

The Amazing Apple!

Where do apples come from? How do they grow? Let's take a trip to an apple orchard and find out. On the farm, apples come from apple trees, where their buds were formed a full year before they are picked. During the winter, these fruit buds are dormant (resting) and waiting for spring. As the weather warms in the spring, the leaves and flowers begin to slowly open until the apple trees are covered in white and pink blossoms.

The apple blossoms smell so sweet that bees visit them looking to gather nectar to make honey. As they fly from tree to tree and flower to flower, their feet get covered in a dusty substance from the apple blossoms called pollen. When they fly and land, the pollen falls on new flowers and this process allows the blossoms to be pollinated and grow into apples. Once the flower has been pollinated, the petals then fall off.

After the bees are done with their job, the leaves on the apple trees take over to help the apple grow. The leaves create food or carbohydrates to help the apples grow by using air, water and sunlight in a process called photosynthesis. Each apple needs about 20 to 50 leaves to help it grow. Farmers prune the apple trees in the winter and early spring to help the leaves get more sunlight. Pruning is like giving the tree a haircut. Branches that block sunlight from other branches are cut out.

During the summer, apples grow bigger and bigger. In the fall, most apples change color from green to red. The apples are then ripe and ready for picking. Some apples are ready in early fall and others are not ready until close to Halloween. The best way

to tell when an apple is ready to pick is by asking the farmer. An apple farmer will inspect the orchard and taste the apples.

Now the fun part! The best way to choose an apple is to look closely at it. Make sure it is an apple you want to eat. Hold the apple in your hand and twist, twist and twist the apple around the stem. Then pull the apple gently off the tree. Make sure not to rip off any branches because those are next year's apple buds forming. Shine up your apple and enjoy the first bite!

Going to an apple orchard is a fun family outing. Go to the orchard and find your favorite apple varieties. Have a taste test with your family and find out the most popular apple in your home. Make some applesauce or homemade apple pie out of the apples you pick out! Enjoy the sweet taste of fall.

Apple Crisp Kids' Love!

4 apples, peeled and thinly sliced
1/2 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup flour
1/2 cup oats
3/4 teaspoon cinnamon
3/4 teaspoon nutmeg
6 tablespoons butter

Heat oven to 375 degrees. Grease bottom and sides of square 8x8 pan. Arrange apples in pan. Mix remaining ingredients in a bowl. Sprinkle over the apples. Bake about 40 minutes or until topping is golden brown and apples are tender.

Apple Fun Facts for Kids

- A bushel of apples weighs in at around 42 pounds!
- George Washington grew and pruned his own apple trees in his spare time!
- According to the Guinness Book of Records, the largest apple ever plucked from a tree weighed three pounds, two ounces! It was picked in Caro, Michigan.
- Archeologists have found evidence that humans have been enjoying apples since 6500 BC.

Information donated by Steve Tennes, Country Mill Orchard

