

## HALLOWEEN AT THE COOP: THE TRICK OF TREAT

October 3, 2024



By Kim Velsey

October 15, 2024

Every Halloween, the Coop sets aside small apples donated by Hepworth Farms to give out to trick-or-treaters, a tradition that reflects the Coop's commitment to healthy, fresh, seasonal foods. The holiday is generally a low-key affair at the store, but members enjoy celebrating it—it's common for staff and shift workers to show up in costume that day—and the Coop carries a number of seasonal items for decorating, eating and giving out to trick-or-treaters.

ILLUSTRATION BY DEBORAH TINT

"We bring pumpkins in for the three weeks before Halloween, starting around October 7," says Cecelia Rembert, a receiving coordinator and one of the Coop's produce buyers. "We don't want to get them too soon because they get kind of gross. And we try not to have any left over. Turns out no one wants them on November 1." Last year, the Coop sold nine bins (or 5,850 pounds) of carving pumpkins, mostly from Hepworth Farms, one of the Coop's oldest produce suppliers. There are also pie pumpkins, which many people like to paint for Halloween, and a variety of gourds to decorate. You can find turnips and potatoes in the produce department as well, the root vegetables that were traditionally carved at Halloween. Pumpkins, a new world vegetable, didn't make their way to Europe until the 1500s, and it was several centuries after that that they became associated with Halloween.

