

# Roots & Sprouts

News and Ideas from the Belmont Farmers' Market

September 2006

[www.belmontfarmersmarket.org](http://www.belmontfarmersmarket.org)



## The Appeal of Apples

*A short history of New England's favorite fruit*

Apples, the quintessential American fruit, were first grown in Asia thousands of years ago in the region that is now Kazakhstan. Apple trees may even be the earliest cultivated trees. Still found wild in the mountains surrounding the Caspian Sea, the descendants of *Malus sieversii* have spread across the world and into commerce, culture and mythology.

### Apples arrive in America

John Endicott, a Puritan governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, has long been credited with bringing the first apple tree from England to Massachusetts in the early 1600s. Records from the Massachusetts Bay Company confirm that settlers planted apple orchards in New England as early as 1625.

John Chapman was born in Leominster, Massachusetts in 1784. The son of Nathaniel Chapman, a Revolutionary War veteran, he grew up to become known as Johnny Appleseed, a wandering, barefoot preacher who planted orchards and gave seeds to settlers from Massachusetts to Ohio, helping to establish apples as an American diet staple.

Settlers relied on apples as a valuable, steady food source. They were easy to grow – in large quantity and great variety. Apples could be cooked, dried or eaten fresh. They could be stored through the winter and fed to livestock. Best of all, they could be transformed into pies, cakes, jelly, sauce, butter, vinegar and sparkling cider.

### Belmont's apple orchards

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, apple growing made an essential contribution to New England

commerce, with Belmont leading the way. The area that is now Belmont was one of the first in Middlesex County to develop a commercial agricultural base. Belmont growers began shipping produce in 1820 to Quincy Market. Among the many producers in the area (including the Bright, Chenery, Cushing, Frost, Jackson, Marsh, Richardson, Skahan, and Shaw farms), the Hittinger orchards contained 422 apple trees producing 944 bushels of apples, along with quantities of pear and peach trees. An inventory list from 1915 records that the Hittinger farm sent an average of 60,000 bushels of produce, including apples, to the Boston markets each year. Here and there around Belmont, a few trees from these long-gone orchards still grow and fruit in our backyards.

### Heirloom apples

Today, only a limited assortment of apples—Macintosh, Red Delicious, Granny Smith, Gala and Fuji—is available in supermarkets. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, however, a vast variety was grown, with flavors and textures as distinct as their uses, whether for desserts, cider or winter storage.

While many of these heirloom varieties have disappeared, small farmers and horticulturists are preserving others. The Tower Hill Botanic Garden in Boylston tends a collection of 119 varieties of apples once common in New England, including Summer Rose, Crow Egg, Winthrop Greening, Winter Banana, and Pumpkin Sweet. Often, the only place to find, taste and buy these rare, forgotten flavors is at local farmers' markets and farm stands.

—Cartha Vickers

*Now open!*

**June through October**  
**Thursday afternoons**  
**2:00 to 6:30 pm**

**BELMONT CENTER**  
**In the municipal parking lot**  
**behind the Leonard St. stores**  
**off Cross St. & Channing Rd.**

*In this issue . . .*

**Apples past and present**  
**Meet Kimball Fruit Farm**  
**Food for Thought: Nutrition and farmers' markets**  
**An apple dessert**  
**Enter our apple recipe contest!**

# Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food

## Meet Kimball Fruit Farm

Each issue of **Roots and Sprouts** will introduce one of our farmers or vendors. We'll tell you about how they got started, how they grow or produce their products, and what they will bring to the Belmont Farmers' Market.

If you drive down Hollis Street, a country road in Pepperell, you will come to Kimball Fruit Farm, owned and operated by Carl and Marie Hills and their family. Half of this 80-acre farm is located on each side of Hollis Street, with another 50 acres are rented nearby. Founded in 1920 by Carl's uncle, the farm was inherited by Carl's father in 1969. He ran it until 1990, when Carl took over the operations.

The family farm tradition continues today. Carl's wife, Marie, works full time for the farm; his mother, Everdean, makes bread for the farm stand and his sister, Wendy, is the farm stand manager and market seller. Every summer for many years, Thompson, Dennis and Bigger, three skilled farmers from Jamaica, have joined the Hills family to help with the apple harvest and other crops.

At the 1998 Annual Town Meeting, the citizens of Pepperell voted to join the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in purchasing an Agricultural Preservation Restriction on Kimball Fruit Farm, protecting this farmland from future non-agricultural development. The farm uses the IPM (Integrated Pest Management) system, meaning that a minimum of pesticides are used and only when a certain threshold of insect pests is reached. Now protected as

open farmland in perpetuity, Kimball's 80 acres will also remain nearly pesticide free.

