



APPLE APPEAL

The diversity of our humble British apple is under threat and October's annual Apple Day aims to give us a taste of what we're missing! Leaving a much sweeter taste in the mouth than our current credit crunch, **Steph Cods** reports.

Apple Day? The first time I heard of it, I thought it was a computer company venture. Who'd have thought it was actually about fruit? So what exactly is Apple Day, and why does it warrant a day in the calendar?

From its roots in a Covent Garden market back in 1990, it has grown exponentially into something of a local custom in many villages and city markets around the country. Celebrated on the 21st October, it turns out that Apple Day represents something of an ethical lifestyle. A festivity of variety is what the founders had in mind, not only in the fruit, but in culture and ecology too. They rightly understood that people were 'in danger of losing' an awareness of diversity, as well as locality.

take your pick

Many farmers' markets have suffered as a result of the quick and convenient supermarket chains that sell the generic apple (Gala, Granny Smith etc.). But who has heard of the Ashmead's Kernel or the Cornish Gilliflower? We know the variety of cheeses we consume, so why not the subtler taste of apples? Perhaps our busy and frenetic lives mean that we don't have time to step out of what we already know – an apple is an apple, right? Yes, but it's more than that. Just like you, it has its own unique characteristics. Supermarkets often discard weird shapes and sizes, in favour of the standard symmetrical apple. What's wrong with nonconformity?

We're all familiar with the crunch that goes with the first bite of an apple, but if you go to an Apple Day event, you'll be surprised at the range of texture and taste. From velvety sweetness, to a sharp acidity or smooth aromatic flavour, there is something to suit every taste bud. Some of the more unusual ones are the Rosette with its rosy flesh and pink juice, and the Spartan – a late-ripening apple with a maroon hue. It's sure to be one of the varieties on offer at your local Apple Day festival, since the apple ripens in October.

a bit of fizz

And what exactly happens on the day? A rich display of every apple under the sun – tasting of the fruit in its pure form or as chutneys, pies, ciders and juices. There's music, poetry readings, photography, and an enthusiastic buzz of the crowd (and of bees!). Perfect for a family day-out, or for a browse around with some pals. Get back to grassroots and rediscover the apple at

this traditional festivity. The apple's had a modern makeover since Newton's eureka moment and the story of Eve!

So where do these events take place and who organises them? It's not only orchards and farms that are involved, so too are National Trust properties, horticultural societies, and the day is a focus for health campaigns. You'll find that some schools and shops have also jumped on the bandwagon, so you're never short of resources. For those of you who'd like to create your very own Apple Day event, head to the Common Ground website for colourful and bountiful ideas.

Apples have been part of our culture since biblical times and with our sense of community spirit, variety will continue to flourish.

Ode to the Apple...

My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through a tree
Toward heaven still.
And there's a barrel that I didn't fill
Beside it, and there may be two or three
Apples I didn't pick upon some bough.
But I am done with apple-picking now.
Essence of winter sleep is on the night,
The scent of apples; I am drowsing off.
I cannot shake the shimmer from my sight
I got from looking through a pane of glass
I skimmed this morning from the water-trough,
And held against the world of hoary grass.
It melted, and I let it fall and break.
But I was well
Upon my way to sleep before it fell,
And I could tell
What form my dreaming was about to take.
Magnified apples appear and reappear,
Stem end and blossom end,
And every fleck of russet showing clear.
My instep arch not only keeps the ache,
It keeps the pressure of a ladder-round.
And I keep hearing from the cellar-bin
That rumbling sound
Of load on load of apples coming in.

An excerpt from 'After Apple Picking' by Robert Frost