

The Ketchup Dream

BY SOFIA MAGNI

5th GRADE STATE WINNER

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Illustrated by: Inderkum High School

I've been told the same story about my family's history since the day I was born. I listen to the story, but my family doesn't listen to me.





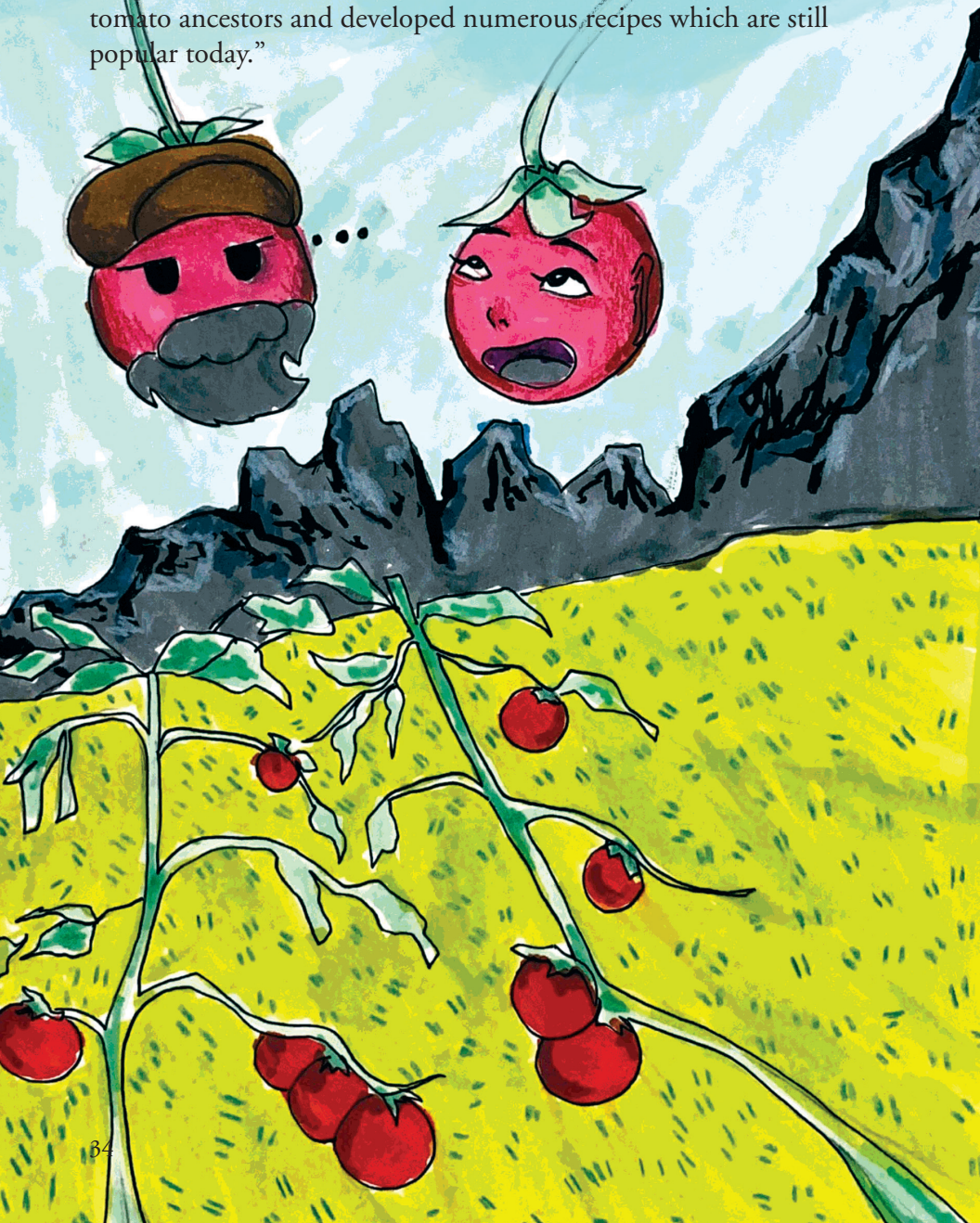
Grandpa always says the same things. He tells me all about where my relatives came from, where they've been, and how we got where we are now. I don't care about those places. The place I want to be is on a big, juicy hamburger.