Kimball Fruit Farm's principal crop is apples with about 4,000 apple trees yielding between 8,000 and 10,000 bushels a year. In addition, this farm grows one of the greatest varieties of vegetables and fruits in the area. When we visited, they were offering eggplant, zucchini, corn, green beans, squash, squash blossoms, arugula, basil, blueberries, plums, peaches, nectarines, apples and flowers. The produce selection changes with the seasons. The farm welcomes visitors for a pick-your-own program for several fruits and vegetables as well as purchases at the farm stand.

In the past, Kimball Fruit Farm sold its produce primarily to wholesalers and distributors, and found it difficult to break even. Today, farmers' markets are their principal outlet, ensuring the sustainability of their livelihood. Kimball plans its offerings according to the varying preferences of customers at each of the ten weekly markets it attends, and tries to honor special requests of customers.

—Andres Aguirre

Kimball Fruit Farm  
184 Hollis Rd.  
Pepperell, Massachusetts  
978.433.9751

## What's Fresh in... September

apples  
artichokes  
beets  
bell peppers  
cauliflower  
corn  
cucumbers  
eggplant  
garlic  
grapes

green beans  
herbs  
hot peppers  
kale  
kohlrabi  
melons  
okra  
onions  
peaches

pears  
plums  
potatoes  
pumpkins  
raspberries  
shelling beans  
winter squash  
tomatillos  
tomatoes  
zucchini



[www.belmontfarmersmarket.org](http://www.belmontfarmersmarket.org)

## Belmont Farmers' Market Committee

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### We thank our many volunteers!

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### It's not too late to help!

Contact us at  
[belmontfarmersmarket@gmail.com](mailto:belmontfarmersmarket@gmail.com)

Roots & Sprouts is a publication of the Belmont Farmers' Market Committee.  
PO Box 387  
Belmont, MA 02478

Editors: Gale Pryor and Laurie Levy  
Designer: Dee Ippen  
Logo designer: Trey Klein  
Printer: Belmont Printing Co.

## 2006 Vendors

- **Blue Heron Organic Farm** *occasional* produce and plants grown in Lincoln
- **Busa Farm** a variety of produce grown in Lexington
- **ButterBrook Organic Farm** herbs, vegetables, honey, flowers, eggs and more
- **Coutts Specialty Foods** fine jams, jellies, applesauce and relishes
- **Dick's Market Garden Farm** a large selection of seasonal produce
- **Fiore di Nonno** fresh mozzarella, handcrafted daily "as Grandfather did"
- **Kimball Fruit Farm** vegetables, fruit, pies, honey
- **Leslie Wolf Baking** rustic fruit tarts and scones made in Belmont
- **Melissa's Flower Farm** potted herbs, annuals, cut flowers, dried flowers
- **Nicewicz Family Farm** apples, peaches, plums, berries, vegetables, flowers, more
- **NorthStar Farm** quality perennials and ornamental plants
- **Old Friends Farm** *occasional* field-grown cut flowers, shitake mushrooms and select salad greens
- **Sassy River Sauces** all natural, low-fat, healthy pestos, spreads and sauces
- **Thoreau Foods** organic breakfast cereals and toppings, smoothie boosters
- **Toscanini & Sons** breads and baked goods
- **Underwood Greenhouse** *occasional* potted herbs, annuals, perennials and tomato plants grown in Belmont
- **Waverly Place** *occasional* mums grown in Belmont's McLean greenhouses



## Food for Thought

### Farmers' markets provide the most nutrition

*Belmont resident Shirley Blakely commutes to Washington, DC where she is a nutritionist with the FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, and serves as Associate Dean of the Staff College. Capt. Blakely recently completed an extended assignment as a visiting scientist at the Military Nutrition Division of the U.S. Army Research Institute for Environmental Medicine in Natick, researching overweight and obesity.*

This year with the bumper crops of fresh produce, farmers can provide consumers with home-grown, aesthetically pleasing, good tasting and highly nutritious foods. Who can resist the smell and taste of sweet corn, the colorful sweetness of berries and the delectable crispness of fruits like tomatoes, peaches and plums?

When spoken by local farmers, the phrase, "I picked it myself this morning," conjures up excitement and sincere appreciation.

Local produce can remain on the vine long, and thus, ripeness and flavor are allowed to develop the fullest. It inspires us to relish in the awe of being close to food that was so recently plucked from the vine.

Expand your repertoire of favorite flavors by sampling freshly picked produce. Kids who won't touch a vegetable can be inspired to try some by visiting farmers' markets. Imagine eating an entire meal of just vegetables and fruit! A meal of corn on the cob, green beans, tomatoes, and spinach can be very satisfying. This idea appeals to vegetarians and non-vegetarians alike. Additionally, there's a good deal of interest in eating raw vegetables. Shredded raw vegetable combinations provide a crunchy eating experience.

