boys' survival to their Tongan upbringing. "When we find other Tongans, we stick together," she said. "That is very much in our value system, and it's very different to how those fictional boys would have been raised."

In September 1966, Australian fisherman Peter Warner noticed smoke from a fire while sailing past 'Ata, which he knew to be uninhabited. He sailed closer to the island, enabling the castaways to spot his boat. One of the boys swam out and explained the situation. When Warner radioed in the teens' names, the astonished operator replied, "These boys had been given up for dead. Funerals have been held." After a huge celebration to mark the boys' return, Warner hired all six to work on his lobster boat. He remained especially close to Totau, who viewed him as a father figure.

3. Fernão Lopes

Arguably no one on this list was left on their deserted island in a worse state than Fernão Lopes. A Portuguese soldier, Lopes, sailed with his compatriots to India in 1510 and participated in the capture of the port of Goa. Lopes reportedly rode into Goa with Afonso de Albuquerque, the governor of Portuguese India, following a priest who carried a cross and the banner of the Order of Christ. The procession signaled Portugal's ambition to convert India's Hindus and Muslims into Christians.

Lopes, however, did exactly the opposite, converting from Christianity to Islam alongside several of his fellow soldiers. When Albuquerque discovered this betrayal, he chopped off the men's noses, ears, tongues, right hands and left thumbs as punishment. Lopes survived this torture and spent the next several years living in disgrace. It was only in 1516, after Albuquerque's death, that he received a royal pardon and permission to return to Portugal. On the way back home, however, Lopes got off the ship at St. Helena (an uninhabited island 1,210 miles off Africa's west coast) rather than face the reality of being viewed as a traitor in his home country. According to *The Other Exile*, a 2017 biography of Lopes by author A.R. Azzam, St. Helena was home to a "highly nutritious" selection of edible plants and herbs. The island's "shallows also boasted the reclusive but flamboyant angelfish and hundreds of butterfly and goatfish," Azzam wrote. "Fresh water was everywhere, with streams gushing thanks to the almost daily rain."

Lopes remained on St. Helena—the same island where Napoleon Bonaparte would die in exile in 1821—for about 14 years. He eventually returned to Portugal, where he met the king and queen. But the trip was brief, as Lopes was eager to return to St. Helena. He soon made his way back there, this time taking along pigs, chickens and goats. He died on the island in 1545.

4. Philip Ashton

Philip Ashton was near death when he was finally rescued in June 1724 after 16 months of seclusion on an island just off Honduras. It wasn't the first time the young man from Massachusetts had defied death in recent years.

Ashton was fishing near Nova Scotia in June 1722 when pirates led by Edward Low (better known as Ned Low) attacked his boat. Ashton flatly refused to join up, so the pirates kept him captive as they made their way across the Atlantic, attacking ships near Brazil and the coast of Africa.

When the pirates stopped to collect fresh water off Honduras in March 1723, Ashton managed to secure himself a spot on a rowboat headed to shore. Setting foot on land for the first time since his capture, Ashton escaped the pirates' clutches by hiding in the woods. But he had no food or equipment to aid his survival. Despite finding fruit and raw turtle eggs to eat, Ashton started to waste away.

In November 1723, an Englishman on the run from the Spanish canoed to the island, where he encountered Ashton. Although the stranger disappeared after venturing out on a hunting trip, he left behind some supplies, including a knife, tobacco and flint, which enabled Ashton to hunt animals and cook meat. Ashton still had to contend with a fever, the island's intense heat, and threats from wild animals such as snakes and mosquitoes. He also endured constant hunger and fear of an attack by the Spanish. Finally, in June 1724, a British ship docked at the island and saved Ashton. Describing the moment he was finally rescued in a 1726 book about his escapades, Ashton said the sailor who found him "started back, frighted to see such a poor, ragged, lean, wan, forlorn, wild, miserable object so near him, but upon recovering himself, he came and took me by the hand, and we fell to embracing one another, he with surprise and wonder, I with a sort of ecstasy of joy." After his rescue, Ashton returned to his home state, where he died in 1746.

5. Marguerite de la Rocque

The story of Frenchwoman Marguerite de la Rocque's marooning on a Canadian island is one of romance and tragedy.

Little is known of de la Rocque's life prior to 1542, when she joined a relative, the adventurer Jean-François de la Rocque de Roberval, on his journey to the New World. En route to Canada, Roberval learned that de la Rocque had taken a young man on the ship as her lover. Incensed by the couple's actions, the Protestant Roberval left them with de la Rocque's servant on the Isle of Demons, off the coast of Newfoundland. While in exile, de la Rocque gave birth to a child. At some point afterward, both of her adult companions died, as did the child. Now entirely alone, de la Rocque survived by hunting wild animals with firearms given to the castaways by Roberval's departing crew.

