

What's in Season from the Garden State

Biweekly Highlights from Cooperative Extension, a unit of Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

October 15, 2007



Win Cowgill, Agricultural Agent with Honeycrisp apples from research blocks at Rutgers Snyder Research Farm, Hunterdon County.



Growers use a starch iodine solution to determine the starch to sugar ratio for optimal picking.

Fresh Apples from the Garden State

Win Cowgill, Agricultural Agent, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Hunterdon County

Did you know that New Jersey has 150 apple growers that produce over three million pounds of apples annually? This is a good thing for consumers. Our New Jersey growers sell direct to you in one of three outlets: roadside farm markets, Pick Your Own, and at the forty five plus tailgate markets located throughout the Garden State. For more information on these markets visit <http://www.state.nj.us/jerseyfresh>.

We also have one of the few apple breeding programs left in the United States, located at the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES). Rutgers has developed many apple varieties that are New Jersey apple lovers' favorites. These include Suncrisp (NJ55), Mollies Delicious, Britemac, and Jersey Mac.

What are the advantages of buying locally grown Jersey Fresh apples? First, you will be getting a high quality product that was harvested fresh and has not been trucked across the country. Secondly, you help keep the Garden State green by supporting your local apple growers. The main apple regions in the US are Washington State, Michigan, New York State and Pennsylvania. Of course our supermarkets have apples from around the world as well including Chile, Australia, and New Zealand.

Rutgers NJAES and our New Jersey growers partner to harvest apples at the optimum maturity. A comprehensive apple maturity report is prepared each week during the main New Jersey apple season from late August through October. Fruit samples are collected on Sunday and Monday each week from orchards across central and northern New Jersey. The fruit is tested at the Rutgers Snyder Research Farm and the information is sent to all New Jersey growers via E-mail or fax.

How do we tell when an apple is ready to harvest? We look at three things: sugar content (Soluble Solids or Brix), flesh pressure, and the Starch Iodine test. All three of these are used on a sample of ten apples for each variety from each orchard sampled weekly. For more information on apple maturity testing visit <http://www.umass.edu/fruitadvisor/clements/articles/sitest.htm>. Of course tasting the fruit is the last step to determining apple maturity. All these tests ensure that growers know the optimum time to harvest Jersey Fresh apples for your eating pleasure or to open their Pick Your Own blocks to allow you to harvest.

The best way to tell a locally grown apple from an imported one is to look for a PLU sticker on the fruit (the little sticker that has the Variety and the Location Grown). If it has a sticker, chances are it was grown in another state or country. New Jersey grown apples are rarely PLU stickered.

New Jersey Department of
Agriculture's Jersey Fresh &
Seafood Availability Report

Current:
Apples Peppers
Arugula Pumpkins
Baby Arugula & Spinach
Baby Spinach Squash - Acorn,
Basil Butternut, Spagh-
Beets ghetti yellow &
Cabbage zucchini
Cilantro Sweet Corn
Collards Sweet Potatoes
Cucumbers Swiss Chard
Dill Tomatoes
Eggplant Turnips
Escarole & En- White Potatoes
dive



Butterfish
Flounder
Fluke
Ling
Lobster
Makos
Monkfish
Scup (Porgies)
Sea Scallops
(Day Boat)
Skate Wings
- Nov. 1st
Squid
Sword Fish
Tilefish - Nov. 1st
Tuna
Whiting

**Farm Raised
Hard Clams &
Oysters**
Littlenecks/Middle-
necks
Specials
Cape May Salt
Oysters
Delaware Bay
Oysters



From Folklore to Lab: Research on Cranberry's Health Benefits

A vital aspect to research science is taking findings from the lab and applying them to the real world. That's what Dr. Amy B. Howell of Rutgers Marucci Blueberry and Cranberry Research and Extension Center is accomplishing through her work with the cranberry and blueberry industries in advancing knowledge of the beneficial effects these fruits have in preventing urinary tract infections.

But even before scientific theory is put to the test in the lab, Howell considers how such information surfaces to begin with. Many of the indicators of health benefits of certain foods, which today are considered nutraceuticals, originally came about as folklore. Howell cites how cranberries were so vital to the survival of Native Americans who dried them and used them to preserve meat. "They really kept them alive over the winter and were a huge part of their lives", says Howell. But how did they realize some of the health benefits that came to us by way of folklore?

Howell relates a story of how a colleague who was doing diabetes research on berries learned how a Native American tribe made such a connection. When visiting a reservation in South Dakota, she was told that before they had indoor plumbing there was an outdoor area used for elimination. The urine of people with diabetes attracted ants whom are drawn to sugar. They noticed that when the diabetics ate particular seasonal berries the ants stopped coming. And so the connection was made between the berries and their impact on blood sugar levels.

This relationship between certain foods and specific health benefits is the driving force behind nutraceuticals or what are also known as functional foods. Howell explains, "People want to self-medicate – they don't like to go to doctors. Since we have to eat anyway – there's competition for stomach space, why not eat something that's good for you and has health functionality to it, like cranberry juice, instead of sugary soda which causes oxidative stress in your body? Sugar jolts cause inflammation, causing a cascade of negative effects. Having cranberry juice instead is helping and not causing oxidative stress."

Buying Local – One of the Lesser Known Reasons

People who buy fresh local foods are often motivated by a variety of reasons; whether they are culinary, environmental, or societal factors. But there is a less conscious or perhaps sub-conscious reason that may be a motivating factor for many people: the act of buying local evokes childhood memories. Many people can think back to a time when there were more farms than shopping centers, when farmstands lined the routes to the Jersey Shore, when their families went apple picking together, or the kids had the job of peeling corn out on the back porch. Whether or not you grew up in New Jersey, there may be a time you can remember your family gathering together in the kitchen to bake some apple pies or carving out Halloween pumpkins.

While the world is a much different place now, these are still traditions that we can pass onto our children. Whether it's roasting pumpkin seeds or sitting down to a family meal and discussing where the food came from, these practices can weave an emotional thread that connects time, family and place.

"Every year we go apple picking. Usually several families go together. The children love sampling the apples and taking hay rides. My family usually picks around 100 lbs. Then we make apple pies and applesauce that we freeze and use throughout the year."

Find some more homegrown memories or share your own at:
<http://www.njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu/memories.asp>

Where to find Jersey Fresh? Ask for it
where you shop or dine or go to:
<http://www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov>

To receive these reports by e-mail:
njfarmfresh@rce.rutgers.edu

Web: <http://www.njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu>
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Extension office go to:
<http://www.rce.rutgers.edu/county>