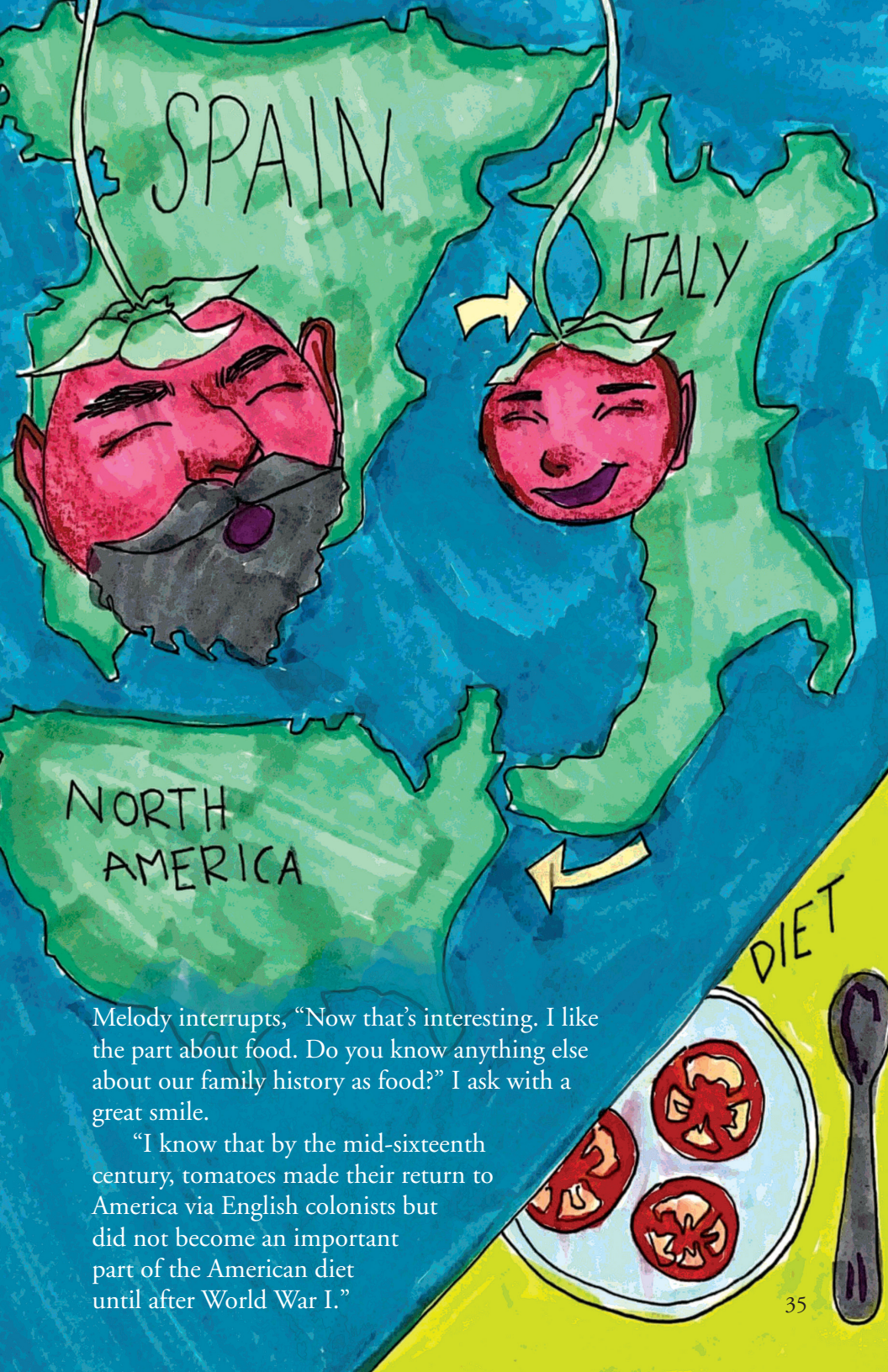
This is how Grandpa tells his story.

"Listen up, Melody. You need to be proud of your tomato heritage. You know, the first tomatoes can be traced to the South American Andes Mountains where they grew wild as cherry-sized berries."

"I know, Grandpa. You've told me before," I say, rolling my eyes.

"Just keep listening, Melody. This is important. We know that padres following the Spanish conquistadors most likely sent the first tomato seeds to Spain in the early 1500s. We gained little attention in Spain, but soon traveled to Italy—a country that embraced our tomato ancestors and developed numerous recipes which are still popular today."





