

# McIntosh News



The newsletter of the New York State Apple Association

***In  
search  
of  
gnarly  
trees***  
page 6

**Recipes  
from  
Champlain  
Orchards**  
page 8

**Keep your  
apples cold--  
and coming**  
page 2



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**Orchard Run** Russell Powell, executive director

## Keep 'em cold, and coming

If you are much older than age 30, you can probably remember the unpleasant experience of biting into a McIntosh apple at this time of year and being supremely disappointed by its bland taste and mealy texture. Happily for apple lovers, those days are long behind us.

While the bulk of the 2009 New England apple crop has now been sold, you can still find some of our region's apples in the produce aisles among those from Washington state and countries in the southern hemisphere. The reason is controlled atmosphere, or CA, storage.

Controlled atmosphere storage was developed by Dr. Robert Smock of Cornell University in 1940, but it did not come into widespread commercial use until the 1980s. CA works by reducing oxygen and increasing carbon dioxide in storage facilities, since apples, like humans, respire. Reducing the amount of oxygen slows down the apples' natural ripening process.

After they are harvested, the apples are placed in air-tight, refrigerated warehouse rooms. The oxygen content in each room is reduced from 21 percent to 2.5 percent, the carbon dioxide level is increased from 0.25 percent to between 2 percent and 5 percent, and high humidity is maintained. CA storage radically slows the ripening process, allowing New England's growers to provide crisper, more flavorful apples year-round.

CA storage extends the season for New England apples by supplementing cold storage, the traditional method for keeping apples fresh post-harvest. The apples are rushed to cold storage warehouses as soon as they are picked, and placed in refrigerated storerooms, where the temperature is maintained at 32 degrees, with high humidity. This, too, slows down the ripening process, though not as effectively as CA storage. Most apples in regular cold storage are sold by January or February.

Last week, to my pleasant surprise, I found Macouns at Bolton Orchards in Bolton, Massachusetts. The Macoun crop is usually gone by New Year's, and historically they have not been considered good keepers over the winter. But there are few better-tasting fresh apples.



**The Macouns I purchased in mid-June at Bolton Orchards were a revelation.**

The ones I purchased in mid-June were a revelation: crisp and flavorful—not quite as tangy as when they first come off the tree, but a reasonable facsimile. They were superior in flavor and texture to many of the blandly sweet, hard-textured varieties that are raised and shipped here in part because of their ability to withstand long-distance travel and handling.

Of course, you may have to look a little harder to find a New England apple at this time of year, and it is still possible to bite into a mushy one, without its characteristic flavor. If so, chances are it won't be because of how the grower raised or stored the apple. A more likely culprit is the supermarket, for failing to keep the apples cold, or rotating fruit in the loose bins where they are commonly and attractively displayed.

Or it may be that you forgot to refrigerate the apples when you got them home. Apples look beautiful mounded in a wooden bowl on the dining room table. But unless they are eaten in a day or so at room temperature, the ripening accelerates quickly beyond peak flavor and texture.

So savor New England apples year-round. But keep them cold, and enjoy the last of the 2009 crop as you get ready for the fresh harvest to resume again in August.

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# New video addresses proper storage and handling

## Cider-making, pollination and the packing house to follow

A video program on proper storage and handling of apples will be the next in a series featured on the Internet search engine YouTube and the New England Apple Association website, [www.newenglandapples.org](http://www.newenglandapples.org). Consumers are advised to keep their apples cool and prevent them from bruising in the new program, one of more than a dozen completed or in progress over the past two years.

By mid-summer, the series will be complete, with programs on pollination (featuring several orchards), cider-making (from Carlson Orchards in Harvard, Massachusetts), and the packing house (shot at

Sunrise Orchards in Middlebury, Vermont, and J. P. Sullivan in Ayer, Massachusetts).

The new programs will be added to 10 videos currently on YouTube and the association website. A four-minute program on pick-your-own etiquette featuring orchards from Connecticut, Massachusetts and Vermont was viewed more than 6,000 times in September and October alone. Currently on the website's "Find an Orchard" page, it will move back to the home page August 1 to promote the 2010 fresh harvest.

A three-part series on apple pie-making on the recipe page features Andrea Darrow of Green Moun-

tain Orchards in Putney, Vermont. Currently on the home page are a three-part program about New England apple varieties (with Chuck and Diane Souther of Apple Hill Farm in Concord, New Hampshire, and Greg Parzych of Rogers Orchards in Southington, Connecticut, pruning (two parts), and grafting, the latter two narrated by Mo Tougas of Tougas Family Farm in Northborough, Massachusetts).

The project has been a regional effort, funded with Specialty Crop grants from Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont, and a grant from Northeast Farm Credit's AgEnhancement Program.

