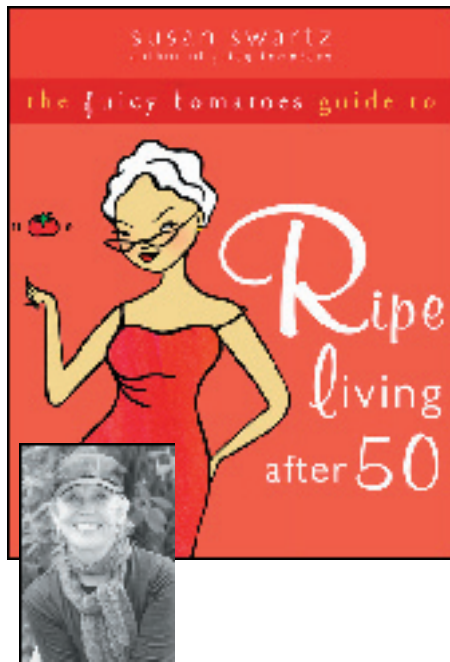


Tales and tips from women with the “ripe stuff”



🍅 *Tomatoes are hardy. They don't require a lot of pampering. A little encouragement and they deliver, even in bad dirt. The riper they get the better they taste. And if you add a bit of salt they really come alive.*

—Susan Swartz

So you wanna be a juicy tomato, eh? Are you strong? Confident? A vibrant, sexy woman over fifty who is living her midlife with style? If so, there's room for you on the vine! Journalist Susan Swartz invites you to celebrate yourself in this powerful follow up to her book *Juicy Tomatoes*.

The Juicy Tomatoes Guide to Ripe Living After 50 chronicles new challenges and new possibilities—a midlife that our grandmothers could only dream of. Artfully blending narrative and affirmation with practical advice on how to make the most of these years, Swartz includes warm and frank discussions on topics like career changes, sexuality, and risk taking at midlife. 🍅

what's so juicy about being over fifty?

Being over fifty is about influence, curiosity, adventure and risk taking. It's about having a lot of tough stuff behind you and having the confidence to take on what's next. It's about being experienced and wise. About shaking off the self-consciousness of youth and flaunting the woman who you've grown into. You've got clout, perspective, connections and choices. You've got juice.

the rise of the juicy tomato

- 🍅 American women now have a life expectancy of 80.1 years
- 🍅 There are 44 million American women age fifty and over
- 🍅 Women over 50 make up 15 percent of the U.S. population

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The Juicy Tomatoes Guide to Ripe Living After 50, by Susan Swartz

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about Susan Swartz



Susan Swartz is an award-winning reporter and columnist with the *Santa Rosa Press Democrat* whose columns on women's issues and societal trends appear in newspapers across the country. Her first book, *Juicy Tomatoes*, was translated in four languages and turned into a stage play and radio performance.

Ms. Swartz lives in Sebastopol, CA. Visit her at www.juicytomatoes.com. 🍅

words from this juicy tomato



With all the talk about a longevity revolution and fifty being the new thirty (and, I suppose, eighty soon becoming the new sixty), getting older has never seemed so young. Juicy Tomatoes already know this.

Juicy Tomatoes is my term for certain women who are full, ripe, luscious, still on the vine, and Juicy Tomatoes is my term for certain women who are full, ripe, luscious, still on the vine, and Juicy Tomatoes past the half-century mark. Even before official sources recognized the changing habits and expectations of people at midlife and beyond, Tomatoes were setting an example.

Now we have the U.S. Census Bureau and other numbers people declaring that Americans are living and working longer, skiing and having babies later than ever, and indulging themselves with cosmetic peels and river rafting trips with their grandkids. American women now have a life expectancy of just over 80 years (actually 80.1), an all-time high. The challenge is to make those 80.1 active, conscious, curious years. For that we need to start practicing right now.

Thanks to the baby boomers, the number of women over fifty continues to swell faster than a forehead on Botox. The time is ripe. If we're going to improve the image of aging, it needs to happen now. That's why when someone reports news about midlife women, I take notes. I collect stories about women of a certain age. I hang out with them. I interview them for my newspaper column. I whoop and holler when I see them portrayed honestly in books and the movies. Credible and funny, smart and thoughtful, they wear their maturity with panache. Oh, sure, they grouse about their brown spots and brain glitches and maybe they have a few regrets about the road not taken, but they're not paralyzed by birthday numbers.

[*Juicy Tomatoes*] established that aging is full of many challenges. What are those lines around my neck? Will I ever have sex again? Can a person die from hot flashes?

