

Flora & Fauna

### All about Apples

From sweet to tart, big to small, green to red, apples come in a wide range of flavors, sizes, and colors. Some are great for baking, some are good for cider, and others make a tasty raw snack. There are over 7,500 varieties of apples grown throughout the world, and 2,500 are grown in the United States.

Apples are a member of the rose family, and have been enjoyed for centuries. In fact, archeologists have found evidence that humans have been enjoying apples since at least 6500 B.C. Apples were introduced to the United States by the pilgrims, and have been popular here ever since. In fact, six states have designated the apple as the official state fruit.

#### **Growing Your Own Apple Trees:**

Contrary to popular belief, planting a seed from your favorite apple won't yield a tree full of that same apple. Apples grown from seed bear little resemblance to the sweet fruit those seeds came from. Because they are crossed between varieties, the tendency is to for them to revert to apple types that are hard, bitter, or inedible. That's why apples (all the ones you'll find at the grocery store) are propagated by two methods: grafting or budding.

Grafting describes a technique in which a section of a stem with leaf buds is inserted into the stock of a young fruit tree. Budding is a form of grafting in which a single bud is used rather than a section of the stem. These techniques produce a “clone” of an apple tree that will yield the tasty fruit you enjoy eating.

Don't let your mouth water quite yet. It takes four or five years for an apple tree to produce its first fruit. So if you decide to embark on this undertaking, be prepared for a long wait before you can enjoy the “fruits” of your labor.

#### **Apple Cider History:**

Many of us are familiar with the tales of Johnny Appleseed (aka John Chapman), who travelled the country, spreading apple seeds from valley to valley. But what many of us don't know is that Johnny Appleseed sowed apple seeds not for edible fruit, but to make hard cider.

Why cider? Drinking plain water could be dangerous back in the late 1700s (after all, there were no water treatment plants around!) Cider was also safer, tastier, and easier to make than corn liquor. After pressing the apples to produce juice, it was left to ferment in a barrel for a few weeks. The result was a mildly alcoholic beverage that was about half the strength of wine.

#### **Tasty Facts about Apples:**

- Apples are fat, sodium, and cholesterol free.
- A medium apple has about 80 calories.
- One apple has five grams of fiber.

**GUARANTEE SYSTEM.**

**1518 Steele Ave SW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49507  
Phone: 616-451-0787  
www.guaranteesystem.com**

### *Cleaning Corner: Tips for Cleaner Laundry*

**For fluffier down pillows**, toss a clean, unused tennis ball into the dryer. This will help restore fluffiness.

**To get rid of unsightly yellow underarm stains on white washable shirts**, try this mixture of one part baking soda, one part peroxide, and one part water. Mix about a quarter cup of each and apply to shirt (be sure to protect your work area with a thick white towel). Rub the solution into the stains using an old soft toothbrush, which will also come in handy to break up any crusty bits. Allow the solution to dwell for 30 minutes, and then wash as normal.

**To prevent lint from clinging to clothes**, add 1/2 cup of white distilled vinegar to the wash cycle. This will also help **remove soap residues** that can make black clothes look dull.

## August

- 1718 The city of New Orleans, LA is founded
- 1776 The Declaration of Independence is formally signed
- 1782 President George Washington orders the creation of the Badge of Military Merit to honor soldiers wounded in battle. It is later renamed the Purple Heart
- 1876 Colorado is admitted as the 38<sup>th</sup> US state
- 1967 The US Senate confirms Thurgood Marshall as the first black justice on the Supreme Court
- 1984 Prince's album, “Purple Rain,” goes to number one on the music charts and stays there for 24 straight weeks
- 1989 Voyager 2 discovers two partial rings of Neptune

## Health Advice: Lose the Salt, Keep the Flavor

You've probably heard that one of the things you should do to have a healthy diet is to limit your sodium intake. So what's the big deal if you eat a little too much salt?

Salt, after all, *is* important for our overall health. It helps your muscles contract and it helps send nerve impulses throughout the body. The recommended amount is just 2.4 grams (2,400 milligrams) a day, or about 1 teaspoon of salt. Too much sodium can increase blood pressure and place you at a higher risk for heart and blood vessel diseases. The average American diet often contains anywhere from 5-6 or sometimes 10 grams a day!

