



Farmer In The Field

Everything you ever wanted to know about the history of apples

BONNIE SWANK

With phrases like “apple of my eye” and “American as apple pie” and the folklore legend Jonathan Chapman—Johnny Appleseed, who spread apple seeds everywhere he went, you would think Americans took credit for growing the first apple.

The truth is apples have been around for centuries, many, many centuries, and the only true apple native to North America is the crab apple. Colonists brought apples to North America in the 17th century planting trees along the trade route. The first apple orchard was planted in 1625 by the Rev. William Blaxton in Boston, Mass. By 1845, the United States apples nursery catalogue featured 350 of the most popular vari-

eties of apples sold. The popularity of this delicious, pre-packaged by Mother Nature, long-keeping fruit had grown tremendously in the United States in less than two centuries.

Today 2,500 varieties are grown in the United States and 7,500 varieties are grown around the world. Apples are grown in all 50 states but only commercially in 36, with California being fourth. West of the Rocky Mountains, California grows more varieties than any other state and some are unique only to California. The apple is part of the rose family, which isn't surprising given its fragrant sweet characteristics.

Apples are a great source of pectin fiber. They're fat free, cholesterol free and only 80 calories per one medium

apple. The peel makes up two thirds of the apple's fiber content and contains a ton of antioxidants known to repair cell damage caused by disease.

So remember...don't peel your apple and “an apple a day keeps the doctor away.” Well, maybe not, but it couldn't hurt.

APPLE QUIZ

- 1 What were apples called in colonial times?
- 2 Why do apples float?
- 3 It takes energy from how many leaves to make one apple?
- 4 How many apples does it take to create a gallon of apple cider?
- 5 What is the science of growing apples called?
- 6 What apple variety is most widely

grown in the United States?

7 How long was the longest recorded apple peel?

Answers:

1 Winter bananas; 2 Because apples are 25 percent air; 3 50; 4 36; 5 Pomology; 6 Red delicious; 7 172 feet, 4 inches

Bonnie and her husband, Dick Swank, are owners of Swank Farms in Hollister. Contact them at 831.637.4704. SwankFarms.com

Apple-Maple French Toast

Recipe courtesy of MarthaStuart.com

INGREDIENTS:

- 6 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Ground cinnamon
- 6 slices bread
- 2 tablespoons butter, plus more for serving
- 3 apples, peeled and sliced
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1/2 cup maple syrup

DIRECTIONS:

Whisk the eggs, milk, vanilla and a pinch of ground cinnamon in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Add the bread in a single layer, turning until all the egg is absorbed. Meanwhile, heat a large skillet over medium heat. Melt one tablespoon butter and add apples, stirring to coat until starting to caramelize. Add the water, cooking until water has evaporated and apples are tender, about four minutes. Pour in the maple syrup and a dash of ground cinnamon; simmer for a minute to combine. In a large, heated non-stick skillet, melt about one tablespoon butter and saute the soaked bread until golden brown on each side, about four minutes. Place French toast on a plate and top with apple-maple mixture, plus more butter if desired.



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