

## Tasty Apples

I recently ate an apple from our refrigerator and it was tasty and crisp. My wife commonly purchases the Gala and Fuji varieties, and I assumed it was one of these. It was not. It turned out to be Braeburn. In the past, when I have eaten Braeburn apples, they have been tasteless and mushy, and I couldn't understand their popularity. This holds true with other apples due to how they are handled, and it is worth giving them more than one try before passing judgment.

Apple quality is highly dependent on how the fruit was stored, treated and shipped before it reached the point of purchase. This is why an apple's quality (such as Braeburn) may suffer at one store and the same variety has excellent quality at another. Additionally, many times, the most common apples become more of a commodity where handling for quality becomes less important due to their commonality. Conversely, many of the newest, less familiar varieties receive better care and higher quality is maintained due to better profit margins on these particular apples. As with most things though, there are no absolutes, and if you find a vendor who has excellent produce, even the common varieties will usually have good quality.

Newer varieties I have tasted and been impressed with include Pacific Rose, Ambrosia, Sonya, Cameo and Honeycrisp. Out of these, Cameo and Honeycrisp are the most available. The others may only be carried by certain vendors or may be available for just a few months of the year.

Many times, commercial apple grower cooperatives such as Washington Apples or the New York Apple Association have Web sites with a wealth of information about varieties their growers produce and feature such things as recipes and general information. They can be interesting to view. These two associations' variety Web pages can be accessed using the following hyperlinks: Washington Apples, at <http://www.bestapples.com/varieties/index.shtml> and the New York Apple Association, at <http://www.nyapplecountry.com/varieties.htm>. Another interesting Web site pertaining to apples is called Orange Pippin. It offers a relatively thorough listing of varieties and detailed information. It additionally allows users to comment about their experience with different apples. It can be accessed at <http://www.orangepippin.com/>.

If you plan to cook with apples, the variety you choose can impact the quality of the recipe. Some better cooking apples include: Granny Smith, Rome, Cortland, Jonamac, Jonathon, Northern Spy, Golden Delicious, Cameo and Pink Lady. Golden Delicious and Pink Lady are reportedly especially good for pies.

When you purchase apples, they should be kept at around 35 F. This will maximize shelf life and quality. If storing for a long period of time, frequently check to ensure that all bruised and rotting fruit is

removed. Apples decline very rapidly when exposed to rotting fruit or stored at room temperature. If you receive gift baskets containing apples and other fruit, unpack them as quickly as possible. Fruits, such as apples, lose quality quickly in baskets.