One of the main historical accounts of de la Rocque's trials is the *Hemptaméron*, a collection of short stories by French noblewoman Marguerite de Navarre. The text, which was published posthumously in 1558, suggests that de la Rocque "passed the time in reading, contemplation, prayers and orisons, having a cheerful and contented spirit in a body emaciated and half dead." De la Rocque was eventually rescued by passing fishermen. She returned to France, where she became a schoolmistress. The date of her death is unknown, and whether Roberval faced any punishment for deserting her is unclear. He was assassinated in 1560 amid rising tensions between France's Protestant Huguenots and Catholics.

6. Ada Blackjack

Although popular culture tends to associate castaways with tropical islands, Ada Blackjack spent two years stuck on the freezing Wrangel Island, above the Arctic Circle.

In 1921, the young Iñupiat woman set off on a two year expedition from Alaska to Wrangel Island. She was supposed to work as a seamstress, repairing the clothes of the four men she was accompanying on the journey. Although the first year passed without issue, the situation turned dire after the animals, the group relied on for food, disappeared, and the ship hired to pick them up didn't arrive. When the expedition's leader fell ill, the other three men set out for Siberia on foot in search of help. None returned.

Blackjack was left to care for the captain, who died on June 23, 1923. Desperate to be reunited with her son, Bennett, whom she'd placed in an orphanage while she sought work to pay for his tuberculosis treatment, Blackjack survived by fighting off polar bears, catching foxes and shooting birds. She was rescued by a schooner sent to look for the missing expeditioners in August 1923. Upon meeting the rescuers, Blackjack reportedly told them, "There is nobody here but me. I am all alone."

While the press pleaded to hear every detail of Blackjack's story, praising her as a female Robinson Crusoe, the lone survivor of the expedition avoided the attention. Instead, she took Bennett to Seattle to undergo medical treatment. Blackjack died in Palmer, Alaska, in 1983, at age 85.

7. Joseph Rangel

The most recent entry on this list dates to the fall of 2000, when 51-year-old Joseph Rangel and 50-year-old Lorenzo Madrid, both California residents and lifelong friends, joined 24-year-old guide Jose Luis Ramos Garcia on a weeklong fishing trip in the Sea of Cortez. They were initially part of a larger group of 12 people, but one day, Garcia took the two men on a separate excursion in a smaller boat. When the 22-foot-long skiff encountered heavy winds, the trio decided to dock at an island off the coast of Baja California, Mexico. The men made driftwood oars to row themselves to the mainland, but the winds pushed them back to the island before ultimately wrecking the boat. On one occasion, Garcia attempted to swim some 30 miles to safety but turned back after seeing a shark, the *Los Angeles Times* reported in 2000. The trio's food options were limited to crabs, sea snails and sea cucumbers. As time passed, Madrid began to weaken. Eleven days into the ordeal, he died, apparently of dehydration and exposure. Rescuers found the two surviving men less than 48 hours later. When Rangel returned to shore, he criticized the organizers of the trip, suggesting that the skiff lacked adequate safety measures. "A simple radio would have taken care of it, simple safety equipment and a plan if something went wrong," Rangel told the *Associated Press*.

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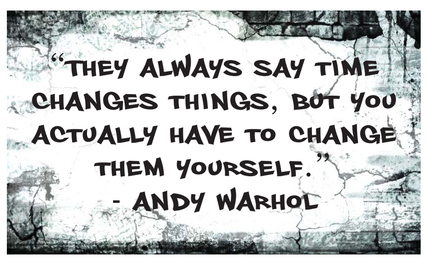
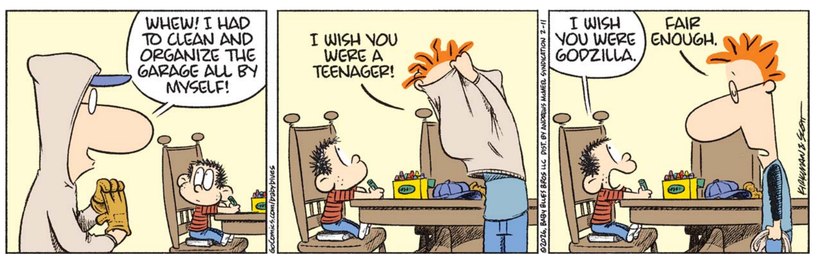
THE WALL



BABY BLUES

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



ZITS

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman