



MEDIA RELEASE

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

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**Audio Clip Attached*

PICK LOCAL APPLES NOW TO ENJOY ALL WINTER LONG

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Eating seasonally is chic and so much fun – until it isn't.

When the first heavy frost hits and gardens officially close up shop for about six months, aspiring “localvores” are left with hard squashes, root vegetables and an assortment of dried beans. As far as fruits go, those who live north of the tropics are out of luck, unless they are willing to re-draw the lines of what qualifies as “local” to include Florida and parts of Chile.

Thank goodness for apples.

Apples are crisp, colorful, juicy, versatile and will keep fresh for months under the right conditions. They can be picked fresh off the tree right up until frost time. The very best part is that they grow close by, making the decision about what to do over the weekend an obvious choice: go pick apples.

Tennessee typically grows about nine million pounds of apples every year in orchards that cover the state. Most orchards grow several varieties of apples which ripen at varying times throughout the harvest season. Tennessee orchards start to have apples ready for picking by mid-August, but the harvest builds through late summer to peak in October. Although there are scores of apple varieties, most apples generally fall into one of two categories: cooking apples or “eating” apples.

Cooking apples tend to be tart, with less sugar and a firm flesh that retains its texture or shape when cooked. Many people now also prefer these crunchy apples to eat fresh, but Granny Smith, Jonathan, JonaGold and Gala were originally considered cooking apples. Golden Delicious is traditionally thought of as a great choice for apple sauce.

When visiting a local orchard, go ahead and take home a bushel without fear of any of the fruit going to waste. Few fruits are so amenable to whatever storage spaces and devices are available. Apples are easy to dry and enjoy as chewy snacks, but they also freeze well. Peeled and sliced, they'll wait patiently in the freezer to be pulled out at a later date to be cooked up as pie, applesauce or jelly.

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Keep apples fresh for as long as possible with smart selection and cold air. Go ahead and use apples that are the most ripe or have any blemishes, including spots or bruises. These less-than-perfect apples can be eaten right away or stored by freezing or canning. Keep blemish-free, firm apples refrigerated and away from moisture as much as possible. Depending on refrigerator conditions, freshly picked quality apples can stay fresh for months.

Always call before visiting an orchard, even if official hours of operation are posted on the grower's website. A sudden downpour or a sudden rush of customers can temporarily close an orchard until the rows between tree lines dry out or more apples have time to ripen.

Once there, take some time to talk to the grower, who'll have valuable information about which apples hold up the longest and which are best for particular uses. Many orchards also offer homemade treats like fried pies and jellies made with fruits grown right there on the farm.

Having fresh, local apples stowed away for winter won't make warm weather come more quickly, but they'll definitely make wintertime sweeter. To find local orchards, farmers markets, pick-your-own farms or recipes featuring Tennessee farm products, visit the TDA Market Development website at www.picktnproducts.org or call 615-837-5160.

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