

*WHY NOT GO...*

# OUT ON A LIMB

CSA NEWSLETTER # 5

11.8.2011



## **WHAT'S IN THIS WEEK?**

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## **YOUR SHARE**

- 🍏 Black Gilliflower - *Sandy River Orchard*
- 🍏 Black Oxford - *Super Chilly Farm & Sandy River Orchard*
- 🍏 Golden Russet - *Apple Farm*
- 🍏 Rome - *Sandy River Orchard*
- 🍏 Winter Banana - *Apple Farm*
- 🍏 Yellow Bellflower - *Sandy River Orchard*



The snow last weekend officially ended the apple harvest. The apples have all been picked and the root cellars and cold storage are loaded. We have enough apples to keep us Mainers with fruit until next June, when our attention will surely turn to fresh strawberries. To help you thrive during the darker months of the year, we are offering some of the best of the keeping apples in this last delivery of 2011. They are the varieties that we put in our root cellar this time of year. Most should be good

now, and all will improve over the course of the next few weeks and months.

**How should you store these keeper apples?** Apples store best in high humidity at a few degrees above freezing. They love it moist and cold. If you don't have a

root cellar, you can store them in an unheated basement, pantry or garage. Just don't let them freeze. A closet or cupboard located on the outside wall of your house or apartment can work as well. We once stored apples in a cellar bulkhead that we packed with hay to insulate them from freezing temperatures. In our root cellar we store them in wooden crates right next to the potatoes (something most people recommend against) since we have never found it to have any negative effect on the apples. Open cardboard boxes work well too, since they allow good air circulation. Some people recommend wrapping each apple in newspaper so they don't touch each other; others suggest putting them in perforated plastic bags to keep the moisture in and allow airflow. Best technique is probably to check them regularly (which you will be doing if you eat an apple a day), remove any that seem to be getting too soft, and turn those into a nice batch of applesauce for breakfast.

We hope that you have enjoyed this year's Out On A Limb apple CSA. We have had fun introducing you to some new, old apples and tasting and testing the apples ourselves along the way. Please consider joining us in 2012 when we will once again attempt to provide you with an assortment of the best unusual apple varieties. In the meantime, don't hesitate to be in touch with any additional thoughts, questions or comments.

Thanks very much from the Out On A Limb crew  
– John, Cammy, John Paul, Regina, Eliza and Rob.

**Black Gilliflower:** very old American variety with an odd name that probably originated in New England during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. The earliest references to the apple are from Connecticut. Originally it was called Red Gilliflower or simply Gilliflower. Where do they get these names? The OED says that Gillyflower is “any of various cultivated flowers with a scent like that of cloves.” S.A. Beach (author of Apples of New York) calls the apple “peculiarly aromatic, good for dessert and special markets.” So, maybe the name comes from its spicy aroma. Some people call the apple Sheepnose because of its elongated, conic shape that looks like—you guessed it—a sheep's nose.



Black Gilliflower is said to be a good baking variety because of its relatively dry flesh. However, we ate them fresh, as we picked them, and found them to be pleasantly tart and fairly juicy. It cooks quickly into a coarse, bright yellow, unusual sauce. Will keep until February.

**Black Oxford:** probably Maine's most famous apple. In his book, The Apples of Maine, George Stilphen writes: “Black Oxford was found as a seedling by Nathaniel Haskell on the farm of one Valentine, a nailmaker and farmer of Paris in Oxford County, about 1790 and the original tree was still standing in 1907, the

farm being then owned by John Swett." I have found very old trees in many central and southern Maine locations. A few years ago I visited a tree in Hallowell that was planted by Dr. Benjamin Vaughan in 1799. It bore seven bushels that fall. The Black Oxford tree has unusual light pink flowers in spring; in some yards it is even planted as an ornamental.