# Website features improved recipes, home page

The New England Apple Association continues to make upgrades to its Internet website, [www.newenglandapples.org](http://www.newenglandapples.org). Here are some of the latest changes:

- On the home page beneath the slide show there is now a link to a featured recipe;
- Apple icons have been added to improve the main navigation, and the headings have been reorganized and some renamed;
- This newsletter is now available through a link on the home page, and can be downloaded as a PDF;
- A new apple variety appears at the bottom of the left-hand column each time a visitor clicks to a new page; and
- The recipes page has been redesigned to make better use of the space, and with added color.

Grant funds are being sought to help fund the next round of changes, including technical assistance to member orchards to ensure that they are getting maximum value from their presence on the association site, and from their own farm's site; a Spanish language translation; the addition of a section of educational activities for children; enhanced Search Engine Optimization (SEO); and a rewrite of the site's pages on education and nutrition to make them more web friendly.

Additions to the site since September include a series of short video programs about apples, available

through the search engine YouTube, a New England apples weblog and a Facebook social networking page.

Once on the New England Apples website, students and consumers can find more than a dozen video programs about apples and photographs and descriptions of nearly 70 apple varieties grown in New England. Visitors can learn about an apple's parentage, physical characteristics, ripening time, flavor, and best usage. The number of varieties pictured is expected to increase to about 100 this season.

Visitors can search for New England orchards by state, zip code, apple variety or other farm product they sell, such as sweet corn or maple syrup, or find apple recipes from breakfast through dessert.

Member orchards create and update their own listings from the convenience of their own farm.

By mid-June, the association website had attracted more than 200,000 hits since January 1, an increase of more than 40 percent from the same period in 2009. (Traffic to the site fluctuates depending on the time of year; the site attracted nearly one-quarter of a million hits last September and October, the height of the fresh harvest.)

We are always interested in ideas about how to make the site better. Send your suggestions and ideas to [info@newenglandapples.org](mailto:info@newenglandapples.org).

## Orchards can add their imprint to 'New England Apples' brochure

Orchards! There is still time to order quantities of the brochure poster New England Apples with your farm's imprint on the back panel. The brochure is being updated this summer.

The brochure side of the promotional piece has recipes, information about storage and handling, health benefits of apples, and a usage chart for a number of popular commercial varieties. The back side, which folds out as a poster, has descriptions and photographs and brief descriptions

of a dozen varieties presented in order of their ripening. The varieties featured on the poster are: McIntosh, Empire, Macoun, Cortland.

The information in the brochure/poster is timeless, useful from season to season. The association distributes it widely at promotional events like the Eastern States Exposition, and makes it available free to the general public. It has been the association's most popular publication since its debut several years ago, especially among students and

teachers.

Orchards receive a free supply of the brochure/poster as a benefit of membership (100 for basic members, 300 for full). For the first time this year, orchards can include their logo, contact information and marketing message on the back panel. For information on how to order, contact us at [info@newenglandapples.org](mailto:info@newenglandapples.org).

Deadline for special orders is July 15.

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## Become a 'friend' on Facebook

Are you a friend of New England apples? If so, join us on Facebook! The association's Facebook page can be found on the home page of the its website, [www.newenglandapples.org](http://www.newenglandapples.org). Friends receive timely information about New England apples, such as this newsletter, updates on the crop, and announcements of new blog posts or videos. Just click on the Facebook icon on our home page to become a "friend" of New England apples.

The association's weblog, or blog, is also accessible through the home page. Recent posts have featured topics like early bloom and breakfast at Hamilton Orchards in New Salem, Massachusetts. If you have ideas for a blog post, let us know by emailing [info@newenglandapples.org](mailto:info@newenglandapples.org), or sending a message on our Facebook page.

## Thoreau: Cape Cod apple trees 'not higher than a man's head'

Every landscape which is dreary enough has a certain beauty to my eyes, and in this instance its permanent qualities were enhanced by the weather. Everything told of the sea, even when we did not see its waste or hear its roar. . . . The trees were, if possible, rarer than the houses, excepting apple-trees, of which there were a few small orchards in the hollows. These were either narrow and high, with flat tops, having lost their side branches, like huge plum-bushes growing in exposed situations, or else dwarfed and branching immediately at the ground, like quince-bushes. They suggested that, under like circumstances, all trees would at last acquire like habits of growth. I afterward saw on the Cape many full-grown apple trees not higher than a man's head; one whole orchard, indeed, where all the fruit could have been gathered by a man standing on the ground; but you could hardly creep beneath the trees. Some, which the owners told me were twenty years old, were only three and a half feet high, spreading at six inches from the ground five feet each way, and being withal surrounded with boxes of tar to catch the cankerworms, they looked like plants in flower-pots, and as if they might be taken into the house in the winter. In another place, I saw some not much larger than currant-bushes; yet the owner told me that they had borne a barrel and a half of apples that fall. If they had been placed close together, I could have cleared them all at a jump. I measured some near the Highland Light in Truro, which had been taken from the shrubby woods thereabouts when young, and grafted. One, which had been set ten years, was on an average eighteen inches high, and spread nine feet with a flat top. It had borne one bushel of apples two years before. Another, probably twenty years old from the seed, was five feet high, and spread eighteen feet, branching, as usual, at the ground, so that you could not creep under it. This bore a barrel of apples two years before. The owners of these trees invariably used the personal pronoun in speaking of them; as, "I got *him* out of the woods, but *he* doesn't bear." The largest that I saw in that neighborhood was nine feet high to the topmost leaf, and spread thirty-three feet, branching at the ground five ways.

