

## My Favorite Dessert Apples

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The author was asked to list his twenty choicest dessert varieties of apples. This is his list of twenty in the approximate order of taste preference: Spigold, Macoun, Golden Delicious, Esopus Spitzenburg, N.Y. 45500-5 (McIntosh x Delicious), N.Y. 43013-1 (Golden Delicious x Jonathan), Jonathan, Yellow Newtown, Northern Spy, Patricia, Red Melba, Cox Orange, Golden Russet, Orleans Reinette, Spartan, Tydeman Early, Mutsu, Tompkins King, Spencer, and Kidds Orange Red.

The many characteristics which influence fruit quality cannot be measured as a composite by using objective analytical methods. For this reason, any list of favorite varieties is necessarily based on subjective evaluation. Any list is a personal list; only rarely can two persons agree on the twenty best varieties.

Many personal factors influence one's choice of favorite varieties. The taste of the green apples that a boy steals from the neighbor's orchard may set a standard of perfection for life. Or, a scientist who makes estimates of fruit quality for purposes of evaluating apple varieties for their commercial usefulness may be strongly influenced by the training of his teachers—Yellow Newtown has a long history of good quality, therefore, it has good quality.

Economic returns realized by the grower of apples can have a tremendous influence on his judgment of quality; growers in the Northwest have been known to say that Delicious has better quality than any other variety; growers in the Northeast often state,

without reservation, that McIntosh is best of all; growers in the mid-West, Jonathan.

A person's "sweet-tooth" can affect his judgment of quality; this writer prefers a somewhat mild flavor, while many prefer rather acid flavors. For every individual, taste preferences will vary; each new apple season, every person will make changes in his list because of new impressions made through new experiences. Further, one's judgment of quality is affected by his immediately previous experiences. If he is tasting ten varieties in a single row in the orchard, the ten would have different relative ratings if he starts at the East end than they would have starting from the West end. A variety ripening in summer may seem to have better quality than many varieties which, in fact, have definitely superior quality, but ripen in late fall.

In addition to the variety itself, many environmental factors, such as abnormal rainfall, overcropping, or cool summer temperatures, can affect quality. Thus, a variety may have good quality in one orchard and poor in another. Who has not noted the wide variations in quality within the same variety? A fully ripe, large, nonrusseted *Golden Delicious* can be a thing of beauty and of luscious eating goodness; a *Golden Delicious* borne on an overcropped tree is small, green, spongy in texture and only mediocre in dessert quality. *Northern Spy* can also possess these same extremes in quality. Even the best varieties often have fruit quality that leaves much to be desired. Thus,

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when varieties are compared for quality, all of them must be grown under the very best conditions. This is virtually an impossible set of circumstances to acquire.

Storage sometimes greatly affects quality. *Golden Russet* can be included on the above list only if it has been stored for several months, after which its best quality develops. The same is true for *Esopus Spitzenburg* and *Yellow Newtown*. Most of the varieties listed achieve their best dessert quality just after harvest, but early varieties are best just as they ripen.

The writer lives in McIntosh country and for this reason, is attracted to McIntosh types; *Macoun* represents the best fruit quality among these varieties. Many people agree that *Macoun* has excellent quality, even though the tree is difficult to handle because of long, lanky branches, closely spaced fruits, and fruit dropping. Other McIntosh types high on the quality list are *Patricia*, *Red Melba*, *Spartan*, N.Y. 45500-5, and *Tydeman Early*.

*Spigold*, a cross between Red Spy and Golden Delicious combines and surpasses the luscious good eating qualities of both its parents. *Mutsu*, new from Japan, is a Golden Delicious type and the fruits are larger. Its quality is sometimes indistinguishable from Golden Delicious, though the flesh texture is slightly coarser. *Spencer*, a McIntosh x Golden Delicious cross, combines the good qualities of both.

*Jonathan* has good sprightly flavor relished by almost every apple lover. N.Y. 43013-1 combines this good Jonathan quality with the aromatic blended flavors of Golden Delicious into a delicate mildly flavored sort.

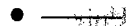
*Cox Orange* is the favorite in England but most people in America do not find its flavor highly appetizing. The writer rates it high. At its best,

it is outstandingly good, despite its faults of small size, poor finish, frequent sunburn, and low yields. *Orleans Reinette* has a distinct nutty flavor which is desired by some; but, like Golden Russet, it is best after storage. *Kidds Orange Red*, a Cox x Delicious cross, is somewhat russeted but similar to Cox in texture and quality.

*Tompkins King*, noted more as a cooking apple, can also develop excellent fresh quality, especially for the tongue that prefers some tartness.

For commercial apple growing, fresh dessert quality is not the major factor in the selection of varieties. Although a certain minimum of quality is necessary in all commercial varieties, other factors which determine economic returns, such as high yields and market acceptability, have greater influence than dessert quality on commercial variety preference. In the twenty favorite dessert varieties listed here, only two, Northern Spy and Golden Delicious, are among the nine commercially important varieties grown in New York State.

For the Adams and Eves who consider themselves connoisseurs and cravers of the best apples, economic returns are not important; best dessert quality is important. A list of choice varieties prepared by most persons who know apple varieties would differ somewhat from the list here, but several of these varieties will be found on most lists. The author's list will be different next year.



Latest Michigan fruit tree survey shows that Delicious and its sports now leads with 27% of all apple trees in Michigan. Jonathan is second with 26%. However, the production of Jonathan in 1964 was still almost double that of Delicious.