We recommend it for everything: fresh eating, pies and cider. Leave the skins on for a delightful pink sauce. (The skins will dissolve.) **Best eating from late December to March.** Keeps all winter into spring. We ate the last one from our 2010 harvest in July 2011 – somewhat spongy but still flavorful.

**Golden Russet:** thought to have originated in the Eastern U.S. before 1800. Unfortunately, most old-timers referred to the many russeted varieties simply as "Russet." Consequently, many unique apples with different sizes, shapes, seasons and qualities have been confused and lumped into one "variety." In 1874, four different russets were recommended for Maine: English Russet, Golden Russet, Sweet Russet and Poughkeepie Russet. The Golden Russet we offer this week might actually be "Poughkeepsie," "Sweet" or "English." Probably no one will ever know.

Nevertheless, we recommend the apple for dessert, cider and winter storage.



**Rome Beauty:** possibly an open pollinated seedling of Westfield Seek-No-Further. In 1816, Joel Gillett found an odd tree in a shipment from Putnam Nursery. He gave it to his son Alanson, saying, "Here's a Democrat. You may have this one." His son planted the tree on the banks of the Ohio River, where several years later it began to produce. His cousin, Horatio Nelson Gillett took cuttings and started a nursery in Proctorville, Rome Township (now Lawrence County), Ohio to promote the apple. Originally known as "Gillett's Seedling," it was renamed the "Rome Beauty" in 1832 in honor of Rome Township. Often called simply Rome, this is one of the most famous American apples. Until recently Rome, known as "Queen of the Baking Apples," and "Baker's Buddy", was one of the standard cooking apples found in every grocery store.

We recommend it for pies and for baked apples, but not as a dessert fruit, since it develops its flavor with cooking. It keeps very well.

**Winter Banana:** originated on the David Flory farm, Adamsboro, Case county, Indiana, about 1876. Winter Banana was introduced by Greening Brothers Nursery in Monroe, Michigan in 1890; it spread rapidly to many colder, apple-growing regions, including Maine. It is one of the better-known heirloom apples in the state, probably because of its bright "banana"-yellow color, its intriguing name and its beautiful red blush. Old timers around central Maine called it Banana Apple or Fall Banana. Some people detect a hint of banana in the aroma or taste.

Steve Meyerhans of the Apple Farm thinks the taste is rather bland for fresh eating, but we found it to be refreshing, with a light, sweet flavor. We recommend it as a baking and sauce apple. We baked it in an apple crisp last night, and the slices stayed firm, so cut the apple into thin slices if you like a softer fruit. Will keep until early winter.

We noticed as we were packing the Winter Banana apples that they bruised more easily than expected. We culled as many as we could, but we suspect that transporting them to Portland and to your homes will cause more blemishes. We apologize for this and suggest you inspect your apples and use any bruised ones right away.

**Yellow Bellflower:** among the oldest of American apple varieties, probably originating in Crosswicks, Burlington County, New Jersey as early as the 17th century. Also known as Belle-Fleur or Yellow Belle-Fleur, its name refers to its beautiful spring bloom and the yellow color of its fruit. Yellow Bellflower has been grown for generations throughout New York and New England, and magnificent, ancient specimens can still be found in old Maine orchards. A few years ago we visited one on North Haven Island that measured nearly 50 feet across. One hundred and fifty years ago, A.J. Downing described the apple as “tender, juicy, crisp, sprightly sub-acid.”

It is one of the best of all the cooking apples. Apples cook quickly into a somewhat coarse sauce with good flavor. (Most people would want to remove skins after cooking.) Keeps until March in the root cellar.

## **WHO GREW YOUR APPLES?**

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The origin of Super Chilly Farm dates back to 1972, when John Bunker and a couple of his friends from Colby College bought land in Palermo the day after graduation. The property was well over 100 acres of woods, and the only a clearing was the size of a small shelter for hunting/logging. John and his friends spent the “early years” clearing land and building their cabins. When word spread that these young men were trying to grow food in the rocky forest soil, the neighbors objected and mandated that the vegetables be planted in their established garden.

