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Date September 12, 2019

Plants on Your Plate

Apples

Apple harvest always signifies autumn at my house. I have many fond memories – as a child and as an adult – that line up with apple harvest. Growing up in south-central Kansas, our prolific Jonathan apple trees were always ready to pick around the time of the Kansas State Fair in September, and my brothers and friends would load up their pockets while they were loading up livestock to go to the fair.

Depending on the variety and location across Missouri, apples ripen as early as July, but I always seem to associate apple picking with my daughter's late September birthday. We often convinced her to opt for apple crisp or apple dumplings instead of birthday cake.

Apples, like many fruits, are a good source of vitamin C, potassium and fiber. The antioxidant properties of Vitamin C help to reduce your risk of heart disease and certain cancers. Vitamin C also helps in reducing bruising, aids in wound healing and helps in overall skin and gum health. Potassium is an important mineral in regulating blood pressure. Apples contain both soluble and insoluble fiber, which is beneficial in controlling cholesterol as well as digestive and bowel health.

Some of the more common fall apple varieties for our region are Braeburn, Fuji, Granny Smith and Winesap. When selecting Braeburn apples, look for large, firm red fruit. These apples have a well-balanced flavor and are best for fresh eating. While Fuji apples might not always be

the most attractive red apple, they are very sweet and juicy, making them a great choice for fresh eating. The ever-popular green Granny Smith apple is known for its firm, crisp texture and sweet-tart flavor and is good for fresh eating, salads or processing. Winesap apples are considered by some people to be the red equivalent to Granny Smiths, as they are equally crisp and tart, making them good choices for fresh eating, salads or processing.

While most people tend to think of apples as a snack, salad or dessert ingredient, the recipe below pairs up with another fall favorite of mine, squash, for a tasty side dish. Since the oven is hot, go ahead and bake some herb seasoned chicken or turkey to serve with it.

Apple Stuffed Squash

Ingredients:

2 acorn squash, washed & cut in half
1 tablespoon margarine
2 apples, chopped (try Braeburn and Granny Smith for color)
1 tablespoon brown sugar
½ teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
2 tablespoons chopped walnuts, toasted

Directions:

1. Cut squash into halves and remove seeds.
2. Melt butter in a separate bowl in the microwave. Mix in apples, sugar, and spices.
3. Spoon apple filling into each squash half. Cover and bake at 350 degrees for 45 to 60 minutes or until squash is tender. Remove cover and sprinkle with walnuts and return to oven for 5 minutes.

Makes 4 servings

Calories: 150, Total Fat: 4 g, Saturated Fat: 0 g, Cholesterol: 2 mg, Sodium: 10mg, Total Carbohydrate: 32 g, Dietary Fiber: 5 g, Total Sugars: 7 g

Recipe adapted from the USDA Mixing Bowl.



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