—from *Cape Cod*, by Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), chronicling his visits to Cape Cod "in October, 1849, another the succeeding June, and another to Truro in July, 1855," published posthumously.



Fine art photographer Michael Zide, of Amherst, Massachusetts, recently sent us a few of his apple tree series, including this and the one on the cover, "for you to get a sense of my approach with these remarkably lovely trees." Zide says he is "after the sensual suggestive forms in most of what I seem to photograph and decay, cavities, and trees going 'back' into nature are wonderful subjects. If you know of any trees with 'gesture,' please let me know." Anyone interested in suggesting their own trees as subjects can email Zide at [zide@comcast.net](mailto:zide@comcast.net).

# Suhr thing

## A versatile recipe tested for generations

Readers of the June 6 *Boston Globe Magazine* were pleasantly surprised to find a recipe in it for “Grandma’s Dutch Apple Torte.” Part of a special issue titled “Dig in: New England farmers share their favorite recipes,” the apple recipe came from Champlain Orchards in Shoreham, Vermont. It is reprinted here with some variations and stories supplied by Audrey Suhr, mother of Bill Suhr, owner of Champlain Orchards.

We’ve thrown in another recipe provided by the Suhrs featuring a round, red fruit grown widely in New England. “Tomato and Fresh Mozzarella Caprese Salad” doesn’t contain any apples, but in high summer there is room for both on one plate.

### Grandma’s Dutch Apple Torte

Fast, never fail, delicious—a “standard with variations” in the Suhr family for three generations. The crust is like shortbread—and can be made in a couple of minutes—also it’s great when friends call unexpectedly for a visit.

This recipe originated with New Englander Barbara Soller, grandma of Champlain Orchards’ owner, Bill Suhr. It was the family’s favorite dessert, both for nightly dinners and dinner parties. It goes on picnics, is presented as house gifts, and was even served at the reception at grandma’s memorial—on 25 borrowed pie plates!

In summer, use August-ripening Paula Reds, a wonderful tart apple. It is especially good with a mixture of McIntosh and Empires. The recipe is versatile—working well with all varieties of apples, and with almost all the berries and tree fruits as the season changes! Family favorites: apples, apples with cranberries, blueberry, peach—and occasionally plum. See suggestions at end of recipe for the family’s favorite crust and filling variations. It’s a recipe to have fun with!



- 1 c. flour
- 2 t. baking powder
- ¼ t. salt
- nutmeg, several shakes
- 2 T. sugar
- 1½ T. butter
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 t. vanilla
- milk, about 2 T.
- apples – 8-10, enough to mound into 9-inch pie pan
- sugar to taste (about ¼ c.)
- cinnamon to taste (3 or 4 good shakes)
- 1 more T. butter

Preheat oven to 425F°. Mix flour, baking powder, salt, nutmeg and sugar. Cut in butter with pastry blender. With a fork, lightly beat the egg, vanilla, and milk. Add egg mixture to flour, stirring minimally until dough barely holds together. With floured hands, press dough into lightly buttered Pyrex pie plate. Toss apples with cinnamon and sugar. Mound apples into crust, and dot with about a tablespoon of butter. Lightly sprinkle apples and edges of crust with sugar. Bake for 25 minutes until bottom is golden brown. Cover if top browns too quickly. Cool slightly. Serve with vanilla ice cream.

### Variations:

- If making a larger (10-inch) torte, increase the crust recipe by half—or double for a thicker crust.
- Add ground nuts to dough for added crunch—nice with almonds; substitute almond extract for vanilla.
- Vary seasoning to include choice of cardamom, ginger, lemon zest, other baking spices.
- For Thanksgiving, add cranberries to apple filling.
- If using peaches or plums or blueberries, dust crust with flour and a tad of sugar before filling with fruit (to keep the shortbread crust from becoming soggy when cooking, and also add about a tablespoon of flour or cornstarch to fruit before filling the crust. If making a blueberry (or other berry) torte, when it is removed from oven, immediately sprinkle the top with a small handful of large perfect fresh berries while the pie is hot (very special secret!).