By far the biggest win in visiting farmers' markets and buying local produce is improved nutrition. Campaigns to promote nutritious eating can have a jump-start at farmers' markets. The "5 a Day for Better Health" campaign is easily achieved with locally grown produce. This program advises us to eat three servings of vegetables and two servings of fruit each day.

Visit the website [www.5aday.org](http://www.5aday.org) before you visit a farmers' market. You will read that "eating 5 or more servings of colorful fruits and vegetables a day is part of an important plan for healthier living. That's because deeply hued fruits and vegetables provide the wide range of vitamins, minerals, fiber, and

phytochemicals your body needs to maintain good health and energy levels, protect against the effects of aging, and reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease."

This site also has interactive pages for kids, urging them to "have fun fueling your body every day with colorful fruits and vegetables. Remembering the rainbow makes it easy to get the colorful variety of fruits and vegetables you need every day."

Another way to achieve good nutrition is to follow the 2005 U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, available at [www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines](http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines), and the Food Pyramid eating plan at [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov). The guidelines remind us to eat a diet high in nutrient density – foods with a high nutrient-to-calorie ratio. Fruits and vegetables have a high nutrient density, are low in calories and should form an important part of every individual's daily diet.

–Capt. Shirley R. Blakely, PhD, RD

*Note: Brochures describing the "5 a Day" program mentioned in this article are available at the blue BFMC tent on market Thursdays.*



## quiz

Test your nutrition knowledge, match the food item on the left with the nutrient it contains on the right.

- |                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| 1. carrot           | a. iron          |
| 2. strawberry       | b. vitamin K     |
| 3. spinach          | c. folate        |
| 4. sweet red pepper | d. potassium     |
| 5. zucchini         | e. beta-carotene |
| 6. watermelon       | f. calcium       |
| 7. sweet potato     | g. vitamin C     |
| 8. peach            | h. vitamin A     |

*(Answers at bottom of page 4)*

# Apples are In!

Early fall apples are now making their welcome appearance at the Belmont Farmers' Market. Long-time Belmont resident and active senior, Therese Trenholm, recalls apple season in years past. Therese's father-in-law, Charles Trenholm, was a real estate developer in many areas of Belmont in the early 1900s.

The story of the apple harkens back to the days of Adam and Eve. Even though as adults we learn that the apple is a metaphor for something other than eating, it may be the earliest reference to edibles in religious history. It is interesting to note that a portion of our anatomy is referred to as the Adam's apple. Eve may have had something to do with that.

More so than any other fruit, the apple is also used as an analogy in many well known expressions, such as "the apple never falls far from the tree," and "an apple a day keeps the doctor away." How about two apples a day? That has been my practice for many years: one after lunch and another after the dinner hour, each of a different variety.

In earlier days, the teacher's desk was depicted with an apple on it, presumably brought by a student: "an apple for the teacher." Families

often paid teachers with fruit from their farms. The traditional gift of an apple for teachers reminds us of those days.

When I was a child, my father was employed by the United Fruit Company in Boston. He would often bring home green bananas and they would be put behind the closed doors in the buffet in the dining room. We were told at the time that it was necessary to keep them in a dark, cool place to ripen. Bananas are said to be a good source of potassium. There was no anticipation for me, however, in having to wait for when the time was ripe for their debut in golden splendor.

So instead of waiting for those bananas to ripen, I preferred one of the simple pleasures of life: crunching on my nice crisp apples, low in calories and high in fiber, in addition to being good for the digestive system, so they say.

—Therese Trenholm

## Apple Cranberry Crisp

*This easy recipe intentionally omits sugar and salt and get its sweetness from the ice cream. There is also no need to peel the apples, especially if they are organic.*

### Fruit:

4 or 5 Granny Smith apples, cored, cut into medium size chunks  
1 cup cranberries (or more if you love the tartness of cranberries) preferably fresh, but you can also use dried cranberries

### Topping:

1 cup pecans or walnuts, coarsely chopped  
1/2 cup all purpose flour  
1/2 cup rolled oats  
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger  
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted  
Vanilla ice cream

- Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.
- Core and cut the apples as directed above.
- Combine all the topping ingredients in a large bowl, add the melted butter and mix until a crumbly consistency.
- Place the apples, cranberries and the topping in an 8 x 8 inch or slightly larger ungreased baking pan.
- Cover the baking pan with aluminum foil and place in the oven to bake for about 35-40 minutes or until the apples are soft.
- Remove aluminum foil and leave in the oven for another 20 minutes or until lightly brown.
- Remove from oven and cool. Serve with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

--Andres Aguirre



## Recipe Contest!

Enter your favorite homemade apple dessert in the Belmont Farmers' Market contest on October 5th. Pick up an entry form when you buy apples at the market.



Answers to nutrition questions on page 3:  
1-e, 2-g, 3-abh, 4-cd, 5-d,  
6-gh, 7-eh, 8-c