

Apples: Fun Facts and Health Benefits



It's that time of year again, when the leaves start to turn, sweater bins come down from storage, and spiced fall scents fill the air. Plump orange pumpkins fill our Instagram feeds and the invites for apple-picking at your local farm roll in. And there are a number of reasons why you'll want to fill up your basket. Here's a few reasons why the people of America love apples, their top 5 varieties, and ways operators can incorporate apples into their menu.

Benefits

Seasonal or year-round apples penetrate 58.2% of all US menus and there's various reasons why. Not only do apples taste delicious, but they come loaded with health benefits. Jessica Levinson, a culinary nutrition expert, says that apples have been linked to numerous benefits, including improved gut health and reduced risk of stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and some cancers.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a medium-sized apple is a good source of fiber: It contains 4.4 grams of fiber, covering 16 percent of the daily value (DV). Also, the same apple offers 8.4 milligrams of vitamin C, providing more than 9 percent of your DV, along with other vitamins and minerals.



Heart & Gut Health

High fiber has been shown to improve cholesterol (lowering bad LDL cholesterol and increasing good HDL cholesterol) and according to Harvard Health Publishing, both types of fiber are important to digestive health. Research also shows that those who eat apples are less likely to develop high blood pressure.

Soluble fiber helps slow down digestion, allowing you to feel full, and also slows the digestion of glucose, which helps control your blood sugar. Meanwhile, insoluble fiber can help move food through your system and aid with constipation and regularity, per Harvard.

Healthy Immune System

Who doesn't want a stronger immune system going into fall? Apples might be an important tool in your immune support. According to research, a diet filled with soluble fiber helped convert immune cells that were pro-inflammatory into anti-inflammatory and immune-supporting ones. In another study, researchers found that a diet high in dietary fiber protected mice against the flu. Whether these effects would be seen in humans is unclear until there are more studies.

Still, there's reason to believe that apples may bolster immunity, in part because they contain immune-boosting vitamin C. A review published in 2017 in the journal *Nutrients* found that vitamin C plays many roles in helping the immune system function, such as by strengthening the epithelial (a type of tissue) barrier against pathogens and guarding against environmental oxidative stress, such as pollution to radiation, according to research.

Varieties & Seasonality

There are up to 100 apple varieties available worldwide, but US supermarkets sell a dozen of the country's favorites. Local farmers may offer more unusual heirloom varieties. Some varieties are better for cooking and baking, while others are enjoyed raw for snacking. Ranging from sweet to tart, apples can produce a hearty crunch or a light crispy bite. Most apple varieties are ready for picking from late July through early November.

The following are America's top 5 most popular varieties and make up 90% of America's apple output.



#1 Gala

Coming in at first place, we have the Gala, with its mild, sweet and juicy flesh it's currently America's favorite apple according to the U.S. Apple Association. Galas were introduced to the United States in the 1970s and are a cross between Kidd's Orange Red and Golden Delicious apples.

#2 Red Delicious

For decades the Red Delicious was the most popular American apple. But today's consumer is looking for apples that are sweeter and crunchier and the market is flooded with plenty of interesting varieties that fit the bill, bumping red delicious down to second best.



#3 Granny Smith

One of our personal favorites and the third most popular apple in America, the Granny Smith is an Australian native with a tart and mildly sweet flavor that makes it a staple for baking. Our Caramel Apple Granny is made with buttery caramel and toffee-studded custard hugging fresh Granny Smith apples piled high in our melt-in-the-mouth shortbread crust.

#4 Fuji



This popular snacking apple is sweet and juicy and comes in at fourth as America's favorite apple. In many ways similar to America's history, apples were some of the earliest crops planted by colonists. Named for Japan's Mt. Fuji, the Fuji was developed in Japan in the 1930s but didn't make its way to America until the 1980s. It's a cross between a Red Delicious and a Ralls Janet, and features a distinctive yellow and red color.

#5 Honeycrisp

Released in 1991, the Honeycrisp is a rising contender for favorite American apple. It has a juicy and firm crisp flesh combined with a sweet and balanced bite. The apples ripen in early fall, but store like a late season variety, keeping for up to 7 months.



Menu Additions:

Here's how you can incorporate apples into your regular menu and specials. Sarah Gold Anzlovar, RDN, the Boston-based owner of Sarah Gold Nutrition, suggests adding them to salads or to a grilled cheese, making baked apples for a healthy dessert, or cooking up some pulled chicken with apples in the slow cooker for an easy lunch or dinner.

Restaurants can add Caramel Apple Granny to their seasonal dessert menu or top an already existing NY Cheesecake with a fall-inspired apple topping.

Resources: Harvard | Medical News Today | WebMD | Health Line | Everyday Health | Eating Well