Melody interrupts, “Now that’s interesting. I like the part about food. Do you know anything else about our family history as food?” I ask with a great smile.

“I know that by the mid-sixteenth century, tomatoes made their return to America via English colonists but did not become an important part of the American diet until after World War I.”

"I want to be part of someone's diet today, Grandpa. I want to be the ketchup inside someone's hamburger. Can you help me with that?"

"I want to do what makes you happy, my dear, so I will try to help," Grandpa says.

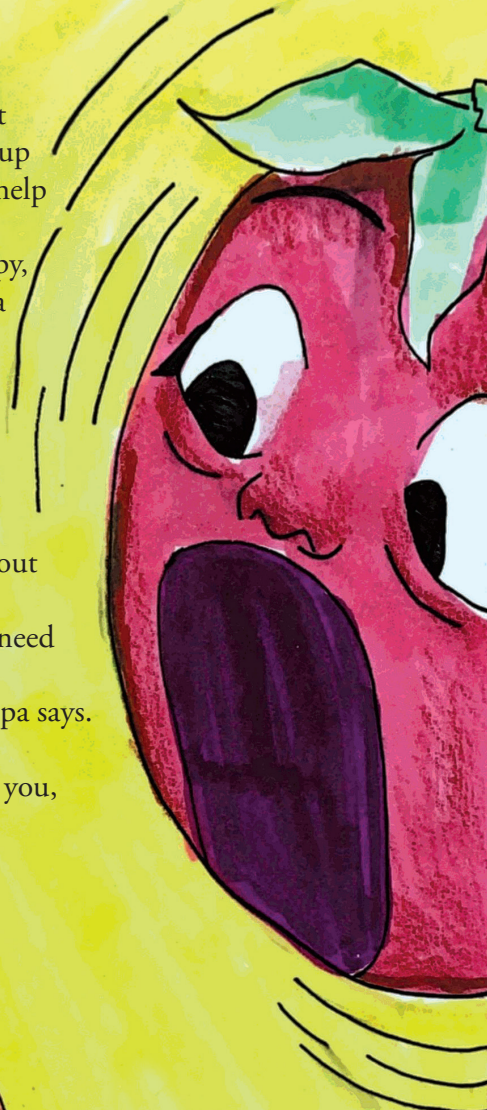
"I can't believe it, Grandpa. Will you actually help?"

"Of course! I will do anything for you," Grandpa says. I feel as if I am on cloud nine. My grandpa is actually listening to the words that are coming out of my mouth.

"Okay, my dear. I have a plan. We need to get you harvested, onto a truck, and delivered to a processing plant," Grandpa says.

