

*WHY NOT GO...*

# OUT ON A LIMB

CSA NEWSLETTER # 4

10.25.2011



**CIDER**

**PARTY!**

**PRESSING**



Thanks to all of you who made it to our Cider Pressing Party last weekend. We hope you enjoyed the apple-y treats, the smells of bubbling apple molasses, the autumn colors and fresh-pressed cider. We had a great time meeting you!

For some visitors it was their first time grinding apples into pumice and then turning the press to squeeze out the cider. Others strolled through the orchards and woods looking at the apple varieties or searching for mushrooms. And as always, folks brought unidentified apples to pique John's interest.

Apples for the cider came from the roadsides and orchards of Palermo and from our friends at Bailey's Orchard in Whitefield. The people who came to the party contributed some apples, too. Because no two batches used the same kinds of apples, each press of cider imparted a unique flavor.



After each batch was pressed, someone shuttled fresh cider to our teetering picnic table, overflowing with delicious stews, cheeses, breads, salads and other goodies brought by the revelers. We clinked Mason jar cups, toasting to good food, good company and good weather (save the two minute blast of rain).



## WHAT'S IN YOUR SHARE THIS WEEK?

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- 🍏 Benton Red - Super Chilly Farm, *organic*\*
- 🍏 Blue Pearmain - Apple Farm, *IPM*
- 🍏 Gray Pearmain - Apple Farm, *IPM*
- 🍏 Grimes Golden - Super Chilly Farm, *organic*\*
- 🍏 Nodhead - Super Chilly Farm, *organic*\*
- 🍏 Pomme Grise - Super Chilly Farm, *organic*
- 🍏 Tolman Sweet - Apple Farm, *IPM*

\* The gray, hazy spots on some of the apples from Super Chilly Farm are sooty blotch. This imperfection is caused by a fungus. With some rubbing you can wipe it off, if you want perfect looking fruit. However, we don't bother since it affects neither the taste nor the quality of the apple. We do recommend that you wash all the apples from our farm to remove the Surround, the clay powder that we spray on them to deter apple pests.

**Benton Red:** Probably Delaware County, PA or Benton, Maine, before 1800. I first chanced upon about a dozen trees of this variety 30 years ago. I found them in an old farm orchard behind the Fitzpatrick Dairy buildings in Benton, overlooking the Kennebec River. For a long time I referred to it as "Fitzpatrick" or simply "Benton Red." I never saw the apple anywhere else. One friend identified it as Stark, but that proved to be incorrect. Recently I was able to piece the puzzle together: It appears to be the old Delaware County, PA, apple Pennock. Pennock was grown locally as none other than "Benton Red"! Good

for everything - eating, cooking, drying, cider and storage.

**Blue Pearmain:** Unknown parentage, New England origin, 1700s. Blue Pearmain is a classic, old American apple that has been grown in Maine for over 200 years. It is thought to be the parent of the Maine variety, Rolfe and the NH variety, Nodhead. The apple name has lots of hilarious variations: Blue Paramay, Blue Pearmell, Blue Pomade, Maine Blue Pear, and our favorite, Pain Bear Blue Maine!

You will find a dusty-colored film on the Blue Pearmain called "bloom." It's a natural residue ("slightly dislodged wax particles") that forms on some apples as well as on many grapes and blueberries. Henry David Thoreau refers to the bloom on the Blue Pearmain in his wonderful essay, Wild Apples.

*"I know a Blue Pearmain tree, growing on the edge of a swamp, almost as good as wild. You would not suppose that there was any fruit left there, on the first survey, but you must look according to system. Those which lie exposed are quite brown and rotten now, or perchance a few still show one blooming cheek here and there amid the wet leaves. Nevertheless, with experienced eyes, I explore amid the bare alders and the huckleberry-bushes and the withered sedge, and in the crevices of the rocks, which are full of leaves, and pry under the fallen and decaying ferns, which, with apple and alder leaves, thickly strewn the ground. For I know that they lie concealed, fallen into hollows long since and covered up by the leaves of the tree itself, - a proper kind of packing. From these lurking places, anywhere within the circumference of the tree, I draw forth the fruit, all wet and glossy, maybe nibbled out by rabbits and hollowed out by crickets and perhaps with a leaf or two cemented to it... but still with a rich bloom on it, and at least as ripe and well kept, if not better than those in barrels, more crisp and lively than they."*

Blue Pearmain is our favorite for baked apples; its thick skin holds up perfectly. It also makes an excellent pie and a somewhat coarse, tart, yellow applesauce, which cooks up in a couple of minutes. The skins do not dissolve but can be left in the sauce.

