

Apples for Dessert — a Second Look Part II)*

ROBERT A. NITSCHKE**

Birmingham, Michigan

Late Midseason (Early October)

Again I would continue to put **Tompkin's King** and **Orenco** at the head of the list for this season, especially as apples for eating out of hand. It seems to me that both exemplify the best characteristics of our native varieties. They have size, they are red-skinned, the flesh is juicy, crisp and breaking, and the flavor is superb. For American tastes there can be no better. King would be the delight of every boy who loves to eat apples, and the delight of his mother in the kitchen. Orenco is perhaps a bit more elegant in flavor—a gourmet's apple. It is a shy bearer but fully worth waiting for.

Because my own taste and that of my friends does not seem to appreciate the "nutty" flavor of Orleans Reinette, I would drop it from the list. I would probably keep **Jubilee** (McIntosh x Grimes Golden), a good, juicy, small apple for eating, its flavor perhaps just a shade from perfection, but possessing a most strikingly beautiful solid red color; and **Macoun** (McIntosh x Jersey Black), the best of the countless newer varieties with McIntosh parentage, and to my taste far better than McIntosh.

There are several I would add to the list for this season, one especially, a new variety called **Jonalicious**. It belongs to the Jonathan family, and has the same fine richness of flavor, but with a little more refinement and not quite as much tartness. It keeps its crisp juiciness wonderfully into

the winter and has a magnificent color—mostly a pure brick red and some pale yellow, with the two colors largely unblended and distinct, as with the Lady apple.

Another new apple variety whose merits grow upon acquaintance is **Franklin**, a Delicious-McIntosh cross from the Ohio Experiment Station. Of Delicious shape and color, Franklin is a fine, juicy apple, both tender and crisp, but with a distinctive mild flavor unlike that of either parent. It must not be allowed to overripen on the tree, or it loses both flavor and texture.

There are also three old English apples which I would add for this season: **Cornish Gilliflower**, **Egremont Russet** and **Ashmead's Kernel**, recognizing, however, that they are primarily for the connoisseur, and are at their best with one's dessert cheese, peeled and quartered with the knife. All three have exceedingly high flavor, Cornish Gilliflower probably more so than the other two, John Lindley, in his *Pomologia Britannica* (1830), had the following to say about Cornish Gilliflower: "This is the best apple that is known if high flavor combined with a very rich saccharine juice, be the qualities we most desire in a fruit." Cornish Gilliflower was discovered about 1800, and brought its finder a Silver Medal from the Royal Horticultural Society. But it has a most unattractive skin and shape, striped brownish red over dark splotchy green, and it hangs on the tree until

*Part I of this article appeared in the preceding issue, Vol. 19 No. 3.

**Chairman of A.P.S. Fruit Gardens Committee.

it rots, so that it must be picked at the right time; but it is still an apple for those who look to intrinsic merits.

Egremont Russet is almost a late version of St. Edmund's Pippin in appearance, but to my taste is fully the equal of that splendid variety in its exceptionally delicious flavor. Its origin is unknown; it was first mentioned about 1880.

Ashmead's Kernel is also a late russet, but a bit larger, more conical in shape, and with a more rugged coat, not quite as rich, but still of first rank, and also a good keeper. In a "blind-fold test" taste session recently held by the Fruit Group of the Royal Horticultural Society, Ashmead's Kernel was ranked first in quality.

Late (Late October)

This is truly the climax of the apple season, except for a very few, which must not be picked until the last, usually early November in Southern Michigan.

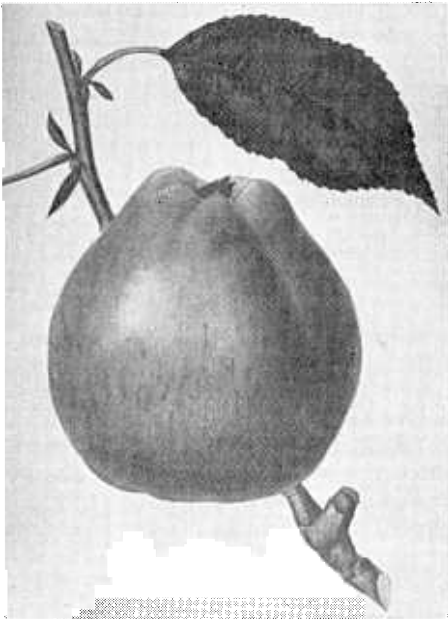


Fig. 1. Cornish Gilliflower, a late midseason old English variety of high flavor.

Melrose and Spigold (N.Y. E-6) should be taken from the tree at this season. It is difficult to speak with restraint of the superb qualities of these two apples. They are to my taste the finest of the new apples coming from the breeding programs of the state agricultural experimental stations, and two of the finest apples of all time. I can add little to what I have already said in praise of these two varieties.