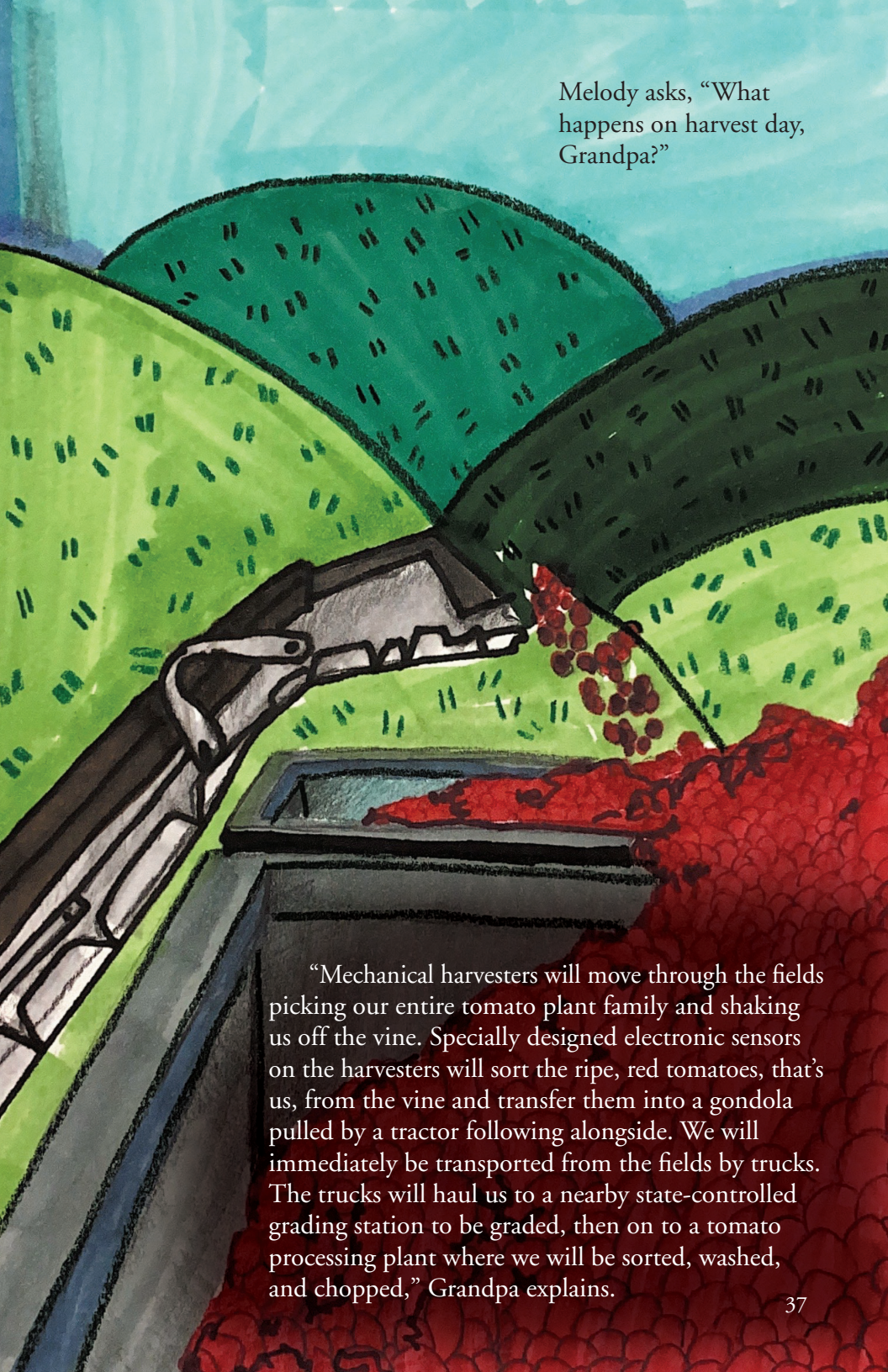
"Okay, I'm ready," I say, cheerfully.

"I am ready too. I will do this with you, Melody," Grandpa says.




"Just imagine Grandpa, how amazing it will be if we get in the same bottle. We could be on the same hamburger together!"

Grandpa replies, "There is no better time. Tomorrow is harvest day."



Melody asks, “What happens on harvest day, Grandpa?”