**Gray Pearmain:** Probably Somerset County, Maine, before 1850. One of the most popular of the many unusual varieties Steve and Marilyn Meyerhans grow at the Apple Farm in Fairfield, Maine. There were five or six of the trees in the orchard when they purchased it over 30 years ago from Royal Wentworth. Those trees were already very old. Unfortunately, they never asked the soft-spoken Wentworth about the origin of the apple. Recently, we found a brief mention of it growing in Skowhegan (very near the Meyerhans) in a 19<sup>th</sup> century Maine Agricultural Report, but the Report provided no further details. Its origin may forever remain a mystery.

If you close your eyes, you might think you were eating a crisp, delicious pear - the best of both worlds. A good mix of sweet and tart makes it perfect for eating out of hand. We eat a lot of them every year. It is also juicy enough to press. Will store reasonably well, although it may shrivel like a Golden Russet.

**Grimes Golden:** Originated in Brooks County, West Virginia (then part of

Virginia). Grimes Golden, considered to be a parent of Golden Delicious, is one of America's most famous and important varieties. It was named for Thomas P. Grimes who, in about 1800, realized he had an amazing apple. There's even a granite monument to the apple in Wellsburg, WV. Despite being a southern variety, Grimes became popular in Maine in the late 19th century.

The scionwood for our tree came from an old tree that was growing just a mile from the farm. I recently located another old tree in an old orchard in Cape Elizabeth. Delicious in sauce, pies or out-of-hand. A perfect choice for apple brownies (recipe below). Yum! One of our favorite apples here on the farm.

**Nodhead:** Thought to be a Blue Pearmain seedling, Hollis, NH, early 1800s. Also known as Jewett's Red or Jewett's Fine Red. Nodhead was the first variety I learned about 35 years ago when I moved to Palermo—they are scattered all over



town and are often called "Not head." I've never heard a satisfactory explanation for the name. Someone suggested that the foliage "nods" in the breeze. Like Blue Pearmain, it has a bluish bloom. Some years ago I received a wonderful note from Ruth King, "When I was a little girl (I'm 89 now) a Nodhead tree grew just outside our dining room. I expect it was quite frail as there were so few apples that the five of us kids squabbled as to who got the most!" Slightly tart and excellent for fresh eating. Chewy in the apple brownie - you know there's apple in there.

*Artwork: John Bunker*

**Pomme Grise:** Unknown origin, probably brought to the St. Lawrence Valley in Canada by French immigrants, may have originated in Europe as early as the 17th century. It found its way into Maine about 150 years ago and it is still found in old Maine orchards today. Pomme Grise is one of "russets" grown in Maine. Russet is the skin condition that looks and feels a bit like un-glazed pottery or maybe suede. The combination of the chalky russet and the green ground color gives Pomme Grise its grey (grise) appearance. Technically russet is a layer of dead skin cells. That doesn't sound very appealing, yet russets are some of the most delicious dessert apples.

We recommend Pomme Grise as a very tasty dessert apple - savor the anise/almond after-tastes. Years ago Cammy was teaching a class of third-graders how to plant apples from seed. Each child named his or her new tree. One boy planted a Pomme Grise seed. When asked what he would name it, he explained that since he would be about 13 when the tree fruited for the first time, he would name it, "PG 13!"

**Tolman Sweet:** Unknown parentage, possibly from Dorchester, MA. Extremely old, it is one of the first American apples, and one of the few to remain popular

for centuries. Sometimes called Talman Sweet, Talman Sweeting and numerous variations thereof—I've also heard Tome-y Sweet and Tom Sweet here in Maine. Called a "sweet" apple because it has practically no acid in it at all. It's an incredibly rugged, long-lived variety, which may explain why it's still fairly common in old central and southern Maine farm orchards.