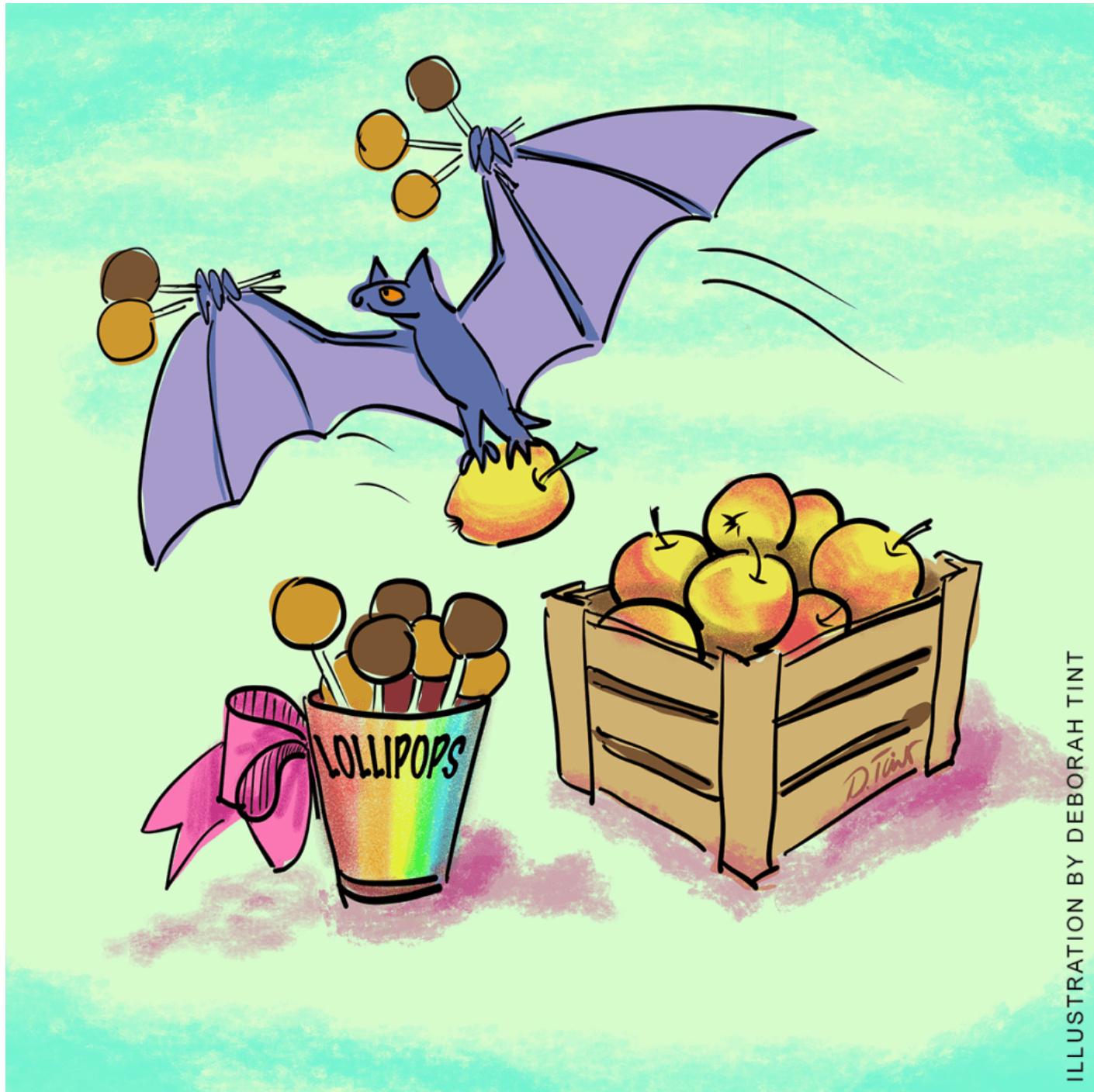


ILLUSTRATION BY DEBORAH TINT

There is also, of course, candy. Although this year, there may be fewer options than in years past. Gillian Chi, a receiving coordinator and buyer who handles the Halloween candy, says that many of the pre-orders she put in early this summer for Halloween-themed products from member favorites like YumEarth, Ocho and Tony Chocolonely have been canceled because those products are out of stock. It's not clear why the distributor, UNFI, one of the Coop's largest suppliers, hasn't been able to fulfill the orders (requests for a comment from YumEarth, UNFI and Ocho were not re-

turned), but it's been a problem during the past few years. Chi says she's had luck in years past reaching out directly to contacts at those companies, but that hasn't yielded any success so far this year.

#### CANDY PRICES HAVE SHOT UP SINCE THE PANDEMIC, INCREASING 27.5% FROM 2021 TO 2023, ACCORDING TO THE BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS.

When Chi first started working as a buyer, she focused on increasing the organic candy offerings: She could see there was a need for organic Halloween candy and it sold well. Popular items in the past have included the YumEarth lollipops in Halloween wrappers—they also made an organic candy corn, the first on the market, but since discontinued—and individual bags of gummy bats and spiders. Tony Chocolonely's individually-wrapped Halloween chocolates were a hit as well. Apparently, anything in a Halloween shape or with a Halloween wrapper sells well. Hard candy does not. "For the last eight years or so, I've tried to have Halloween candy take over the entire end cap," says Chi. "But for the last few years it's been so hard to get stuff [that] it's just been a couple of shelves."



ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

So what can shoppers expect to see on those shelves soon? Snyder's pretzels in Halloween pouches, Endangered Species Not So Spooky milk chocolate mix, Pirate Booty trick-or-treat puffs, Good Crisp Creepy Crisps and Torie & Howard Halloween lollipops. It's also possible that the gourmet candy buyer may score some Halloween-themed items, if they are buying for themselves (or really trying to impress the neighborhood kids). But stocking up on even the non-gourmet products will be pricey. Candy prices have shot up since the pandemic, increasing 27.5% from 2021 to 2023, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Cacao and sugar prices both went up after disappointing harvests brought on by bad weather, which have continued to be an issue (while there were early fears this might lead to candy shortages, in the end candy just became a lot more expensive). A seven ounce bag of individually wrapped YumEarth gummy candies cost \$3.90 in 2019; last year it cost \$7.64. This year, the Coop hasn't been able to stock it at all.



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ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

If shoppers are disappointed in this year's candy selection, however, they can always follow the Coop's example and stock up on a few cases of apples to hand out. After a late frost last May devastated upstate apple orchards, farmers are reporting a bumper crop this season.

Happy Halloween, shoppers!

*Kim Velsey has been a Coop member since 2020. When she's not writing for the Line-*

waiters' Gazette, *she's a staff writer at New York Magazine.*

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## HEIRLOOM APPLE VARIETIES FROM THE SCOTT FARM ORCHARD IN DUMMERSTON, VERMONT

October 3, 2024



Illustrations by Valeria Trucchia

ILLUSTRATION BY VALERIA TRUCCCHIA



## Roxbury Russet

### Roxbury Russet

This is the oldest American apple variety. Some folks say the flavor is similar to guava and the texture like a coconut. It has a very high sugar content, though you may not notice it due to the other complex flavors. Cider made from this apple is like nectar, it is so thick and sweet. A medium-sized apple with russeted skin, it is also known as a leather-coat apple. The Roxbury Russet is generally available from

mid-October to late November.



