

fresh & LOCAL

AN APPLE A DAY...

by Kristen Lofstrom, CHHC

Crunch! What tastes better than a fresh, crisp, sweet apple picked fresh off the tree? Delicious, juicy, local apples are a treat we New Englanders look forward to as summer winds down. From late August until early October, families flock to local farms to “pick your own”. And why not? With many farms offering tractor rides out to the fields, as well as so many other events and activities to entice us, apple picking is a traditional family favorite.

The tried and true phrase “an apple a day keeps the doctor away” may sound like a tale your parents told you, but in reality it could not be truer. Apples offer us many health benefits that make eating them even more enticing. While you’re out picking, munch on a Braeburn or a Granny Smith – because of their high concentration of phenols (antioxidant compounds) these varieties both offer natural sun protection.

Apples can lower cholesterol levels, reducing your risk of hardening of the arteries, heart attack, and stroke. This is because they contain both insoluble and soluble fiber. The insoluble fiber works like bran, latching on to LDL (bad) cholesterol in the digestive tract and removing it from the body, while apple’s soluble fiber pectin reduces the amount of LDL cholesterol produced in the liver. Adding just one large apple to the daily diet has been shown to decrease cholesterol levels. All of this sounds like reason enough to enjoy an apple (or two) a day. For a sweet treat, try dipping sectioned apples in peanut butter or honey. Or for a nice change for your salads, try adding sliced apples for some crunch. Consuming

the entire fruit, peel and flesh, offers the largest health benefit, but even peeled, they taste fantastic, are a healthy choice for a sweet treat and can be prepared endless ways.

Keep in mind that apples are among the 12 foods on which pesticide residues have been most frequently found — “the dirty dozen”*. Therefore, to avoid pesticide-associated health risks, consume only apples that are grown locally and/or organically. Have you ever noticed the difference between a freshly picked apple and the conventionally farmed, waxed, shiny ones in the supermarkets — the ones that travel halfway around the world to get here? That coating, toxic itself, also traps pesticides that were sprayed onto the fruit. Rinse apples under clear running water like you would any fruit. To prevent browning when slicing apples for a recipe, put the slices in a bowl of cold water and add a spoonful of lemon juice.

Apples surround us with their abundance on the South Shore (Paula Reds, Macintosh, Red and Golden Delicious, McGowan) and there are so many options for pick-your-own farms. My personal favorite is C.N. Smith Farm in East Bridgewater where all of your senses are entertained as you visit. The choppy hum of a tractor in the distance, children laughing, chickens clucking and the sun warm and comforting on your face. The smell of chrysanthemums, fresh air and earth. The 75-year-old family owned and operated farm is a gem, and a day here is beautifully spent with family and friends.

Enjoy!

**The not-for-profit Environmental Working Group ranks the pesticide residue content of over 40 different fruits and vegetables according to tests conducted by the USDA and the FDA. The fruits and vegetables with the highest pesticide residues are commonly referred to as the “dirty dozen.” They include: peaches, apples, sweet bell peppers, celery, nectarines, strawberries, cherries, lettuce, grapes, pears, spinach and potatoes.*

Kristen Lofstrom is a Holistic Health Counselor, speaker and writer focused on working with children, parents, and the community. She received her health counseling training from the Institute of Integrative Nutrition in New York City and she holds a BA in Communications and Special Education from Bridgewater State College.



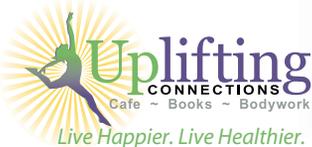
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