

FOOD \$ENSE



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Apples

Food Sense Guide to Eating Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

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Purchasing/Selection

Apples are a favorite fruit of many people for eating out of hand, in fresh salads, or in a wide variety of cooked products. When shopping for apples, look for fruit free of blemishes and breaks in the skin since these can encourage spoilage and decay. Also make sure you are purchasing apples “in season” for optimal quality. Most apples ripen in September/and October. If you buy apples during the summer, chances are they are last year’s stock that has been stored over the past several months. While they will be eatable, they will not be as crisp and may be better cooked than fresh.

If you are selecting apples from the home garden or a pick-your-own site, select firm apples, free of breaks in the skin, and with a background color (the non-red part of the apple skin) that is light yellow or yellow-green. Harvest the fruit by lifting toward the sky to release the stem from the tree, rather than by pulling, which can tear out the stem, damage the tissue, and shorten the storage life of the apple.

Source: <http://homeorchard.ucdavis.edu/8229.pdf>

Cleaning/Washing

Apples purchased at the store will likely be covered by a thin layer of wax to make them shinier and to protect them from drying out and rotting quickly. While eating the wax itself is not harmful, there

may be some pesticide residue beneath the wax that was used to treat the apple prior to harvesting.

Rinsing the apple under cool water and drying it with a clean towel or paper towel should remove most of the wax and any dust or prints from other handlers. Use a soft cloth or vegetable brush to scrub away unwanted wax and other residues. Be sure to rinse well. Commercial products are also available for washing fresh produce. Follow instructions on the product label. Washing apples in a sink full of water is not recommended since the standing water can spread contamination from one apple to another. Use of soap or detergent is not recommended or approved for washing fruits and vegetables because the produce can absorb detergent residues.

Storing

It is difficult to replicate the storage conditions used by commercial harvesting companies for prolonging the quality of apples for several months. However, at home, apples can be best kept in the refrigerator, preferably in the crisper drawer or an unsealed plastic bag. It is important to remember to store fresh vegetables separately because apples release ethylene gas that can be damaging to other fruits and vegetables.

Fresh apples can also be kept at room temperature for several days before eating but the more time

they are kept at room temperature the sooner they will begin to shrivel and lose flavor as well as crispness.

Preparation Techniques

Basic Cooking Methods

Apples can be used fresh as a snack, in fresh salads or cooked using many methods. They can be cooked to be used as a side dish, made into a sauce, or added with other ingredients to create a main dish.

Baked

To make baked apples, select a variety of apples suitable for baking such as Braeburn, Fuji, or Golden Delicious. Leave the peel intact, remove the core and score the skin several times with a sharp knife to prevent the skin from rupturing during baking.

Place the 4 to 6 apples, blossom side down in an oven-safe baking dish with sides. In the cavity formed by removing the core, place 1 tsp of butter or margarine. Next add ½ tbsp of sugar on top of the butter in the cavity of the apple. Bake, uncovered, for approximately 50 minutes or until the apples are tender when poked with a fork.

In a small bowl combine ¼ cup of brown sugar, 2 tsp of flour, ¼ tsp of cinnamon and 2 tsp of water. Stir until blended. Sprinkle the mixture over the hot baked apples and place back in the oven for 10 to 15 minutes. Serve while still warm.

Fresh Applesauce

To make fresh applesauce, you will need cooking apples, sugar and water. Optional ingredients may include cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, lemon juice or apple cider. Select a variety of apples best suited for cooking such as Braeburn, Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, Jonathan, or Honeycrisp.

Peel five to six medium cooking apples. Cut apples in half and then into quarters. Remove the core from the quartered sections. Slice quartered apples into thick slices.

To avoid having the sliced apples turn brown, place them immediately into cool water with lemon juice (about 1 tsp lemon juice per gallon of water). Do not allow apples to soak for more than 15 minutes.

Place ½ cup of cold water into a heavy 2-quart saucepan. Drain slices and add them to the saucepan. Bring apples and water to a boil over medium heat. Cover apples and reduce heat to low. For chunky sauce simmer apples for 8 to 10 minutes. For smoother applesauce, simmer for 13 to 15 minutes.

Add up to ½ cup sugar during the last 2 to 3 minutes of cooking time. Sugar adds sweetness but also helps to thicken the sauce. If no sugar is added, cook apples longer until desired thickness is reached. Serve warm or chilled.

Source: <http://www.recipetips.com/kitchen-tips/t--1303/apple-cooking.asp>

Incorporation into Other Recipes

Fresh apples add crunch and a burst of tart flavor to salad recipes, while cooked apples may be used as a sweet, warm applesauce for pork. Several varieties make great frozen, chilled or warm desserts.

California Chicken Salad

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup low-fat plain yogurt
- 1/2 cup reduced-calorie mayonnaise
- 1 Red Delicious apple, cored and chopped
- 1 stalk celery, chopped
- 1/4 cup plus 1 tbsp toasted chopped hazelnuts
- 3 tbsp finely chopped sweet onion or green onion
- 1/4 tsp each salt and pepper
- 4 cups shredded cooked chicken (about 2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken)
- Soft lettuce leaves

Method:

- 1) In large bowl, combine yogurt and mayonnaise.
- 2) Add apple, celery, 1/4 cup hazelnuts, onion, salt, and pepper.
- 3) Stir in chicken. Serve on a bed of lettuce leaves, garnished with remaining tablespoon of hazelnuts. Refrigerate until serving.

Source: Washington Apples website
<http://www.bestapples.com/recipes/recipe.NEW.asp?ID=265>

Apple Crisp

(For extra tartness, use half apples and half fresh rhubarb.)

5-6 cups peeled, thinly sliced apples
½ cup brown sugar
½ cup oatmeal
¼ cup flour
1 teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
1/3 cup butter or margarine

In a 9 inch round dish, arrange the apples until they form a mound inside the dish.

In a medium bowl, mix brown sugar, oatmeal, flour, cinnamon and nutmeg. Cut in butter with a pastry blender or fork. Spread evenly over apples. Microwave on high for 12 to 13 minutes, turning dish twice.

NOTE: Topping becomes crisper on standing.

Adapted from: Microwave Cooking Library series, Basic Microwaving. 1978.

Oatmeal Applesauce Muffins

Makes about 18 muffins

(There's an applesauce surprise inside each muffin.)

1¼ cups whole wheat flour
¾ cup quick cooking rolled oats
¼ cup sugar
2 tsp baking powder
¼ tsp salt
2¼ cups apple sauce/divided
¼ cup milk
1 egg, beaten
2 tbsp vegetable oil
½ cup raisins (optional)

Combine flour, oats, sugar, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl. Combine 1½ cups applesauce, milk, egg and oil; add all at once to flour mixture. Stir only until moistened. Spray muffin tin with cooking spray; fill muffin cups 2/3 full with batter. Make a slight depression in top of each muffin with back of spoon; fill with 1 tsp applesauce. Bake at 400° F about 25 minutes or until golden on top.

Source: <http://www.treetop.com/>

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