Before long, John began exploring the many abandoned apple trees in the old orchards of Palermo. He got a taste for old varieties, picked bushels of unwanted fruit, pressed many gallons of cider and befriended lots of neighbors and farmers along the way. A few years down the road, John's love of apples and other perennials inspired him to found Fedco Trees, which had its first annual order in 1983.

Meanwhile, Cammy Watts was working in urban areas of the Northeast, connecting youth with nature and working with them to create a just, sustainable food system. She worked as a horticultural therapist at Green Chimneys, a residential treatment facility for youth located on a farm in Brewster, NY. In 1992 she joined the founding staff of The Food Project, which brings teens together to develop farming and leadership skills. Until last June she served as The Food Project's Director of Community Programs, but now she is shifting her focus to rural food justice issues and growing food on the homestead here in Palermo.



Since its inception nearly 40 years ago, Super Chilly Farm has become a beautiful oasis in the woods. With the fruit trees and the gardens that are now well-



established, John, Cammy and the apprentices grow just about all the fruits and vegetables they need for the whole year. The focal point of the homestead is the collection of heirloom apple genetics, but there is also an emphasis on pears and plums. The entire homestead is off the grid, with solar panels for electricity, wood for heat and wells for water. There is abundance to thrive off, yet we continue to establish more gardens and fruit trees every year. In the fall of 2010, we planted a new orchard of 40 apple trees—the future Out On A Limb CSA orchard!

## **THE GREAT APPLE PIE-OFF CHALLENGE**

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

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Pie tasting experiments continued using this week's varieties, except Black Oxford, which we are saving for later in the winter. The Rome apple pie was the runaway favorite, with Yellow Bellflower coming in a tasty second. Winter Banana needed to be cooked longer than the other varieties, and Black Gilliflower did not make a good single-variety pie. Here is what the panel of judges said about the two winners:

### Rome

"Nice tartness to balance the sweet."

"Nearly applesauce consistency."

"Wonderful pink color, hint of berry jelly /jam."

"Amazing. Sweet as heck, creamy."

### Yellow Bellflower

"Springy flavor, sweet & light."

"A bit delicate in flavor."

"Tartness hits you later."

"Flavor tingles tongue. Complex flavor."

We hope you've enjoyed some good pies of your own this season and will continue to send us your feedback on any other varieties or combinations you try out.

## **THE ADVENTURES OF THE PIE FAIRY** by Rob Stenger, *Out On a Limb pomological pie-ologist*

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When Jack Frost nipped at our windows a few weeks ago, and when we received warnings of last weekend's freak snowstorm, an all-out effort to harvest the last of the apple varieties began in earnest here on the farm. To the root cellar they went, where these late varieties will ripen in storage, being better "keepers" than the earlier varieties.

But with no more apples to harvest, what is the apple crew here at Out on a Limb supposed to do? For some of us, it meant turning our efforts to a new apple endeavor—one in tune with the Halloween spirit: **Pie Fairy-ing**.



A pie is as symbolic to the harvest season as a daffodil is to springtime, and a Pie Fairy adventure is an autumnal tradition in the making. It is the calendrical flip-side to the May Day tradition of leaving flower baskets on neighbors' doorsteps. What better way to leave some harvesttime, good cheer for a friend or loved one, than to surprise them with an apple pie, warm from the oven.

### Advice for Would-Be Pie Fairies:

- Try to leave the pies in obvious places, protected in a plastic grocery bag and out of reach of marauding dogs.
- Choose a drop-off close to a time when someone will be home help to reduce the chance that the plan will go awry.
- A small card or note explaining the ingredients (in case of allergies or intolerances) and its origins as a karmic gift from a friend in disguise (the Pie Fairy) is a nice touch.

