# APPLE

## Health Benefits

- Apples are a great source of fiber, especially if you eat the peel.
- Fiber helps you feel full and keeps blood sugar levels normal.
- One small apple or ½ of a large apple counts as 1 cup of fruit.

## Fun Facts

- Apple trees take four or five years to produce their first fruit.
- The largest apple ever picked weighed over 3 pounds.
- Apples will float in water because they are 25% air.
- Apples were used as symbols of love in ancient Rome and Greece.

## Home Grown History

Apple trees have been providing people with fruit for thousands of years. They are believed to have originated in the mountainous area between what is now the Black and Caspian Seas. Throughout human history, apples were cultivated and disseminated throughout various cultures. Apple cultivation reached England in the first century B.C. due to the spread of the Roman empire. Apple growing gained widespread popularity in 15th century Renaissance Italy. Eventually, France and England followed suit, and the fruit remained popular in Europe well into the 1800s, when European settlers brought apples with them to the Americas to share the cultivation and traditions.

The first U.S. apple trees were planted by pilgrims in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In the early 1800s John Chapman, better known as Johnny Appleseed, traveled across the Ohio Valley carrying bags of apple seeds. As he ventured westward, he planted seeds and grew apple trees wherever he roamed to ensure that settlers living in the Western frontier would have nutritious apples to eat.

Through the process of grafting, new varieties of apples are being produced. There are nearly 8,000 known apple varieties but only 100 are grown commercially in the U.S. and 10 varieties make up over 90% of the entire crop.

## Student Activities

- Have students gather their favorite nutritious apple recipes. Brainstorm ideas on how to incorporate apples into school breakfast and lunch menus. Have them meet with school nutrition staff to share their ideas.
- Ask students to write an essay convincing the audience that apples and apple products are indeed a healthy food.
- Arrange for the class to work in small groups (3-5 students). Each group creates a recipe for a nutritious snack that uses apples or apple products. The group members write a recipe for their snack. The groups can volunteer to bring in their snacks for the class to enjoy.

## *Growing Apples in Wisconsin*

Apples are the most widely planted tree fruit in Wisconsin. Apple trees are best adapted to places where the average winter temperature is near freezing for at least two months, though many varieties can withstand winter temperatures as low as 40º F.

In spring, apple trees blossom with fragrant, sweet-smelling white flowers that produce pollen and nectar. Bees help to cross-pollinate the blossoms. When the blossoms fall off the pollinated flowers, baby apples begin to grow in their place. Apples continue to grow until late summer and fall when they are ready to harvest and eat.

## Classroom Cooking—*Apple Oatmeal*

Makes 36 taste test servings (¼ cup)

Ingredients:

- 3 large apples, cored
- 3 cups quick cooking oats
- ½ Tbsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp salt
- 5 ¼ cups 100% apple juice
- Paper cups and plastic spoons

Directions:

1. Chop apples into bite-sized chunks.
2. Combine apple chunks, oats, cinnamon, salt, and apple juice in a large microwave-safe bowl and cover with lid or plastic wrap. Leave a small opening for steam to get out.
3. Microwave on high for 3-4 minutes, stirring once after 2 minutes.
4. Stir and let cool for 1 minute before serving.

Recipe accessed at http://www.harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/

Wisconsin's apple crop is picked from the trees by hand, then washed, packed and delivered by refrigerated trains and trucks to markets and grocery stores, or made into apple juice, apple cider, apple butter, applesauce, and other nutritious apple foods.

Apples come in many varieties, each with a distinct flavor, texture, aroma, and color. There are several different varieties grown in Wisconsin. Some of the most popular varieties include Red Delicious, Golden Delicious, McIntosh, Gala, Cortland, Idared and Jonathan.

## *Exploring Wisconsin Apples — Taste Test Activity*

What You Will Need:

- 3-5 apples, sliced per group of 6-8 students. Select different varieties to taste, such as Red Delicious, Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, Gala, Jonathon, Cortland, and Honeycrisp
- *Home Grown: Tastes of WI* resource guide
- Taste test survey and pencils

Activity:

- Have students observe, touch, smell, and taste each sample and make notes describing the different tastes. Extend the activity in class by comparing and contrasting the varieties and making a graph showing the likes and dislikes of the class.

## *Beyond the Classroom*

Ask students to note during their next trip to the grocery store where the apple displays are located. Are they in the front, back, or on the side? How many varieties do they have available?

## *For More Information:*

U.S. Apple Association: http://www.usapple.org/

Wisconsin Apple Growers Association: http://www.waga.org/

University of Illinois Extension: http://urbanext.illinois.edu/apples/

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