### Cox's Orange Pippin

#### Cox's Orange Pippin

The most popular of English apples, it has been awarded the highest honors by the Royal Horticultural Society. It was originally grown from seed (hence the name Pippin) in 1825 by Richard Cox, an amateur horticulturist. According to Roald Dahl, the popular children's author,

ILLUSTRATION BY VALERIA TRUCCHIA

one can tell a Cox is ripe for eating if the seeds rattle when you shake it. Its tart citrus flavor is exquisitely tempered by notes of sweet pear. It is excellent for eating and cooking, and makes a fabulous apple jelly. Cox is parent to Holstein and Karmijn de Sonnaville. A small round apple with orange skin, sometimes with some russetting. Harvest begins in mid-September.



Reine des Reinettes

## Reine des Reinettes

A French apple from the 1700s which has a high sugar content that's balanced with acidity. It's a juicy apple, good for eating out of hand. It is also good for cooking and in Normandy it is considered the best apple for making hard cider. One of our favorite apples and a top favorite at the tastings here on the farm; there is good reason it's called the King of the Pippins. A large, beautiful apple, red blush with russetting. Look for this longtime favorite mid-to-late-September.



## Calville Blanc d'Hiver

### Calville Blanc d'Hiver

A French apple dating to 1598 with a champagne-like flavor and a wonderful texture when cooked. Of all the French apples, this one is considered the best to cook with because of its flavor and texture and ability to hold its shape. It makes an excellent Tarte Tatin. Calville has a yellow skin with a red blush. Its shape is deeply lobed, often resembling a crown. Harvest in early October.



## Orleans Reinette

### Orleans Reinette

According to Zeke Goodband, our former orchard manager, this is “one of the most handsome apples on the planet.” Grown in France for hundreds of years, it has a flattened shape with a russeted, rosy cheek. It has a combination of citrus and nutty flavors, and makes for a good cooking apple as well as for eating out of hand. Yellow, fine textured flesh. The famous English food writer, Edward Bunyard,

enjoyed his Orleans Reinettes with port wine. Later harvest variety, usually mid-October.



### Blue Pearmain

#### Blue Pearmain

A New England apple dating back to the early 1700's. Henry David Thoreau wrote in his journal about his preference for Blue Pearmain. The crisp, rich flavor makes it a good apple for fresh eating and

ILLUSTRATION BY VALERIA TRUCCIA

baking, though its thick skin might prove unfavorable for some in eating out of hand. Large with purple-blue skin with light russetting. Sometimes marked with handsome green stripes and often with a dusty, waxy bloom. Harvest in late September.



### Ananas Reinette

Ananas Reinette

Or Royal Pineapple, this small yellow skinned apple was grown in

France and Belgium in the 1850s and is named for its flavor after it mellows from the tree. Some sources note it from the 1500s, though it soared in popularity in Germany in the mid-nineteenth century, and remains popular all along central-northern Europe today. Its zesty citrus flavor complements its crisp fine-grain texture. Used mostly for eating out of hand, it is also a fine cooking apple and makes a robust juice or cider. It is a small to medium apple and aptly suited for the home garden. Harvest begins in mid-September through October.

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## HOW ABOUT THEM APPLES?