- If you chose the ring-the-doorbell-and-make-a-mad-dash-for-the-car-as-footsteps-approach technique, it helps to have a get-away driver.
- Mystery is half the fun, but if you suspect that your pie recipients may be suspect of strange baked goods, a leading conversation the next day may help to assuage their fears: “*Say, I found the most delicious pie on my doorstep yesterday...did you (wink, wink)?*”

Family, friends, and those whom are owed favors are all appropriate targets for the Pie Fairy. This season the OOAL Pie Fairies delivered 10 or more pies. Anyone whose hospitality that, as poor farm apprentices, we couldn't justly reward, we paid back in pies. We even delivered an apple Occu-Pie to the protesters in Augusta to warm their day.

So enjoy your apples, but be on the lookout for random acts of pie-ness coming your way—one never knows where the Pie Fairy will appear next!

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

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### **Apple Stuffed Squash**

*Contributed by OOAL crew member, Eliza Greenman*

This recipe saved us a few weekends ago when we threw a feast for 10 people. The main dish of the evening was Coq au Vin, but when we actually tried to eat the rooster, it was so tough that we likely would have starved or lost teeth had it been the only thing we served. Luckily, we had enough stuffed squash to save the meal and make everyone happily satiated.

This recipe is very filling, so be prepared for potential leftovers. It is from the *Moosewood Cookbook* by Mollie Katzen, which has been getting a lot of use at Super Chilly Farm this season.

*Makes 4 large servings*



**Ingredients:**

Two medium-sized squash (Dave's Dakota Dessert, butternut or acorn)

2 medium cooking apples, chopped

*Our recommendation: I used Blue Pearmain with great success, but any good baking apple would work, such as Winter Banana or Yellow Bellflower*

2 cups cottage cheese (*this really makes it, I promise*)

Juice from 1 lemon

½ cup onion, chopped

3 tablespoons butter

dash of cinnamon

¾ cup cheddar cheese, grated

½ teaspoon salt

**Method:**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Split squash lengthwise down the middle. *Butternut or acorn* squash are the best conventional varieties. We used *Dave's Dakota Dessert* and it was amazing. Remove the seeds and bake, facedown, on an oiled baking sheet for 30 minutes, or until you poke it with a fork and it is tender enough to eat.
2. Sauté the apples and onion in butter until the onion is translucent. Combine with remaining ingredients and stuff each squash cavity with the mixture.
3. Place the stuffed squash back on the baking sheet and return to the oven, covered, for 15-20 minutes or until heated through.

**Boiled Cider Apple Crisp**

*Adapted from Cider: Hard & Sweet, by our friend Ben Watson.*

John Paul made this for our Halloween treat using Winter Banana apples. We felt like Goldilocks since we tried it undercooked, burnt (just the back corner), and mostly just right. The Winter Bananas took longer than expected to get soft (hence the impatient tasting of the undercooked crisp), but had a flavor and texture we liked once they softened up.

**Ingredients for the Filling:**

8 medium to large baking apples – cored and sliced 1/8" thick

*Our recommendation: Rome, Black Oxford, Yellow Bellflower or Winter Banana*

2 tablespoons unbleached white flour

½ cup sugar

½ cup maple syrup or boiled cider\*

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

¼ teaspoon allspice  
¼ teaspoon ginger

**Ingredients for the Topping:**

1½ cups old-fashioned oatmeal  
1½ cups unbleached white or whole-wheat flour  
½ - ¾ cup light brown sugar  
½ cup maple syrup or boiled cider\*  
12 tablespoons butter, melted (1.5 sticks)  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon baking powder

\* To make boiled cider: boil down 5 cups of sweet cider to the consistency of maple syrup. The ratio is approximately 5:1 so you should have just enough for this recipe (1 cup) when the consistency is right.

**Method:**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a large bowl, mix filling. Transfer to an ungreased 9 x 13" baking dish.
3. In the same bowl (so you don't have to wash another), combine the topping ingredients and mix well. Spread over the filling in the baking dish.
4. Bake, uncovered, for 40-60 minutes, until the topping is brown and the apples are soft. Serve with ice cream, whipped cream or just plain cream.

