

Strawberries are often perfectly shaped, humongous and uniform — but the flavor leaves much to be desired. Genetic engineering could change that

Native strawberries have been grown in the British Isles for centuries. But the ones we eat today are the product of centuries of cross breeding, including a mix of North and South American varieties.

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But, as in much of the agriculture sector, advances in gene science have given producers new ways of improving their produce.

So [Farmer Marion] Regan, uses genetic markers which can speed up the search for improved varieties.

Genomic informed breeding, she emphasises, is not gene editing or genetic modification but rather looking at the genetic traits of strawberry varieties in order to pick the best ones from which to breed.

Such techniques were given a boost four years ago when scientists [mapped the cultivated strawberry genome](#).

Now, breeders are using this knowledge to grow strawberries with new and improved flavours – [even a savoury strawberry](#).

The knowledge might reverse a trend in recent decades where retailers have prized shape, size and uniformity of fruit and vegetables and neglected flavour.

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The National Institute of Agricultural Botany (NIAB) [says precision breeding](#) could allow us to replace the [59,000 tonnes of imported strawberries](#) with homegrown varieties – that’s almost a third of all strawberries consumed in the UK each year.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here**](#)