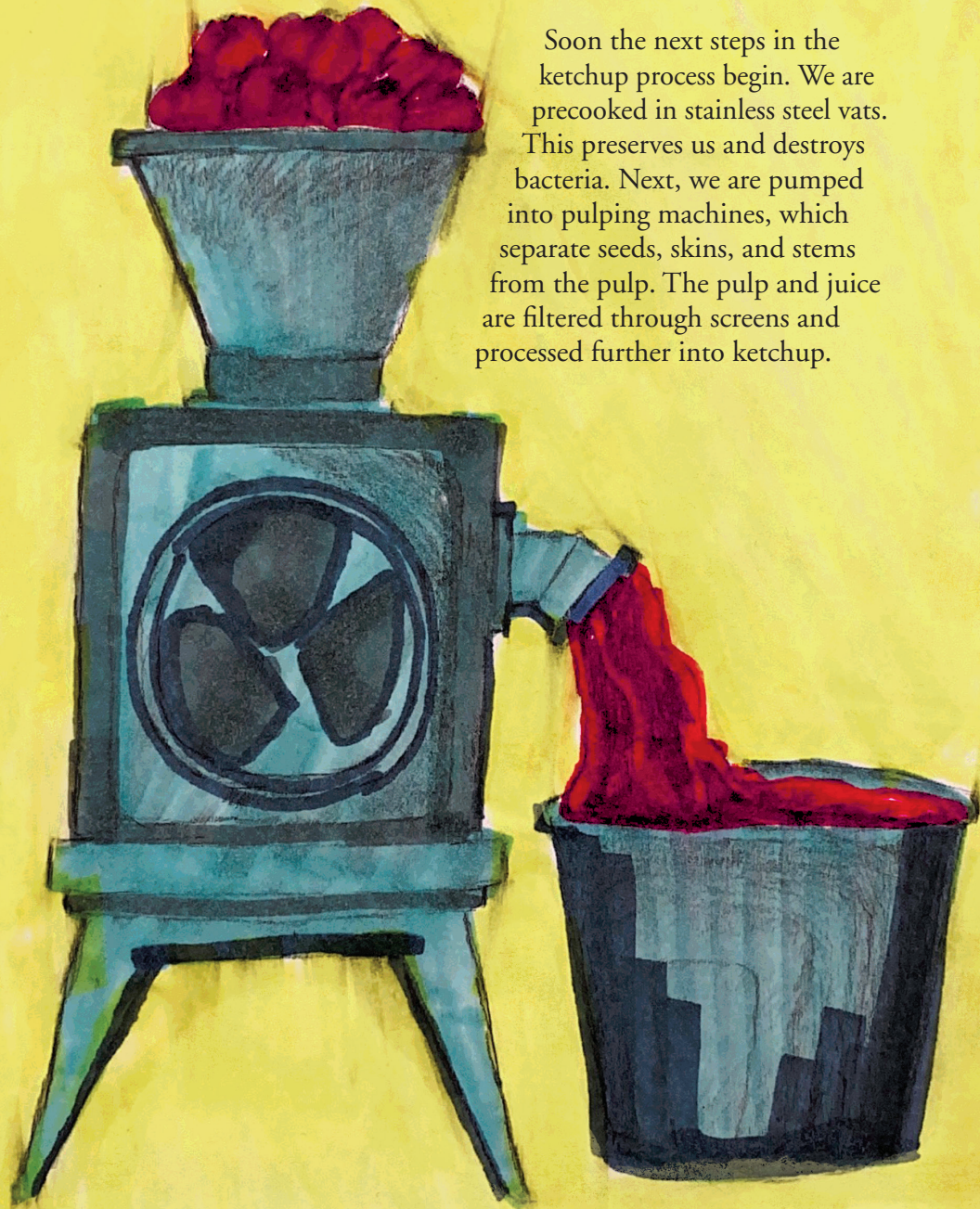
“Mechanical harvesters will move through the fields picking our entire tomato plant family and shaking us off the vine. Specially designed electronic sensors on the harvesters will sort the ripe, red tomatoes, that’s us, from the vine and transfer them into a gondola pulled by a tractor following alongside. We will immediately be transported from the fields by trucks. The trucks will haul us to a nearby state-controlled grading station to be graded, then on to a tomato processing plant where we will be sorted, washed, and chopped,” Grandpa explains.