## **Apple Cheese Tart**

This recipe was contributed by CSA member, Kelly Roopchand. She made it for us using seedling apples from her farmyard and her own homemade goat cheese. It was delicious and a welcome, not-as-sweet change from the single variety apple pies we have been eating all season. Should work well with Black Oxford or Rome apples.

**Ingredients for the Tart Shell & Filling:**

8 tablespoons unsalted butter  
1 ½ cups flour  
¼ cup almond meal/ground almonds  
2 tablespoons cane sugar  
1 large egg  
1+ tablespoon ice water  
½ teaspoon almond extract  
8 oz. goat cheese

2 tablespoons honey  
4 apples  
½ cup golden raisins

**Ingredients for the Topping:**

1 cup flour  
¼ teaspoon cinnamon  
¼ teaspoon nutmeg  
1/8 teaspoon cardamom  
½ cup butter (¼ cut in small cubes, ¼ melted)  
¼ cup cane sugar  
1 cup slivered almonds

**Method:**

1. *Prepare the tart shell:*
  - a. In a medium-sized bowl, whisk egg, ice water and almond extract and set aside.
  - b. In a separate bowl, rub together the butter and flour until the mixture resembles the size of small peas.
  - c. Stir in almond meal and sugar and toss with your fingers until combined.
  - d. Add the egg mixture and mix until the dough comes together.
  - e. Knead the dough a few times until smooth. Wrap in plastic wrap and chill for 20-30 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350 degrees and *prepare the topping.*
  - a. In a medium-sized bowl, whisk flour and spices and rub in butter with your fingers. Stir in sugar, then almonds. Set aside.
  - b. In a separate bowl, stir together goat cheese and honey until smooth and spreadable. Set aside.
3. Roll the chilled dough to fit a 10-inch fluted tart pan. Using a rolling pin, roll over the top of the tart pan to trim off the excess.
4. Spread the goat cheese mixture in the bottom of the tart shell in one even layer.
5. Peel, core and thinly slice apples. Arrange over the goat cheese mixture in overlapping concentric circles. Sprinkle the raisins over the top of the apples. Cover completely with the topping. Drizzle the melted butter sporadically over the crumb topping.
6. Place on a baking sheet and bake for 25-30 minutes, or until golden and the apples are tender. Cool for 15 minutes on a wire rack before serving.

## Sage & Cider Jelly

We found a jar of homemade Sage Cider Jelly sitting in our barn last week after the CSA pick up. It was left by CSA member, Nancy Stevick, (perhaps now known as the "Condiment Fairy"?) who kindly agreed to share her recipe. We are loving it on toast and bread, and Nancy recommends it as an accompaniment for roast turkey and pork as well. Sounds like we should save some for those Thanksgiving leftovers. She says it is easy to make.

### Ingredients:

3 cups apple cider  
1 1/2 tablespoons dried sage  
1 package (1 + 3/4 - 2 oz.) powdered pectin  
4 cups sugar

### Method:

1. Sterilize six 6-oz jelly jars and set aside.
2. In a large kettle combine cider and sage. Heat to scalding. Remove from heat and let stand for 15 minutes.
3. Strain the liquid through a fine cloth or several thicknesses of cheesecloth. Return the liquid to the kettle and add pectin. Place over high heat and stir until the mixture comes to a full rolling boil. Stir in the sugar and return to a rolling boil. Boil for 1 minute if you use 1 + 3/4 oz. pectin (or 2 minutes for 2 oz.), stirring constantly.
4. Remove from heat, skim off the foam, immediately pour into sterilized jelly glasses, filling one at a time, sealing as filled with scalding lids and ring. Invert the jar to coat top surface with hot jelly then place right side up to cool. This will make 6 glasses (6 oz. size).

