

WHY NOT GO...

OUT ON A LIMB

CSA NEWSLETTER #2

9.28.2011



WHAT'S IN YOUR SHARE THIS WEEK?

- Chestnut (Wulf Orchards - organically grown)
- Milden (Wulf Orchards - organically grown)
- Red Baron (Super Chilly Farm - organically grown)
- Red Blaze (Super Chilly Farm - organically grown)
- Sweet Sixteen (Wulf Orchards - organically grown)
- Wolf River (Wulf Orchards - organically grown)

All the apples in the share this week are organically grown. Organic fruit will never look as “perfect” as the apples in the grocery store, but in our minds the superior taste is worth a few imperfections in appearance. We hope you will agree. We try to cull out the apples with the worst blemishes, but some dings and stings might still sneak through: please bear with us. Since even organic apples are sprayed (with USDA-approved nutrients and insecticides), as always, we suggest that you wash the fruit before eating. Enjoy!

Chestnut: Malinda x open-pollinated, University of Minnesota, 1946. For a growing number of people in central Maine, late September is “Chestnut Apple Time.” For years we put out bushels of these crabs at Fedco’s booth at the Common Ground Fair and watched them disappear. Neophytes often looked at the fruit with disdain. Those that were not put off by the small size or the unusual color usually took one bite and became instant converts. It took Second Place in both apple tastings at the fair this year. People do like it very much.

We usually eat chestnut simply “out of hand,” although it is said to make an excellent sweet sauce. Regina used them in the apple pickle recipe that we included in the newsletter last week and thought they made the best batch yet – a strong recommendation since we make apple pickles a lot at Super Chilly Farm.



Rob picking Sweet Sixteen's for your CSA Share this week

Milden (or Milding): Alton, NH, about 1865. Please don’t confuse this with last delivery’s “Milton”; this is a very different apple. Milden is an all-purpose variety that, generations ago, was grown widely in areas where Baldwin lacked hardiness. It was once fairly common in much of Maine. Some years ago I received a wonderful letter from 101-year-old Eva Burgess of Sangerville who wrote, “I practically grew up in an apple orchard. My grandfather, Henry Leland, was an orchardist in Piscataquis County...his main apple was Milding.” It keeps remarkably well—an unusual trait for an apple that ripens relatively early.

Our Mildens ripened early this year, but we think they’d be better for pies after mellowing for at least another few weeks. We tried a pie last night and the slices didn’t soften as much as we’d like them to. For now, they’ll make a very good, thick sauce. Or wait and make a pie in two weeks-or-so.

Red Baron: Golden Delicious x Daniels Red Duchess, University of Minnesota, 1969. I received the scionwood for this apple many years ago from a grower who told us it was a University of Minnesota

variety called Beacon. Another grower told me the name was incorrect, and I puzzled over the apple for years. This year we got a decent crop, and I decided to put the matter to rest. I called the University and talked with them. Then I scoured my books. I'm certain now that what we have is another Minnesota apple named Red Baron.

It is a relatively mild dessert variety that we recommend trying in pies. One of our recent visitors to the farm commented that it was the perfect apple for fruit salad.

Red Blaze: Probably Mercer, Maine, before 1900. I received scionwood of this extremely rare variety from Francis Fenton who had it growing on one branch of a tree. He had found it years ago on an old farm a few miles from his Sandy River Orchard in Mercer. Now we may have one of the only trees anywhere. We plan to propagate more this coming spring. I always wondered how it got its name. Then I cut one open and noticed a very small red scallop-shaped stain in the flesh by the flower-end. There it was—the red blaze!

We recommend it for fresh eating, although some of the OOAL crew like it better peeled. You might also find it good for the kitchen. Last year Red Blaze was still tasty on December 11th.

Sweet Sixteen: MN447 x Northern Spy, University of Minnesota, 1979. This is another of the many varieties introduced by the University of Minnesota (we're offering 3 UMN varieties this week) – and one of the ones with a very devoted following. It may have not gotten the widespread attention we think it deserved because it was never patented. Without the patent, UMN did not have much incentive to promote the apple.