This book doesn't dismiss those worries but goes beyond. Here are women who have figured out what they want or need to do next. They have made some pretty interesting discoveries about themselves in their fifties, sixties, and beyond. Isabel Allende says age has given her power.

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words from Susan Swartz (continued)

"I've become a witch," she says. A Midwestern banker says continued passion for her job gives her reason "to put my pantyhose on every morning."

I continued the Juicy Tomatoes moniker because women say it fits. After reading my first book, a hiking group who used to call themselves "Buzzard Bait Broads" renamed themselves the "Juicy Tomatoes." So did a group of women who retreat to a beach house once a year.

We're not alone in our need for encouragement. Women of other cultures apparently share the same issues. My first Juicy Tomatoes book has been translated into Greek, Korean, Portuguese, and German. The German version has its own title that translates to "Old Am Still for a Long Time Not I."

That's true. We have a long way to go. In fact, scientists are now saying that we should be planning for our extended longevity—that instead of measuring aging by how long a person has lived, it makes more sense to consider how many years she can still look forward to. Welcome aboard. This is the spin we were looking for: that there's more to come, lots to do. 🍅

Raves for the Juicy Tomatoes series



"Written with insight, humor, and a 'we're getting older so we may as well enjoy it' spirit, *Juicy Tomatoes* perfectly captures the real issues and essence of midlife for women."

—Susan Evans and Joan Avis,
authors of *The Women Who Broke All the Rules: How the Choices of a Generation Changed Our Lives*

"*Juicy Tomatoes* is one of those books you'll read and then give to all your women friends. It's insightful, optimistic, wise, and yes, funny. Susan Swartz is telling us things we all need to know about ourselves."

—Robin Beeman, author of *A Parallel Life and Other Stories* and *A Minus Tide*

"In reading Susan Swartz's wonderful *Juicy Tomatoes Guide to Ripe Living After 50*, I laughed out loud, recognizing so many of my own internalized myths about the aging process. What a relief to realize that there are so many gutsy and brave women over fifty who have turned life's detours and challenges into grand opportunities through their amazing resourcefulness and creativity..."

—Molly Murphy MacGregor, executive director
and the cofounder of the National Women's History Project

"After reading this second book by Susan, I've realized that not only am I juicy AND ripe, I've been marinating long enough! No more excuses! I'm gonna get out there and LIVE! I would be happy to call any one of the women in this book, 'Sister.' Susan knows how to bring the 'juice' out of each of us!!"

—Dee Adams, creator of Minnie Pauz

"*The Juicy Tomatoes Guide to Ripe Living After 50* gives you a girl's night out without leaving your favorite reading chair—or bubble bath. It's a "whew!" for those of us at 50++ who have thoughts 180 degrees different from our mothers, letting us know we aren't alone."

—Jeanie Linders, writer and producer of *Menopause: The Musical*,
founder of Aging Out Loud, and publisher of W4W VOICES

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excerpt: who are we trying to kid? (the cosmetic surgery question)

This cosmetic surgery question is a pesky one. You can be philosophically opposed to the whole thing because there are so many more important qualities than an unlined face. But then there are those days. "I look in the mirror and say, 'You look like shit,'" says Celeste, who wishes her face were as toned and youthful looking as the rest of her fifty-two-year-old body. "Why can't we work on our faces at the gym?" she moans, running her fingers through freshly colored golden curls and sipping a nonfat latte.

Celeste, a photographer, admits that she feels "horrible pressure" to do like most of her middle-aged girlfriends and get some work done—tattooed eyeliner, collagen plumping, lid lifts, or even a full-on face-lift. She says she's practically the only woman in her crowd who hasn't had a makeover.

"I was surprised at first that I would know even one woman who'd have cosmetic surgery, but then I heard about a friend. Then another. I saw a woman I knew at a party and I could tell she'd done something because she looked awesome. Another had the works. She showed up at a meeting and a man I know kept staring at her. He said, 'Boy, I hope my wife gets that done when she's that age.' I sat there feeling like dumpy-the-lumpy.





"I'm not a beautiful woman and I've always felt like my greatest attraction was my personality. Off and on for the past five years I've thought a lot about cosmetic surgery, but then I saw a show on TV where the doctor was peeling back the flesh and then stapling things into a woman's head. What if I had my eyes done and they did one wrong? If I go to the beauty shop and my hair color is a shade wrong or cut one inch too short I freak out. You hear about people getting their eyes done and then one doesn't shut right."