### Tomato and Fresh Mozzarella Caprese Salad

This is a delicious salad or first course. It is simple to make and gorgeous to look at (especially if you use various colors and shapes of tomatoes). Once you make it, you won’t need to follow a recipe in the future—it is just layered on a platter and seasoned—and rests to mellow before serving. What could be easier? But—don’t even think about making it with winter tomatoes and hothouse basil: it’s fresh, sunshine-ripened, local farm tomatoes—or nothing at all.

- Ripe tomatoes, sliced 1/4-inch thick (mixture of red, yellow, plum, various Heritage varieties)
- Grape or cherry tomatoes—handful
- Sugar, salt and pepper
- Fresh Mozzarella cheese, sliced into 1/4-inch discs
- Fresh basil leaves (about 30)
- Olive oil
- Cider vinegar (can also use Balsamic and/or wine vinegar)

On a large platter, overlap tomato slices in concentric circles, alternating colors and shapes; reserve cherry and grape tomatoes for garnish. Sprinkle tomatoes with several pinches of sugar, salt, and freshly ground pepper. Drizzle olive oil lightly over tomatoes. Holding thumb over top of vinegar bottle, shake droplets of vinegar over all. On top of each tomato slice, fit a basil leaf, and on top of that, a piece of the creamy fresh mozzarella (can use whole discs, or smaller triangle pieces). Decorate the arranged platter with grape tomatoes. The platter “pops” with the colors of the Italian flag! Let the salad rest to mellow, unrefrigerated, for at least 20 minutes before serving.

Enjoy the oooohs and ahhhhhhs as you bring it to the table! Now THIS is real summer! Yum.

*Champlain Orchards grows a wide variety of apples and organic vegetables available year-round at its farm store and grocery and coop stores on its delivery routes throughout Vermont and neighboring states.*

*Visit the website for full information, [www.champlainorchards.com](http://www.champlainorchards.com)*



Back: Bill Suhr and his wife Andrea, nephew Will, and mom Audrey.

Front: brother in law and sister, John and Carrie Suhr Leovy.

# Apples promote good health

Heard enough about counting calories, the battle of the bulge, and the dreaded swimsuit season? Let's accentuate the positive! You can never get enough information about power foods that contribute to your good health. Here is a tested dessert recipe that is delicious and adds apples, one of many power foods, to your diet.

## Apple-Oatmeal Bars

- 1 c whole wheat flour
- ¾ c oatmeal
- ¾ c brown sugar, packed
- ½ c butter, melted
- ¾ c sugar
- 2 t cornstarch
- 1 c water
- 1 t vanilla extract
- 4 c New England apples, cored, unpeeled, sliced

Melt butter and mix with flour, oatmeal, and brown sugar until crumbly. Press half of this mixture into a greased 9-inch pan. Place apple slices on top.

In a small saucepan, combine water, vanilla, sugar, and cornstarch. Cook until it is a clear, slightly thickened sauce. Pour this over the apple slices. Top with the other half of the crumb mixture.

Bake at 350° for 45 minutes. Cool before serving.

Variation: Substitute apples with rhubarb (½-inch pieces).



This recipe recommends unpeeled apples because the skin of an apple contains five times more polyphenols—chemical substances found in plants that protect us from cell damage—than the flesh of the fruit. Apple skin provides two times more fiber in the form of pectin than many other fruits, as well. This soluble fiber fights against high cholesterol, lessening the risk of stroke and heart attack. Pectin is also a natural laxative, an aid to constipation problems by keeping the digestive tract running smoothly.

Two antioxidants found in apples, quercetin and catechin, also protect us from cell damage, reducing



The skin of an apple contains five times more polyphenols—chemical substances found in plants that protect us from cell damage—than the flesh of the fruit.

the risk of cancer and cardiovascular disease.

Eating apples and apple products has been shown to reduce abdominal fat, lower blood pressure, and lessen by 27 percent the chance of

developing metabolic syndrome, the condition of having three or more heart disease symptoms.

Because women are at greater risk for heart disease than men—it is the leading cause of death of American

women, in fact—eating apples is an especially healthy addition to their diets.

With the growing incidence of diabetes, it is important to remember that the natural sugars in apples can help regulate your blood sugar levels.

Although there is no cure for Alzheimer's disease, apples do provide vitamins and chemicals that generally protect the brain from degenerative neurological diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

These are just a few of the benefits of adding power foods like apples to your diet. Look for more apple recipes on our website, [www.newenglandapples.org](http://www.newenglandapples.org).

*Photos and text by Bar Weeks*





battle

Add nutritious, delicious  
power food to your diet.

See page 10



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