We think of it as a dessert variety with a unique flavor. Take a bite, and see if you can taste cherry lifesavers or a hint of licorice. We eat them fresh and use them in cooking. Cooks into a sauce somewhat slowly, but skin softens and the flesh dissolves nicely. For the purist, you might want to remove the skins. Although it ripens relatively early, the apple keeps pretty well.

Wolf River: Alexander seedling, near Wolf River, WI, 1875. Perhaps the most well known, old-time apple in Maine, likely due to its

catchy name and its extremely large—even huge—fruit. The fruit is famous for baked apples and essential for the “walk-about” apple pie that we are once again featuring with this week’s recipes.

Because it’s dry and not particularly flavorful, it only makes a passable single-variety “regular” pie. We suggest mixing Wolf River with other juicier, more flavorful varieties in a pie, such as Sweet Sixteen or Mildens. Wolf River is also good for drying. Cut slices right across the core and place them on a screen above the wood stove or string them and hang them in a sunny window, greenhouse or the attic. They dry in a couple of days.

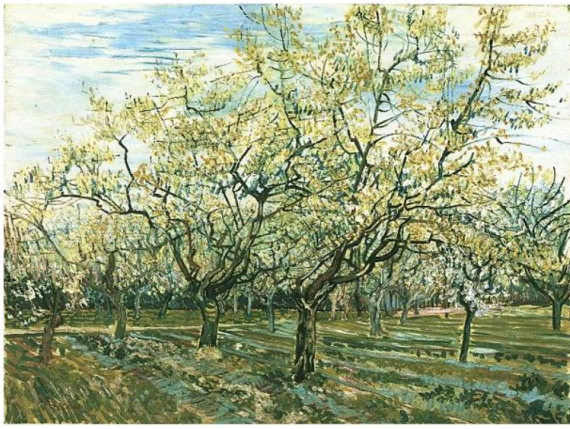


Cammy Watts with a gigantic Wolf River

WHO GREW YOUR APPLES?



Four of the apples in your share this week were grown by orchardist, Howard Wulf. As a young boy, Howard lived on an orchard in East Germany with his grandfather. During his young years, Howard watched the movement and patterns of the natural world and learned about biodiversity from the trees, the birds and the great poets and philosophers of humanity. Before leaving Europe in his early twenties to start his own orchard in the States, Howard sought out and found all the sites that inspired Van Gogh’s orchard paintings.



During his years in East Germany, Howard began a life-long love affair with apples and pears. Unlike annual crops, orchard fruits are a constant—“They’re always there: sometimes abandoned, often historic and wistful.” At age 25, Howard began looking for his own plot of land in eastern Maine.

Rather than purchase new trees, Howard wanted to save old trees, acclimatized to the area of their origin. When you buy generic trees like the Honeycrisp, he explained, you can’t listen to how folks have grown the trees before you—you can’t learn from people who’ve grown them already. “The Honeycrisp is like a Madison Avenue model,” Howard said. “All the individual parts reflect some kind of aesthetic ideal, but together, they don’t add up to something real or beautiful.”

Today, central Mainers can thank Howard for bringing back a number of near-extinct apple and pear varieties, native to this region. Two of his heritage apples are included in your CSA share this week: Milden and Wolf River.

As Howard ate his favorite *Fameuse* apple, he recited this poem:

Painting by: Christine Walker

Wind Song
Carl Sandburg

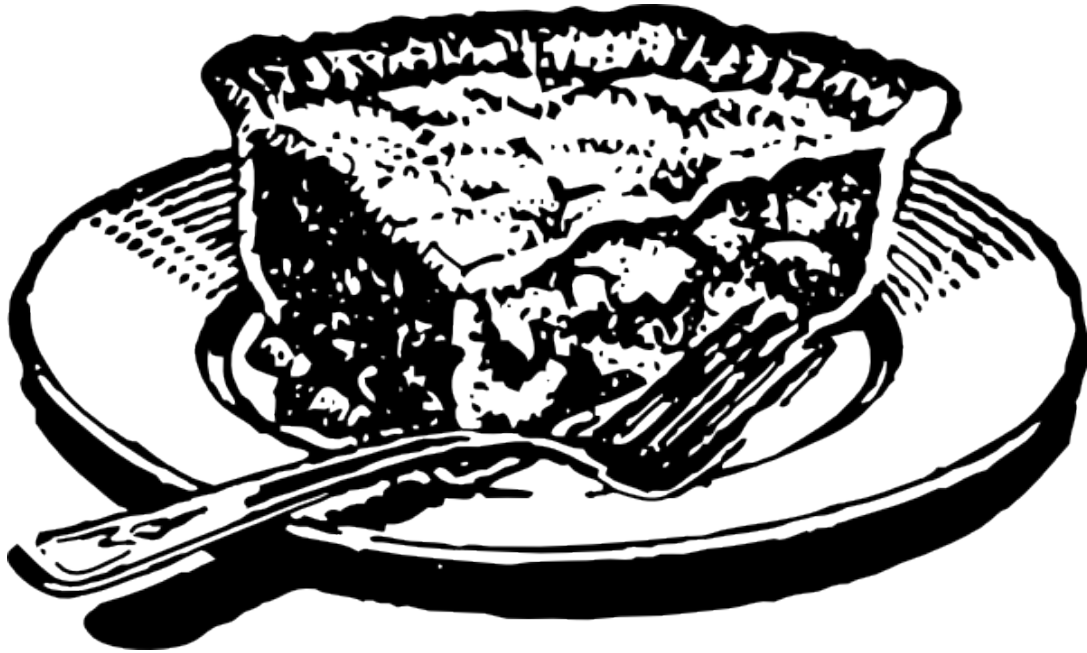
Long ago I learned how to sleep,
In an old apple orchard where the wind swept by counting its
money and throwing it away,
In a wind-gaunt orchard where the limbs forked out and listened or never listened at all,
In a passel of trees where the branches trapped the wind into whistling,
“Who, who are you?”
I slept with my head in an elbow on a summer afternoon and there I took a sleep lesson.
There I went away saying: I know why they sleep, I know how they trap the tricky winds.
Long ago I learned how to listen to the singing wind and how to forget and how to hear the deep
whine,
Slapping and lapsing under the day blue and the night stars:
Who, who are you?

Who can ever forget
listening to the wind go by
counting its money
and throwing it away?



THE GREAT APPLE PIE-OFF CHALLENGE

by Rob Stenger, *Out On a Limb pomological pie-ologist*



With apples everywhere beginning to ripen en masse, the OOAL crew here at Super Chilly Farm has initiated an intensive research effort to investigate the cooking properties of various apple varieties. Not a day passes when a sauce, crisp, ferment or other potentially delectable apple dish is not concocted and passed around for tasting and critique. My principal concern is the all-American apple pie, symbol of the New England harvest season and conjurer of warm kitchens and sweet aromas in the memories of dessert lovers everywhere. Out of this interest, the tradition of the Great Apple Pie-Off was born.

At least several afternoons a week we wind up in the kitchen, an assembly line of pie makers on a mission to rate the varieties ripening in the orchard. An amateur baker at heart, I crank out crusts whilst others help wash and slice apples. Having a single variety of apple in each pie is the key to our comparisons. Thus far we have tested about 14 varieties, with more in the queue. By having several pies to try at one time, we often find that what would seem an excellent pie standing alone, sometimes dims in splendor when held up to competition. It is my intention to keep the members of this CSA posted on our results and also to encourage you to initiate research

on your own and report back to us. The following tips are offered to help you design your own pie-offs:

Keep the Recipe Constant.

As responsible pie-ologists, we test the differences in the apple varieties, not the other ingredients. Using the same proportions of other ingredients and mixing them in the same way is crucial to an accurate comparison.



Can't taste the apples for the Pie? Don't hide them.