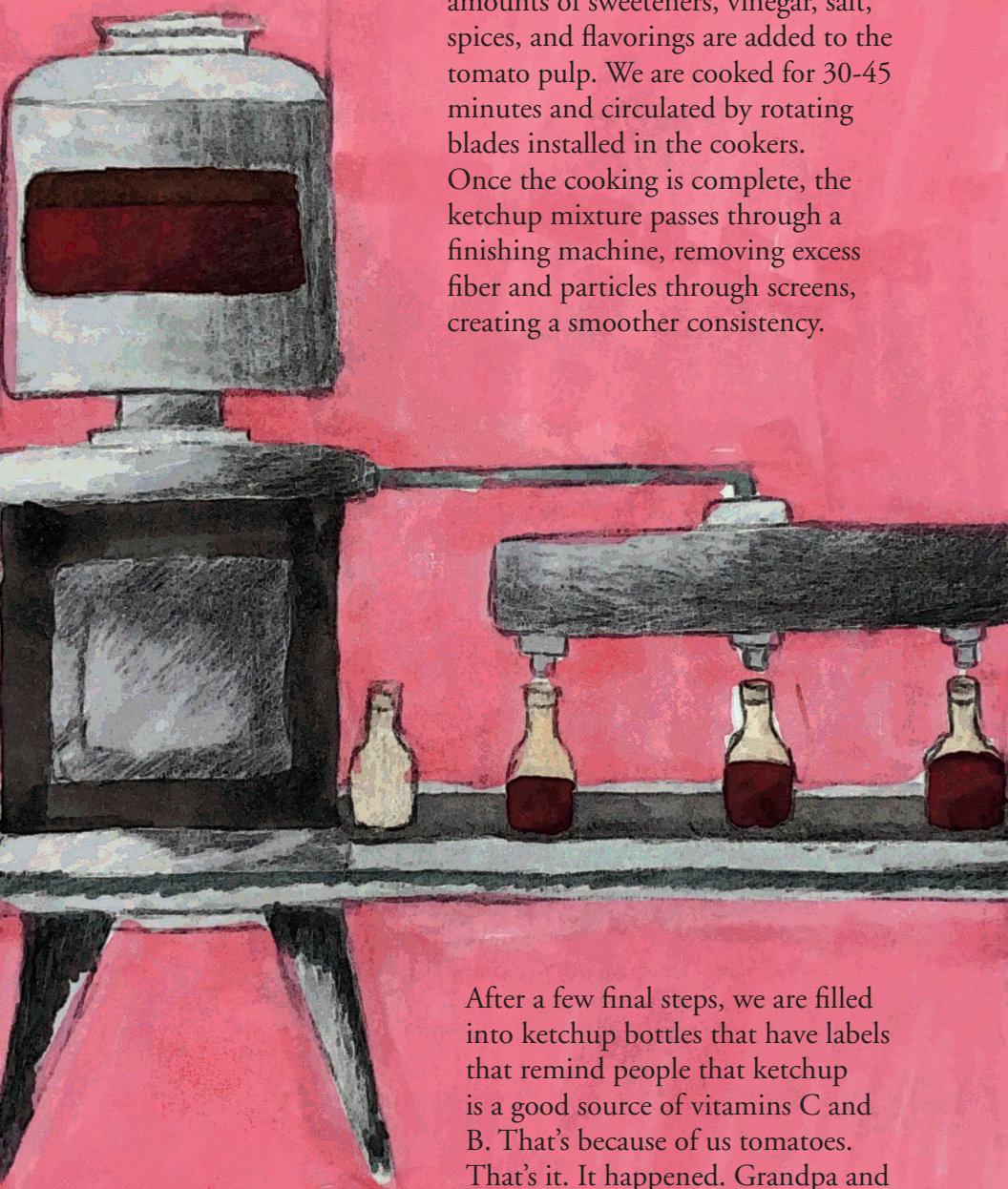


“Wow, that’s so cool. I can’t wait!”
The next day everything happens
just as Grandpa told me. Even
though I have been cut into
pieces, I’m excited because
my dream is coming true.

The entire process of ketchup
manufacturing generally takes two
to three hours, so Grandpa and I
are going to be on a hamburger
sooner than I thought!

Soon the next steps in the ketchup process begin. We are precooked in stainless steel vats. This preserves us and destroys bacteria. Next, we are pumped into pulping machines, which separate seeds, skins, and stems from the pulp. The pulp and juice are filtered through screens and processed further into ketchup.





The pulp is pumped into cooking tanks and heated to boiling. Precise amounts of sweeteners, vinegar, salt, spices, and flavorings are added to the tomato pulp. We are cooked for 30-45 minutes and circulated by rotating blades installed in the cookers.

Once the cooking is complete, the ketchup mixture passes through a finishing machine, removing excess fiber and particles through screens, creating a smoother consistency.

After a few final steps, we are filled into ketchup bottles that have labels that remind people that ketchup is a good source of vitamins C and B. That's because of us tomatoes. That's it. It happened. Grandpa and I are in the same ketchup bottle.



A week later we are at a little girl's birthday party getting poured onto a big, juicy, hamburger. All my dreams have come true.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

≡ Sophia Magni ≡ 10 years old

Everybody has goals and dreams! In contemplating her own aspirations, and those of fellow classmates (often to be in the NFL or MLB) Sofia came up with the idea of *The Ketchup Dream* where a young tomato's goal is to end up on a big, juicy hamburger.

Sofia's favorite part of the writing process is coming up with the character names and giving those characters personalities. Her ultimate hope is that readers are inspired to accomplish their own goals and that they laugh at the jokes she incorporated into the story.

Sofia learned that if she puts her mind to it, she can accomplish her goals. She looks forward to sharing her story with others and is excited to see the illustrations that accompany her story.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATORS

Ayman Aljahwari & Liona Rimando

Inderkum High School | Rachel Rodriguez, Art Teacher

These Inderkum High School seniors know how their ketchup is made! To illustrate *The Ketchup Dream* they started by researching how a tomato gets from field to fork, or as in this story, field to burger. Next came visualizing the different scenes and planning what the tomato characters and the processing machines should look like. The students learned that there are many ways to explain a storyline, but how do you use a drawing to grab the reader's attention? They started with rough sketching and improving the images until they were satisfied. For consistency, one student did the drawings, while the other added the color. They enjoyed reading about a tomato fulfilling her dreams and are eager to see the words and images merged.