She did go as far as Botox. "I have deep creases between my eyes, which probably come from being an artist. I thought Botox would be a good segue into the next step. I spent \$300 and it lasted three weeks. The creases were smoothed out. My forehead didn't move. But for a week and a half I had a horrible headache."





For the present Celeste says she'll try to maintain her personal flash through her signature look—tight blue jeans, silver belt, and Tiffany necklace. And she'll continue to chide herself. "Sometimes I think the only one who's worrying about how I look is me. After all, who am I trying to fake out? The busboy?"

Side Bar: Cosmetic Surgery Pros and Cons

REASONS TO DO IT

-  Your friends are doing it and you're tired of being asked if you're their auntie.
-  You want it, you can afford it, and you trust your doctor.
-  Your son's getting married and you want to look better in the wedding photos than the mother of the bride.
-  It will make you happy.

REASONS TO PASS

-  Who wants to be another sap for the beauty culture? Give the money to the food bank or go back to law school.
-  You can let your hair blow in the wind and not worry about showing those telltale white scars along your hairline.
-  People die, like Olivia Goldsmith (author of *The First Wives Club*), dead at age fifty-four following complications during cosmetic surgery.
-  The effects of cosmetic procedures don't all last. You may have to do it again. And again.

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excerpt: grandma what big underpants you have

Terry was dressing when her granddaughter walked into the bedroom, eyed Terry's underwear lying on the bed and said, "Boy, Oma. You wear big underpants." Taking immediate action, Terry got rid of all of her big underpants and went right out and bought some hipsters. "I would have bought bikini panties but I'd need a full butt lift to wear them again." Still, both Terry's granddaughter and husband were happy with the change.

Do not think that women of a certain age do not care about panty lines. Do not think that we are beyond spending the price of a good bottle of wine on one pair of silk skivvies in a color and style contrary to our persona. I admit, however, to some ambivalence about thongs. Didn't we spend most of our lives making sure we didn't have a "snuggly," only to find out that some women like it that way? It's been trendy for young women to wear them with low-rise jeans, so that the top of the panties is visible from the back. I'm not sure why you want people seeing your underwear, although I do like the little-lace-camisole peekaboo look to soften a tailored jacket.

In aerobics class one day I happened to notice that our instructor seemed to have a free-floating waistband showing above her tights. Could it be a thong? I asked. It was, she said, setting off a discussion about the merits of such. What's so great about having something in your butt? we inquired indelicately. No panty line, she said. Then why wear anything at all? we asked. Try it—you'll like it, she advised.

Not wanting to appear closed minded I talked a friend into going thong shopping. Picking through the sale bins at a high-priced boutique we giggled like teenagers buying our first 28 AA bras. One fun thing about wearing thong underwear, I discovered, is the response you get from a man who is accustomed to seeing you in what I believe are called French-cut briefs. In your first thong appearance, "What the hell is that?" is not what you hope to hear. One would rather the response be, "Come here, you global wonder." Author Diane Johnson writes that a French woman's sexy lingerie is an indicator of self-indulgence and self-respect.



Juicy Fact: Seventeen percent of single women age fifty to fifty-nine told AARP they were having intercourse at least once a week. Fifty percent of married women said the same.

We need to get rid of the ratty stuff. Throw out all old underwear. Including anything with tired elastic and a faded color from being washed too many times. If you ever find yourself wondering, "What is my mother's bra doing in my laundry basket?" it's time to go see what's new at the lingerie shop. You might also want to buy something with a better fit.

Fashion consultant Brenda Kinsel says women often stick to the same old bra size "as if it were nonnegotiable, like the color of their eyes." Fit is everything. "If you're in underwear that is sized right, you really shouldn't notice it in the day nor should anyone else following from the back notice it either. Too-tight underwear is noticed. That's where you get the double butt effect; there's the smile line of your butt and then there's the smile line a few inches higher from your underwear." Brenda does lots of underwear shopping with her clients to find just the right fit in bras "and to find those undergarments that make the outer garments look better." An underwear splurge, she said, is much more important than purchasing an additional pair of shoes.

And there's the lusciousness of it all. Even if the only person who sees you in your undies is your cat, having something that caresses your skin is a sweet luxury that we deserve now more than ever. Besides, when those airport security guards search your carry-on, they'll pull out something more eye popping than grandma pants.

Our bodies deserve the best. And it can be your little secret. The world may think you're a plain old blue-jeans kind of gal, but hiding underneath that denim is an \$8 tiger-striped G-string that makes you frisky just thinking about it.

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