In order to accentuate the flavor of the apples over other ingredients, consider whittling down or ruling out competing flavors when designing your recipe. For instance, we use less sugar than a standard pie recipe for our Super Chilly pie-offs (we aim for $\frac{2}{3}$ cup sugar per pie) in order to determine how tart the apples are on their own and minimize an overly-sweet masking of flavor. We also use a shortening-based crust instead of butter, as it has less flavor of its own. For spices, we add only a scant half-teaspoon of cinnamon (see previous newsletter for our basic filling recipe).

The More Mouths the Merrier.

To rate a pie, you'll need a lot of judges; and the more tasters you have, the more opinions you'll get. And if you make three or four pies—our usual pie-off quantity—you'll need many mouths to help polish them off. A pie-off can be the culminating culinary experience for a dinner party, so invite your friends over!

Consider a Blind Tasting.

For those who think they already know the best pie apple, learning the variety name before they take a bite can impart some level of prejudice to a pie tasting. We recommend anonymously labeling the different pies so impartiality of judging can be maintained. (At Super Chilly we do this by crimping the pie edges with different patterns.)

Decide on Variables.

A pie can be a winner in one category and sub-par in another. Consider what is important in a pie and then pick particular characteristics to rate. We ask ourselves: How is the texture? Is it too sweet or too tart? Are there hints of other fruit flavors? Would it go well in a mixed-fruit pie? Is it watery? Does the crust hold up or collapse when the apples get soft? How does the taste differ when it's warm or at room temperature?

Hot vs. Cold.

Sometimes it's difficult to wait until a pie has cooled in order to cut the first slice. However, the full characteristics and flavors may not be observable when still piping hot. Saving a slice for breakfast and giving a second opinion the next day can ensure that the pie gets a fair chance under all conditions. And nothing is better for breakfast than apple pie, in my opinion!

Record your Results.

Write down your reactions for posterity. You don't want to be shopping for your favorite heirloom pie apple to plant or to cook with and not remember the name. Better yet, share the apple love, and send us your results for our own records.

Now that I've shared our basic methodology and pie-off advice with you, I'll offer some of our winning varieties thus far in the season.

Super Chilly Farm 2011 August/September Pie-Off Picks:

- Yellow Jay
- Nutting Bumpus
- Wolf River - *best in firm texture, but flavor needs more spices*
- Winekist - *excellent tart flavor and red/pink color; would go well with rhubarb or cherry*
- Milton - *what it lacked in texture (too mushy) was made up for with great flavor*
- Wealthy - *old standby*
- Spice Sweet - *could benefit from a few tart apples mixed in*
- Newt Grindle - *classic taste and good texture*
- Sweet 16 - *great pie - very sweet and fruity*
- Red Blaze - *loved this one*

Stay tuned for more results, and best of luck with your own Great Apple Pie-Off. Enjoy!

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR APPLES: A FEW OF OUR FAVORITE RECIPES

Lacto-Fermented Apple Chutney

We preserve many of the vegetables we grow on the farm through the process of lacto-fermentation. It takes less time and effort than canning, requires no electricity or gas and adds healthful, living foods to our diet all year long. In a search to find an old Russian recipe for lacto-fermented crab apples that we had heard about, I came across this recipe. Since it only keeps two weeks, it was not the preservation recipe I had hoped to find, but it did provide an interesting kick to my morning yogurt. You can read more about it on the blog: <http://gnowfglins.com/2010/08/26/5-spice-apple-chutney/>. I recommend reducing the 5-spice blend suggested on the blog to 2-3 tablespoons. And if you know of that old Russian crab apple recipe, please send it our way.

