

American Fruit Varieties Abroad

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It is quite in character, I believe, for the older generation, of which I am one, to lament over the inevitable changes brought about through the passage of time. Although the average individual is not much concerned with horticultural lore and nomenclature, it is a most interesting commentary to note how many laymen of my generation recall and mourn over the passing of those goodies so reminiscent of their childhood days. When speaking of apple varieties in particular, it is not at all uncommon to hear people speak with great eloquence and reverence of the old Russet. I have often seen folks quite poetic, if not downright sentimental, in recalling those barrels of Baldwin, Fameuse and Willow Twig apples, which have since become obsolete.

To the younger generation the best varieties of a half century ago are now regarded as a myth or subjects of historical interest only.

While we recognize that progress has a right of way, it does seem a pity that in some instances, appearance has been permitted to supersede eating quality and has sounded the death knell of an otherwise noble variety.

We are told that color is the greatest single quality factor in the sale of fruit. But why? All the emphasis is placed upon appearance, and the virtues of flavor or eating quality are never mentioned.

It is claimed that in the United States at least 85 to 90 percent of fruit sales are made through the eye rather than the stomach. I don't know whether these percentages are accurate, but the same figures would

have no application to the basis for comparable purchases by the European housewife. While American fruit varieties have long enjoyed a market in Europe, it is also a fact that many European varieties short on looks but long on flavor have managed to hold their own on an increasingly competitive market.

It can be said, I believe, that in general the average European is more conscious of eating quality than his or her North American counterpart. Varieties that would be unsalable on a fruit stand in the United States are often displayed nested in cotton wool and commanding a fancy price in a European luxury fruit shop. In England, the Cox Orange Pippin is nothing to look at, yet it commands the highest price of any apple on the market. The public knows and likes the flavor of the Cox and is therefore willing to pay a premium for it, regardless of looks.

In France the Reinette du Canada ranks high in the eyes of the gourmet, but from the standpoint of appearance it looks like nothing at all. The same can be said of the Belle de Boskoop in Holland, Germany, Austria and other central European countries. Unlike the United States, these old varieties have not become obsolete or been replaced by a lot of new creations which have eye appeal but poor eating quality.

English growers, in expanding their plantings or in establishing new holdings, have stuck pretty much to varieties of local origin. On the continent of Europe however, the trend has been toward the introduction of

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varieties of American origin. This is particularly true in Holland, France and Italy. In Denmark, where the post-war planting of orchards has been extensive, over 80 percent of the trees have consisted of Cox Orange Pippen. This was done with the English market in mind. Holland and Italy look toward the export market, and select their varieties accordingly. In France most post-war plantings have occurred in the southern part of the country, and American varieties have been planted to a great extent.

How do our American varieties behave under European conditions? The same as they do in the United States and Canada. Soil and climate exert the same influence on varietal characteristics in Europe as they do in the United States or in any other given country. The performance of the Red Delicious or Golden Delicious apple is as different when grown in Holland as compared with the shores of the Mediterranean as it is when grown under Virginia conditions as against the state of Washington.

Apples under northern European conditions do not take on the same color, shape or finish as those produced in the southern districts. The same holds true for high as against low elevations. For example, apples produced at sea level along the Italian Adriatic are not in the same class as those produced in the Italian Tyrol or mountainous areas of the North.

Red Delicious, Red Rome, Stamarred and other color sports of apple behave much the same in Europe as they do elsewhere under similar conditions; perhaps not as smooth or with as good a finish as is possible, but superior to those grown in the eastern half of the United States. In the Paris area and throughout northern France, the production of fruit with excellent finish is the exception rather than the rule.

It is difficult to define varietal characteristics because they are the result of a combination of specific growing conditions. Should the five prominent humps on the calyx end of the fruit of a young Delicious tree grown in the Wenatchee Valley be described as characteristic of the variety; or should the Delicious as grown under conditions which prevail in Michigan or West Virginia be described as characteristic? Not long ago I heard the Cox Orange Pippen referred to as being the best apple in the world. I suggested that it might be a question of personal opinion; and certainly it did not reflect the feeling of the large masses of consumers on the American continent.

It can be said that in certain parts of Europe, American varieties of deciduous fruits have adapted themselves well and have produced fruits similar to those grown in various fruit growing areas in America, where conditions are similar. This can be extended to include parts of the Middle East as well. Lebanon, for example, is growing new American color sport varieties of apple that compare favorably with those grown in our own Pacific Northwest, where growing conditions are more or less similar.

Since Europe is sort of a meeting place for fruit produced in all parts of the world, it offers an ideal spot from which to observe the influence of the soils and climates of the world upon varietal characteristics of fruits. In the case of apple imports from Argentina, it is not difficult to tell the areas in which they are produced. The Delicious grown in the vicinity of Buenos Aires is quite a different apple from that produced in the Rio Negro Valley. The Golden Delicious grown under South African conditions bears a close resemblance to those grown in the Lake Chelan country in Washington. In fact, South African fruit in

general is similar in appearance and finish to fruit produced in our arid sections of the Pacific coast states. The popularity of the Golden Delicious apple on the British market is increasing rapidly. Its establishment as a preferred market variety can be attributed almost entirely to the pioneering efforts of South Africa.

Perhaps one of the most outstanding examples of varietal adaptation or behavior that can be cited is that of the peach. The greatest post-war development in Europe from a horticultural standpoint has occurred in Italy. New plantings, especially of peaches, have consisted largely of American varieties. Conditions seem to be especially conducive to perfection in the J. H. Hale peach and its offspring. Many of the new varieties of peaches developed by the Michigan, New Jersey, Maryland and other State Experiment Stations, as well as by the Federal workers at Beltsville, are found growing in Italy and southern France.

The performance of American fruit varieties abroad in many instances leaves little to be desired, and in some cases it would seem as though their behavior is much better away from home than at home. Some years ago I found Newtowns growing in an orchard in the southern part of the Central Valley of Chile which were almost identical to those produced in some of the best orchards in the Hood River Valley of Oregon. At the same time, I discovered Delicious in the same area that bore a close resemblance to those grown under Yakima or Wenatchee conditions.

A few years ago, I saw various American varieties of apples being tried out in an experimental orchard in central France. I was particularly impressed with the excellent quality and appearance of the Grimes Golden,

Rome Beauty, Stayman and Winesap. In strolling through this orchard one had the feeling of suddenly being transplanted to our own Appalachian area.

American fruit varieties, like American people, react differently, according to the environment. In some cases they adapt themselves admirably; in others they are complete failures. As new American varieties are introduced, they will be distributed on a world wide basis. In countries where soil and climatic conditions are favorable they will succeed. Where the reverse is true they will fail. But, regardless of success or failure, the question of varietal adaptation will always remain a lively and interesting subject.



Apple Sports in Washington State

At the present time, we are collecting all the known color sports and growing them on uniform soil and on uniform stock (Malling VII). These trees have not come into bearing as yet. The interest in this area centers around sports of Delicious.

Some twenty odd "super sports" of Delicious are known. Of these, about 15% are of the "spurry" type. This type makes shorter growth with more leaves per linear inch, giving the tree its spurry look. Also, these trees are smaller and come into bearing earlier.

These new sports may also be divided on the basis of the type of color they produce. About 50 percent of them produce a blush type of color, and 50 percent, a striped type. So far, we have not seen any difference in time of maturity among these sports. —E. S. Degman, *Tree Fruit Exp. Station, State College of Washington, Wenatchee.*