Truly an all-purpose fruit that is used for cooking, dessert and even animal fodder. Some consider it the best of all sauce apples. Once popular for "pickling, boiling and baking." In 1849, S.W. Cole recommended baked sweet apples and milk as an important medicine: "We know a gentleman who, 10 years ago, was in a hopeless state of consumption, and by long and exclusive use of this dish, and a little bread for nutriment, and lime-water for a condiment, he was cured. ...This diet would cure thousands suffering from inflammatory diseases, caused by high, rich, constipating food." One of the most recognizable flavors of any apple, it has a peculiar, sweet flavor that you may never forget once you've eaten it.

## WHO GREW YOUR APPLES?

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Forty years ago this Halloween night, Steve Meyerhans met Marilyn, his future wife and the apple of his eye. Throughout his college years, Steve picked apples on Royal and Irene Wentworth's farm in Fairfield, Maine, and he soon convinced Marilyn to come and pick with him. The couple worked for the Wentworths until 1973, when they scraped together every penny they had and bought the Wentworth's 50-acre farm and orchard. Thus, the Meyerhans began their

ownership of the Apple Farm and had much to learn. "Though Royal was a nice man, he sure didn't teach us much," reflected Steve, who remembers his early orcharding years as ones of trial, error and lots of study. After 10 years of perseverance, hard work and improved marketing, the Meyerhans were well on their way to becoming successful orchardists.

In 1999, The Meyerhans bought Lakeside Orchard in Manchester, Maine. Because it was under an agricultural easement from Maine Farmland Trust (where it will forever remain as farmland), they were able to afford their second 50-acre orchard. Lakeside soon brought synergy to their apple business, as it contained an extensive cold storage and packing line, integral for an expanding business. Lakeside also paid for itself immediately, when a hailstorm in Fairfield destroyed their entire apple crop. Luckily, this hailstorm didn't touch the Manchester orchard, and they were still in business.

When asked his opinion on heirloom apples, Steve says: "They are the future. The past is the future and the future is the past." The Apple Farm grows 33 different varieties of apples and many are heirlooms. Two in particular have

particular significance to the Apple Farm: the Gray Pearmain and "Sweet Red."

Royal Wentworth grew many heirloom varieties and had identified Gray Pearmain as an apple that originated on the farm. The "Sweet Red" was also thought to have originated on the farm, but Royal failed to mention its name to the Meyerhans before he died. The Meyerhans named it "Sweet Red" for its low acid (sweet) flesh and bright red skin.



Today when you go to the Apple Farm, you're welcomed with a family-friendly atmosphere. Inside the country store you can sip freshly made cider, savor a homemade cider doughnut from an old-fashioned doughnut machine and learn about Maine's first pick-your-own operation, featuring a wide variety of apples and other fruits. The Meyerhans love opening up their orchards to everyone so you, too, can explore and enjoy the Apple Farm's many beautiful and enchanted places.

Take a peek at this video profile of Steve and Marilyn:

<http://www.meetyourfarmer.org/lakeside-orchards/>

## PIE-OFF UPDATE: WEEK 4

BY ROB STENGER, OUT ON A LIMB POMOLOGICAL PIEOLOGIST

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Two pie-offs since the last CSA share have yielded feedback on baking properties of five of the seven apple varieties offered this week. Overall winners in the competitions were Grimes Golden and Blue Pearmain. Here is what people had to say:

### **Grimes Golden**

"smooth & creamy"

"flavorful but not overpowering"

"best flavor, both sweet & tart, not too mushy"

"apples mushy, taste good"

### **Blue Pearmain**

"slightly tart, not mushy"

"grainier, spritely taste"

"apples are crunchy, good balance between sweet and tart"

"#1 flavor"

### **Gray Pearmain**

"very firm, almost rubbery"

"pear-like, yellow color, a little too crunchy"

"most distinct flavor"

"an all-American pear pie"

### **Nodhead**

"nice pink color, marbled texture like meat"

"complex texture, almost marbled or stringy"

"delicate flavor with a hint of tart"

"nicer color, less flavor"

### **Benton Red**

“much tarter than the rest, love this one”

“good balance of flavors, but saucy”

“texture somewhat lacking”

“mushiest, but good flavor”

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

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### **Apple Brownies**

We made two batches of these brownies with Wagener apples for the cider pressing party, and they quickly disappeared. Today we whipped up two more batches using Grimes Golden and Nodhead—proper fuel as we packed the apples for the CSA. Grimes Golden was the unanimous favorite, but there were no Nodhead brownies left on the plate by lunchtime. This recipe was adapted from *The Apple Lover's Cookbook* by Amy Traverso.