Melrose (Jonathan x Delicious) from my cold storage the first week of April this year had developed a rounded richness of flavor of august proportions—even putting Newtown Pippin in the pale—much I suppose as it is said a wine of an exceptional year mellowed with age into a rounded balance of perfection.

Spigold (Red Spy x Golden Delicious) for all its huge size has exceptional flavor combined with a marvelously crisp, juicy, delicate texture—at once so solid and so insubstantial, cracking to the teeth, yet almost dissolving into liquidity against the tongue.

These are truly American apples with what I regard as outstanding American characteristics, fine flavor, of course, but combined with size and above all with exceptional juiciness and texture.

Another new apple belonging to this season and worthy of rank alongside Melrose and Spigold is Mutsu (Golden Delicious x Indo), a Japanese variety from the Aomori Apple Experiment Station in Northern Honshu, and named after the bay of that name. In a sense Mutsu is an American variety with American parentage, as are all apple varieties in Japan. It is believed there were no apples in Japan prior to the Meiji era when American apples were first brought in, Indo growing from seeds carried by a

school teacher from Indiana, hence its name.

Mutsu has found recognition in many countries of the world and is regarded at the National Fruit Trials in England as one of the really superior apples to be introduced in modern times. It is large to very large, round in shape, colors pure yellow here at Southmeadow, and has yellowish white, slightly coarse, yet crisp, juicy, tender flesh of a distinctive delicate spicy flavor — faintly anise-like — of completely first rank dessert quality. In addition, it does not shrivel in storage, keeps exceedingly well, is highly resistant to spray and fruit injury and produces uniformly beautiful unblemished fruits. It would replace Golden Delicious on my list.

For this season I would also add **Roxbury** (Boston Russet). Perhaps not quite as attractive, flatter, with more green and less bronze than **Golden Russet**, not as pleasing to all tastes or quite as good to eat out of hand as **Golden**, nonetheless **Roxbury** wears better, develops better flavor as it ages, and ultimately shows more austere perfection and refinement of flavor, just as **Ribston Pippin** ultimately outranks **Cox's Orange**. Indeed, Hogg, the great English pomologist, said of **Roxbury**, "It partakes much of the flavour of **Ribston Pippin** and as a late winter dessert apple is not to be surpassed." It should perhaps be noted that **Golden Russet** may be left on the tree until the first heavy frost takes the leaves, in which case its flavor seems even better.

Also to be added are **Senator** (Oliver Red), a flattish red over yellow apple with pronounced spots, with pure crisp white flesh, exceedingly juicy, pleasantly flavored, and one of the best for eating out of hand; and **Sutton Beauty**, similar to **Hubbardston Nonesuch** and making difficult a choice between these two famous old

Massachusetts apples. Still included would be **Esopus Epitzenburg**, **Canada Red** and **McLellan**; but I believe I would drop **Prairie Spy**, badly affected by internal browning, and often developing a peculiar medicinal flavor.

Fireside, an excellent keeper, should probably be put in the "sweet" apple class, the so-called nonacid varieties. **Dunning** (**Cox's Orange Pippin** x **McIntosh**), introduced by the New York station in 1938, is certainly an improvement over the old **Sweet Bough** which always seems to taste as if nature had not quite finished its job; **Lady Sweet** still remains the best of this group with the refined character that goes with its name.

Very Late (November)

In the very end of the apple picking season, I would add **Tioga**, ripening yellowish green with some slight red blush, and very much like a large **Newtown Pippin** in texture and flavor. Its size is some advantage over **Newtown**, which frequently is smaller than desirable in an apple ripening so late. **Tioga**, however, does not keep in cold storage as well.

Newtown Pippin really is not at its best until March or later, when it reigns in solitary majesty as the last of the fine dessert apples. Because **Newtown** is difficult to protect from apple maggot and because of its tendency to be small, I would also add, for the end of the season, **Granny Smith**, a beautiful pure grass green fall apple from Australia with a rugged shiny surface like peened metal, and of consistently good size. It does not have exceptional flavor, but its juicy flesh makes refreshing eating as late in the spring as does **Newtown**. **Swaar** (see front cover) would still be included, and is of very compact, concentrated flavor and texture; but it is at its best not much beyond the first of the year.

A final word of praise for **Calville Blanc d'hiver**—in my estimation one of the greatest of all apples, one I could never be without, a sentiment which must have been felt by the many apple lovers who preserved its existence down through the ages, since King Louis XIII of France, in 1627, enjoyed its tender, banana spiced flesh. It is a large, flattish-round apple with uneven ribs extending the whole length of the fruit and terminating in prominent unequal ridges at the base. Pale green with light red dots on the side exposed to the sun, it turns a beautiful clear yellow in storage as it reaches maturity. Calville Blanc probably needs a sunny location and a long season to ripen to perfection. (A friend whose opinion I value highly cannot recommend it for the northern tip of New York State.) However, I must warn growers not to judge it by its first few crops. The tree needs maturity to show its promise.