But it's not the salt shaker at the table that's the culprit. Most fast foods and prepackaged processed foods contain a staggering amount of salt, which is used primarily as a preservative. Cutting back can be challenging, particularly if you've grown accustomed to salty flavors. But it is possible to shake the salt habit without feeling deprived.

### Here are a few tips:

- Limit processed foods, which are usually high in sodium. Eat more fresh fruits and vegetables instead of potato chips, French fries, and frozen dinners.
- Drain and rinse canned vegetables before preparing them. They'll keep a little of their salty flavor, but you'll rinse away about a third of the sodium, according to the USDA.
- Switch to packaged foods labeled as "low sodium" or "no salt added."
- Season vegetables, poultry, and fish with lemon juice rather than salt.
- Try cooking with salt-free seasonings such as vinegar, dried or fresh herbs, or olive oil.
- Prepare plain brown or white rice instead of flavored rice mixes. Use herbs or olive oil for flavoring.
- Snack on "lightly salted" popcorn and pretzels and no-salt-added peanuts.

**Tip:** Try making these changes gradually to get used to a lower salt life. You'll eat healthier without sacrificing taste.

## Kid Corner: The Importance of Music

A love of music seems to be hardwired into our very DNA. From a very young age, we almost instinctively tap our toes or bob our heads to a good song. Some of us sing along to the car radio while others fearlessly get up on stage at the local karaoke bar. Music, aside from being enjoyable, serves a very important role in a child's development.

Here are just a few of the areas music benefits:

- **Social skills.** Children with little else in common can form positive relationships with others through music. In order to create music, they have to listen to one another and work together. That can mean playing musical instruments together, or simply clapping hands or stomping feet to a rhythm.
- **Language and literacy.** Singing songs helps teach children new words, and it gives them confidence in using language. Song lyrics, from something as simple as "Mary Had a Little Lamb" to Don McClean's "American Pie," teach us how to use sentences and syllables to convey a message and express ourselves.
- **Mathematics.** Math and music are very closely connected, and most studies indicate that children who are trained in music at a young age demonstrate improved math skills. That's because music is organized in mathematical ways. All those symbols on a sheet of music, sixteenth, eighth, quarter, half, and whole notes, are actually a mathematical formula that describe the melodies, rhythms, and harmonies of the music we love.
- **Knowledge and understanding of the world.** Music says a lot about a particular culture or period of time. Try exposing your children to music from different countries: flamenco music from Spain, folk music from Russia, carniatic music from India, or tribal music from Africa. Or try music from different time periods: classical, baroque, medieval, etc. This can pique your child's curiosity and lead to them learning more about a particular country or period of history.
- **Physical development.** Playing instruments and making sounds with the body, such as clapping hands, snapping fingers, or tapping toes, helps develop fine motor skills while also defining relationships between sound and physical movement. Dancing and moving around helps to develop a spatial awareness while practicing coordination and muscle control.
- **Creative development.** Encourage your children to write their own songs, make their own instruments, or come up with their own dance routine. They could even draw pictures or make collages that represent their favorite songs. Often, this kind of creative expression helps a child communicate thoughts and feelings for which they may not have the vocabulary to articulate effectively. These activities are important for the development of your child's self-esteem, self-confidence, and general emotional well-being.

## Ingredients – Crust:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2/3 cup shortening
- 6 tablespoons cold water

## Ingredients - Filling:

- 1/2 cup unsalted butter
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/4 cup water
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 8 Granny Smith apples - peeled, cored and sliced
- 1 egg white

