



BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) What was American food like in the 18th and 19th centuries? What were the factors that resulted in it slowly changing after the Civil War?
- 2) What motivated Fairchild—a boy from Kansas—to go as long as far as he did?
- 3) Fairchild was always experimenting with ways to pack plants, seeds, and cuttings to stay alive during lengthy voyages on steamships. How would you pack one of your household plants to make sure it survived for two months without any extra water?
- 4) Take a look at the "Fruits of Fairchild" map at the front of the book. What's the most significant one? Why?
- 5) Many people have asked, If Fairchild and his work truly changed our diets, how come we've never heard of him? There are several reasons I give:
 - a) He was a plant scientist in a culture that doesn't often grant celebrity to plant scientists.
 - b) He was constantly traveling, and not in the U.S. to promote his work.
 - c) His work was incremental and moved very slowly. Unlike the invention of the telephone or a light bulb, avocados slowly made their way into the hands of farmers, and then slowly to consumers. There was no single moment to shine the spotlight on Fairchild.

Do you think any of the above reasons are valid? Are there other reasons you see?

- 6) If *The Food Explorer* ever makes it to the screen, who should play Fairchild, Barbour Lathrop, and Marian Fairchild in the (potential) movie?