Ingredients:

6 cups coarsely chopped, firm apples
**Our recommendation: Red Blaze,
Red Baron or Milden*
½ cup lemon juice
1/3 cup whey
¼ cup honey (or other natural
sweetener)
1 cup walnuts, chopped
1 cup raisins
1 teaspoon sea salt
2-3 tablespoons 5-spice blend*
1+ cup water



Method:

1. If whey is not readily accessible, pour yogurt through a cheesecloth, and drain for 30-45 minutes. The liquid that accumulates from the yogurt is whey.
2. In a small bowl toss chopped walnuts and raisins with sea salt and spice blend. Set aside.
3. Coarsely chop apples, and place in a large bowl. Add reserved walnut and raisin mixture. Toss the entire batch with lemon juice, whey and honey until thoroughly combined.
4. Transfer to a clean, half-gallon jar or crock. Pack down all the ingredients, and add 1+ cup of liquid so that at least ½" of water covers the top of the

ingredients. Cover tightly with a lid or plastic wrap secured with a rubber band. Let sit at room temperature for 2-3 days. Each day check for mold growing on the surface, and skim away. Burp the jar if necessary. When the texture has reached the desired consistency (taste-test each day), transfer to the refrigerator in an airtight container. Eat as is or serve on yogurt, kefir, cereal, waffles, pancakes or alongside grilled meat.

*available in Asian markets or in the spice section of most super markets.

Carol's Famous Walk-About Apple Pie

A year ago when we offered Wolf River apples in the OOAL CSA share, Carol Gilbert, who helps her father, Francis Fenton, manage Sandy River Orchard, shared her favorite Wolf River recipe with us. The Wolf River Walk-About Apple Pie was such a hit, that we thought we would include it once again in our newsletter.

Ingredients:

2 ½ cups flour
1 tablespoon sugar
½ teaspoon salt
1 cup shortening or butter
2/3 cup milk
1 egg, separated
1 quart Wolf River apples, sliced
1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon
2 tablespoons butter

Method:

1. Preheat oven to **400 degrees** and grease a jellyroll pan. Set aside.
2. In a large bowl, mix dry ingredients and cut-in shortening or butter. In a separate bowl, beat together egg yolk and milk. Add to flour mixture. In a third bowl, toss apples separately with cinnamon and sugar.
3. Roll out half the dough in reserved, greased jellyroll pan. Spread apples on top, and dot with butter. Add top crust, and cut slits on top for ventilation. Brush the top with egg whites, and sprinkle with sugar. Bake for 30 minutes or until the surface is golden brown.
4. When the pie is cool enough to handle, cut it into squares. No need for a knife or fork; you can take it with you to eat as you talk a walk, drive to work or stroll through an orchard.

Escalloped Apples au Gratin

For those of you who learned to cook way back in the 1960s or 70's, here is a blast from the past. As I was perusing my well-worn and coverless copy of Mollie Katzen's *Enchanted Broccoli Forest* last weekend, I came across this savory apple recipe that I am fairly sure I last made sometime around 1982. I decided it to test it out on some current and former OOAL crew members who came for dinner, and it got the thumbs up from everyone.

Ingredients:

2 pounds sauerkraut
6 cups tart apples, peeled & sliced
Our recommendation: Milden
2 tablespoons flour
½ teaspoon cinnamon
a dash of cloves, nutmeg and salt
2 tablespoons honey
2 tablespoons butter
1 cup onions, chopped
½ teaspoon dried mustard
¾ cup walnuts or almonds, chopped
½ pound cheddar cheese, grated
¾ cup bread crumbs

Method:

1. Preheat oven to **375 degrees**. Butter a deep-dish casserole pan, and set aside. Place sauerkraut in a colander or strainer, and rinse under tap water. Squeeze dry.
2. Toss apple slices with flour and spices. Drizzle with honey and mix well.
3. Sauté the onions in butter until clear and soft (approximately 5-8 minutes). Add dry mustard and sauerkraut, and cook a few additional minutes over medium heat.
4. Combine half the grated cheese with breadcrumbs and chopped nuts.
5. In the buttered casserole dish, layer ingredients in this way: (1) layer half the apple mixture on the bottom, (2) cover with half the onion-sauerkraut mixture, (3) followed by the plain, grated cheese. Then (4) pile on the remaining apples, followed by (5) the remaining onion/sauerkraut mix and, finally (6) the nut-crumbs-cheese topping.
6. Cover, and bake for 20 minutes; then uncover, and bake 20 additional minutes.