## Directions:

1. To make crust, mix flour and salt in a large mixing bowl. Cut in shortening with a pastry blender until mixture is completely blended and appears crumbly.
2. Mix in water, 1 tablespoon at a time, by lightly tossing with a fork. Add only enough water to form mixture into a ball. The dough will be sticky and tough if too much water is added, and it will crack and tear when rolled if too little is added.
3. Divide the dough into 2 balls, and roll each out into a circle 1 inch larger than the inverted pie plate. Slice one crust into strips. Store in fridge till ready to use.
4. To make filling, melt butter in a sauce pan. Stir in flour to form a paste. Add white sugar, brown sugar, cinnamon, and water; bring to a boil. Reduce temperature, and simmer 5 minutes. Add 3/4 of the liquid to the apples, toss to coat.
5. Meanwhile, place the bottom crust in your pan. Brush with the egg white (this will keep the crust from getting soggy.) Fill with apples, mounded slightly. Cover with strips to make a lattice. Gently pour the remaining sugar and butter liquid over the crust. Pour slowly so that it does not run off.
6. Bake 15 minutes at 425°F. Reduce the temperature to 350°F, and continue baking for 35 to 45 minutes.

## Six Tips for Cleaning & Decluttering the House

As the summer winds down and fall rolls in, it will soon be time for the kids to head off to school. Before your nights become swamped with PTA meetings and sports practice, set aside some time for the whole family to clean and declutter the house. Here are some tips to help you get started:

1. **Set the timer for 30 minutes.** Then have every family member go through their things and find items to donate or throw away. Box up the donations and drop them off right away. Then take everyone out for an ice cream reward!
2. **Ask yourself three questions** when trying to decide whether or not to keep an item: Do I love it? Do I use it? (Note: the question is not *could* you use it, but *do* you use it.) Could someone else use it?
3. **Be specific.** To a kid, “Go clean your room,” sometimes translates into “Shove everything under the bed or in the closet.” Try to be specific when you give your kids instructions, such as “Put all your dirty clothes in the hamper,” “Put all your toys in the toy box,” or “Make your bed.”
4. **Make cleaning a game.** Write down cleaning tasks on ping pong balls. Each person chooses a ball, completes the task, and then chooses another one. Whoever has the most balls after 30 minutes wins a prize (like an extra hour of TV or their favorite food for dinner). Don’t have ping pong balls handy? Write tasks down on strips of paper and put them inside a hat.
5. **Make storage space.** Attics, basements, and garages tend to be the “catch all” places for a lot of stuff: Christmas decorations, old clothes and toys, etc. Oftentimes, we store items we really don’t need to keep. Start your cleaning process by going through these areas to get rid of all the junk. Then, when you finally organize your living areas, you’ll have storage space waiting.
6. **Contain your stuff!** Sometimes, it’s not that you have too much stuff, you just need an organized place to put it. Before you get started, make a trip to the local store and pick up a few plastic bins and wire baskets. Then use them to help you sort through all the stuff. Put all the laundry items (the lint rollers, the spot removers) in one basket, put all the tools (the hammer, the screwdriver, the tape measure) in another.

## ...Caring for Leather...

Leather is a popular choice in furniture, car interiors, clothes and accessories. And along with the cozy leather sofa and the great shoes comes the frustration of keeping them clean. Here are some simple solutions you can use at home to keep your leather looking like new. Of course, if you get in a pinch, call your carpet care professional to help you out!

- **Protect leather.** Always keep leather furniture out of direct sunlight to prevent drying and cracking the leather.
- **For general cleaning,** dust weekly with a soft cloth or use a vacuum.
- **For tougher dirt on protected leather,** lather a moisturizing soap such as Dove on a soft, damp cloth, and then wipe the item to remove dirt and grime. Do not over-wet the leather, just carefully wipe with a damp cloth. Then buff with a soft, dry cloth. This allows the moisturizing soap to condition the leather. Polish as usual. **\*For best results,** use manufacturer-recommended cleaners and conditioners, or simply call the professionals to ensure a job well done.
- **To remove water spots,** moisten the area again with a little water, let it dry or gently blow dry. Never place leather in the sun to dry.
- **To remove grease,** apply some Talcum powder or corn starch to the spot and let it sit for a few hours. Do not rub it in, simply let the powder or starch absorb the grease and then you can easily vacuum it away.

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GRAND RAPIDS, MI  
PERMIT #1254

1518 Steele Ave SW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49507



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**Phone: 616-451-0787**

**Fax: 616-451-8303**

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