Harvest of the Month | Family N

# Apples

Throughout the world, about 7,500 different varieties of apples are grown, with about 2,500 varieties grown in the United States. Apples range in color in shades of red, green, and yellow and vary in flavor from tart (e.g. Stayman, Granny Smith) to sweet (e.g. Fuji, Gala). While most varieties of apples are great eaten raw, only some are considered good for cooking (e.g. McIntosh, Granny Smith, Rome, and Cortland.)

## Did you Know?

- Pennsylvania produces 400 to 500 million pounds of apples per year and ranks fourth in the nation for apple production.
- The majority of apple production in Pennsylvania is centered in the southcentral part of Pennsylvania but apples are grown throughout the Commonwealth.
- About one third of Pennsylvania's apple crop is sold fresh. The remainder is sold for processing to make products such as apple cider, applesauce, apple pies and apple juice.

## Selection

Good quality apples are firm, with smooth, clean skin that is free of blemishes. Consider how you will use the apples when deciding how to select. For example, the highest quality may not be necessary if the apples are going to be peeled and used to make products such as pie or apple sauce.

Avoid apples with soft or dark spots and ones that have rough and scab-like conditions on the stem end.

## Storage

Store apples in a cool, dark place. They can be stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Apples will pick up odors if stored with certain foods that produce them, such as onions and potatoes. Apples produce a gas called ethylene which causes other produce to ripen quickly. Store apples away from ethylene sensitive products such as bananas, broccoli, carrots, cucumbers, leafy greens, lettuce, and sweet potatoes.

## Handling

Wash apples under cold, running water prior to serving. Refrigerate cut apples immediately and use by the following day. To prevent cut apples from browning, dip or coat sliced apples with an acidic solution of 1 part lemon juice to 3 parts water or use an appropriate commercial product according to the manufacturer's instructions. Waxing is a normal part of apple processing and is not a food safety concern.

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## Nutrition

Apples are a source of fiber and vitamin C. Removing the skin removes much of the fiber. Dehydrating or drying the apples removes the vitamin C. Apples are also a source of phytochemicals which are substances that are believed to guard against cell damage and have a wide variety of health benefits. Studies show that apples, or the specific phytochemicals in them, may protect against cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and some forms of cancer and may help with weight control.

## Harvest Season

According to the PA Preferred Seasonal Calendar, apples are available year-round in Pennsylvania. They are typically harvested from July through October. Many apples are held in controlled atmosphere storage after harvest for several months.

## Preparation

Eating apples raw is probably the most popular way to consume them. Young children, in particular, may prefer sliced apples over whole ones.

Apples can also be added to salads or even main dishes like stir fries, made into applesauce, or baked.

## Recipe | Apple Coleslaw

Makes 4 Servings

| Ingredients | Measure | Directions |
|---|---|---|
| Cabbage | 2 cups | 1. Wash the cabbage. Cut it into fine shreds, until you have 2 cups of cabbage. |
| Carrot | 1 (medium, grated) | 2. Peel the carrot. Grate it with a grater. |
| Green Pepper | ½ (chopped) | 3. Chop half a green pepper into small pieces. |
| Apple | 1 (chopped) | 4. Remove the core, and chop the apple. |
| | | 5. Put the cabbage, carrot, green pepper, and apple in a large mixing bowl. Stir together. |
| Yogurt, low fat | 5 tablespoons | 6. Put the yogurt, mayonnaise, lemon juice, and dill weed in a small bowl. Stir together to make a dressing. |
| Mayonnaise, low-fat | 1 tablespoon | |
| Lemon Juice | 1 teaspoon | |
| Dill Weed | ¼ teaspoon | |
| | | 7. Pour the dressing over the salad. Toss to mix. |
| | | 8. Add salt and pepper to taste. |

**Source:** *Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Program, Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Network Website Recipes.*

**Check out the PA Harvest of the Month website (www.paharvestofthemonth.org) for sources, additional resources, and recipes.**

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