#### **Ingredients:**

1 cup white flour

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

½ teaspoon baking powder

½ teaspoon salt

8 tablespoons salted butter, melted and cooled

1 cup granulated sugar

1 egg

½ cup walnuts or pecans, chopped

2 large firm-sweet apples, cored and cut into 1/4" cubes

*Our recommendation:* Grimes Golden or Nodhead

#### **Method:**

1. Preheat oven to 350°, and set a rack to middle position. Generously grease an 11 x 7" baking dish and set aside.
2. In a medium bowl whisk dry ingredients and set aside. In separate bowl beat butter, sugar and egg until pale and well combined. Add nuts and apples and stir until evenly mixed, about 30 seconds. Fold in flour mixture and stir until just combined.
3. Spread batter in the greased pan and bake until golden brown, about 40 minutes. Let cool 30 minutes before slicing and serving.

# Apple Ratatouille

For those of you who still have some tomatoes ripening on your windowsill and a log-sized zucchini or two hidden in the back pantry, here's a recipe that will put the rest of the summer bounty to use. Serve it with some corn bread to soak up the sweet juices. This recipe was inspired by "The Apple Cookbook" by Olwen Woodier.

## Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, sliced
- 4 garlic cloves
- 2 teaspoons dried basil
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon ground allspice
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 bell pepper, sliced
- 2 zucchini, sliced
- 6 ripe tomatoes, quartered
- 2 tart, firm apples

*Our recommendation:* Nodhead,  
Benton Red, Smokehouse



## Method:

1. Heat olive oil in a large skillet; add onion. Crush garlic directly into the skillet and sauté for five minutes. Sprinkle in basil, oregano, all spice and black pepper.
2. Stir the bell peppers into the onions; sauté for an additional 10 minutes.
3. Add zucchini and tomatoes to the skillet. Stir, cover and simmer 20 minutes.
4. Add apples to ratatouille; cover and simmer 15 minutes. Serve hot.



## Apple Dumplings: Your Personal Pie in a Pastry

If one of the pie eaters in your household continually takes more than his or her fair share of pie, you can keep the big eaters in check by making everyone his or her own personal pie. It's a pomological version of pigs-in-a-blanket.

**Ingredients for the Pastry:**

2 ¼ cups flour  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
½ teaspoon salt  
2/3 cup shortening, chilled  
½ cup milk

**Ingredients for the Syrup:**

1 ½ cup sugar  
¼ teaspoon cinnamon & nutmeg  
2 cups water  
¼ cup (half stick) butter

**Ingredients for the Apples:**

6 firm medium/large apples  
*Our recommendation:* Blue  
Pearmain  
½ cup walnuts, chopped  
½ cup raisins or dates, chopped  
3 tablespoons butter

**Ingredients for the Topping:**

1/3 cup sugar  
¼ teaspoon cinnamon & nutmeg

**Method:**

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. In a large bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt. Cut in chilled shortening. When pieces of dough are the size of small peas, add milk and stir until incorporated. Form into a ball.
3. Roll pastry dough into an 18 x 12" rectangle (or whatever shape you like, so long as it is large enough to cover each apple). Cut dough into 6" squares.
4. Peel and core apples. Place an apple in the center of each pastry square. Prep topping: In a small bowl combine cinnamon, sugar and nutmeg and set aside. Next, prepare syrup: Combine sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg and water in a saucepan. Bring to a boil and reduce heat; cook for five minutes. Stir in butter and set aside.
5. Fill hollowed apple cores with raisins and walnuts. Dot the tops with butter and sprinkle with half the sugar/spice topping. Moisten edges of dough with water and fold the corners so that they meet on top of each apple, forming a shell of dough that covers every part of each apple.
6. Place each covered apple in a 13 x 9" baking dish or other baking receptacle—just be sure that there is space for about an inch of syrup in the bottom of the pan to bake the dumplings. Pour syrup over apples and then sprinkle remainder of sugar/spice mixture over the moistened dumplings. Bake for 45 minutes. Cool and serve with vanilla ice cream.