In my family, which has over 250 apple varieties to choose from, Calville Blanc continues to rate among

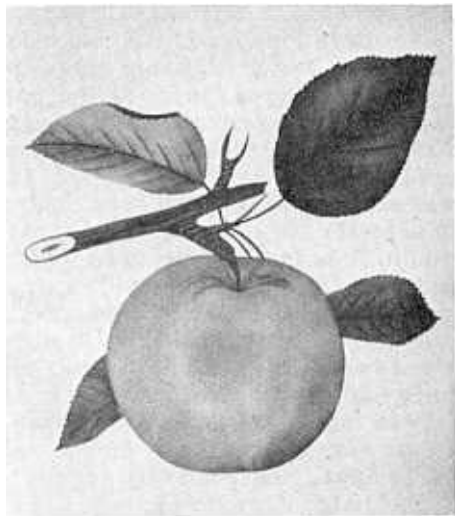


Fig. 2. Roxbury Russet, an old, late winter, fine dessert variety of American origin.

the very best of all dessert apples. And I was interested to note that recently Mr. Potter of the National Fruit Trials, in an article in the Royal Horticultural Society Journal, put it in his list of best home garden varieties in a good season. In addition, we have become acquainted with the virtues of the Calville Blanc in the kitchen, where it is now perhaps first choice for pies, tarts, kuchen and apple compote. I suspect that its Gallic ancestry has given Calville Blanc a temperamental view of American soil and climate, but, where it can be successfully grown, it will grace the connoisseur's table here just as it does even today in the finest Parisian restaurants.

Leading Apple Cultivars in Pennsylvania

The production of the leading apple cultivars of Pennsylvania in 1964 was reported by L. D. Tukey in Penn State Hort. Reviews as follows:

York Imperial: 2,320,000 bu(23%)
 Stayman Winesap: 1,850,000 bu(18%)
 Rome Beauty: 1,550,000 bu(16%)
 Delicious: 1,150,000 bu(12%)
 Golden Delicious: 860,000 bu
 Jonathan: 610,000

McIntosh, Delicious (regular and red sports), Baldwin and Cortland are the four leading varieties in New Hampshire, based on a 1963 tree survey.

A Bartlett selection, OP-9 Bartlett, which outperforms other selections in the nursery, has been found and reported by the Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station at Corvallis.

Trend Toward Smaller-Than-Standard Apple Trees

A recent U. S. D. A. report shows a very interesting trend in the U. S. apple industry. Dwarf and semi-dwarf trees now make up 5% of the entire apple tree population. One-third of the apple trees planted since 1959 are of this type. Because of early bearing and dense tree population, the per acre yield from these smaller trees is potentially greater than per acre yields from standard trees.

Cash prizes totaling \$50.00 will be awarded annually by A.P.S. to college students for winning essays on subjects related to fruit variety improvement, thanks to generosity of John Bregger.

Sources of Old Apple Varieties

The following list includes some of the available sources of old apple varieties. It is being published at the request of one of our readers, and may prove of value to others who have an interest in old varieties.

Converse Company Nursery—Amherst, New Hampshire

Henry Leuthardt Nursery—Port Chester, N. Y.

Worcester County Hort. Society—30 Elm St., Worcester, Mass. (scionwood only)

Baums Nursery—R. D. 4, New Fairfield, Conn.

Southmeadow Fruit Gardens—2363 Tilbury Place, Birmingham, Mich.

David A. Lawyer—Star Route, Plains, Montana (scionwood only)

Annual Meeting of American Pomological Society

The next annual meeting of A. P. S. will be a joint meeting with the North Carolina Apple Growers Association, Jan. 12, 13, 14, 1966. There will be a tour of the local apple area on the first day (Jan. 12). Formal sessions will begin on the evening of Jan. 12, continuing through Jan. 13, and finishing at noon, Jan. 14.

Headquarters for the meetings will be at the Battery Park Hotel, Asheville, N. C. There will be a banquet on the evening of Jan. 13. Also, an apple variety exhibit will be featured.

If you plan on attending the above meeting, Secretary of A. P. S., Dr. J. B. Mowry, Hort. Exp. Station, Carbondale, Illinois, would appreciate your letting him know before hand.

Peach Growing in Mexico

It is of interest that peaches grown in Central Mexico are largely limited to seedling clingstones of Spanish origin. Apparently, the early settlers of Mexico brought with them peach pits from Spain and planted them. However, until now, few of the seedlings from these pits and their progeny have been selected or named.

In northern Mexico, a few Mormon farmers are growing peaches that originated in the United States, on a commercial scale. A few U. S. varieties are also being grown on a small scale in other parts of Mexico where the elevation is high enough (mostly above 6,000 ft.) to provide sufficient chilling during their rather mild winters. There are few large plantings, however, because most potential growers are awaiting the outcome of variety tests of the better short-chilling varieties from this country—*John Bregger, Clemson, S. C. (a past president of A. P. S.)*