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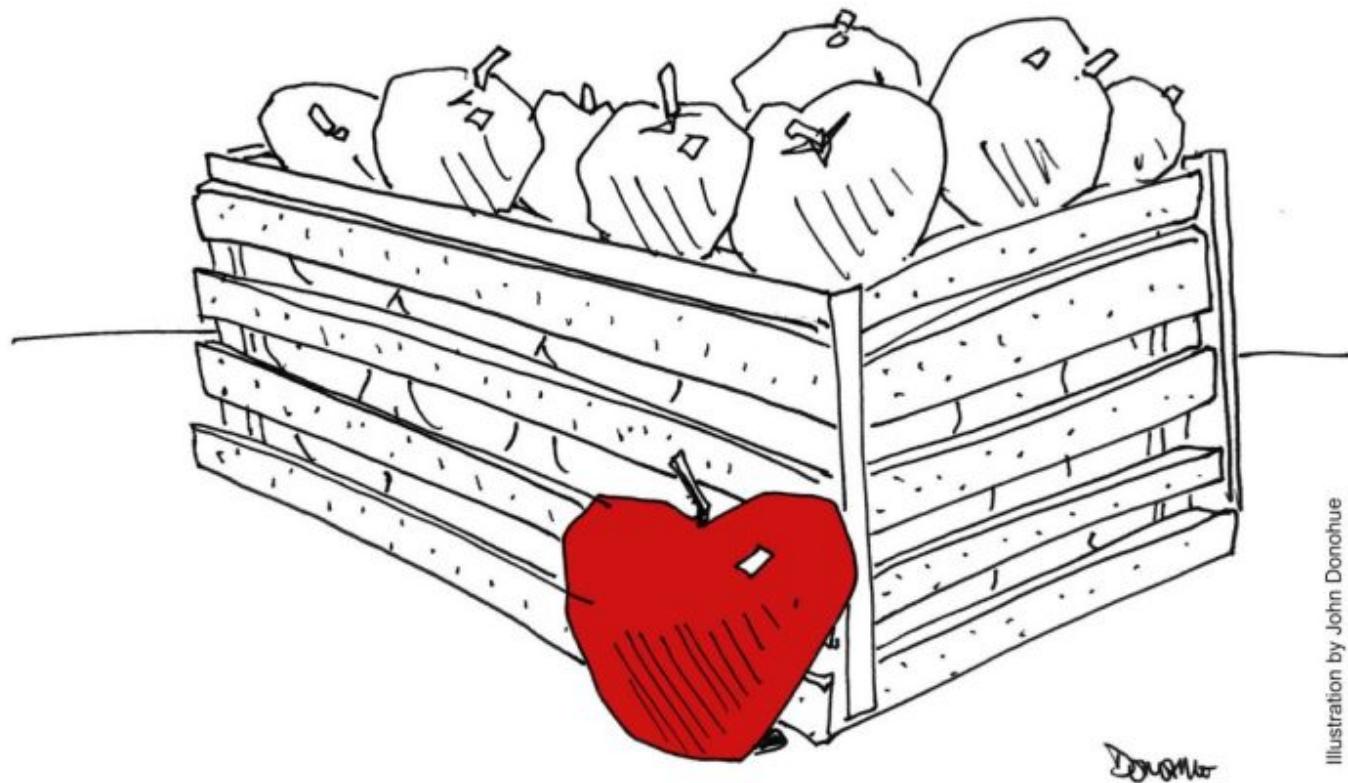


Illustration by John Donohue

By Marisa Bowe

The Coop is bursting with delectable autumn apples. Get ready to nerd out on an encyclopedic survey, from centuries-old heirlooms to present-day, patented and trademarked blockbusters.



Photo by Rod Morrison

Matisse Neal filling up the Coop's numerous apple bins

## BEARS HELPED MAKE APPLES SWEET

The domestic apple is native to Kazakhstan, where the primary ancestor of most cultivated apples still grows wild. It was too sour for humans to eat. Bears are thought to be responsible for selecting (and spreading) the biggest, sweetest fruit. This resulted in apples that humans liked, which were probably domesticated as early as the Neolithic Agricultural Revolution.

An “heirloom” is an apple that was cultivated before WWII and the start of large-scale commercial farming. The Coop gets some of its most appealing heirlooms from Scott Farm in Vermont. Simon Renault, the farm’s general manager, points out that without human intervention, we wouldn’t have any of this variety. “An apple will never reproduce true to seed,” he explains. “They need to get pollinated by a different tree. So the apple will never give you the exact same variety. Grafting a variety you like onto rootstock—that’s the only way you can reproduce [it].”

## APPLE HISTORY 101

“That’s the fascinating part about heirlooms,” he continues. “The apples we have today pleased somebody, somewhere, way back in the history of humanity. One day there’s a guy who walked by a hedgerow, grabbed an apple, took a bite and was like, ‘Oh my God, this tastes like pear. I bet you this would make a great sauce.’”

Just as Renault describes, the Gravenstein apple tree was discovered in 1669 in Denmark. Or was it Italy? Or Germany? Wherever it was and whoever discovered it, they knew what they were doing. The Gravenstein is renowned for its creamy, juicy flesh and distinctive, well-balanced sweet and tart flavors with a touch of tang.

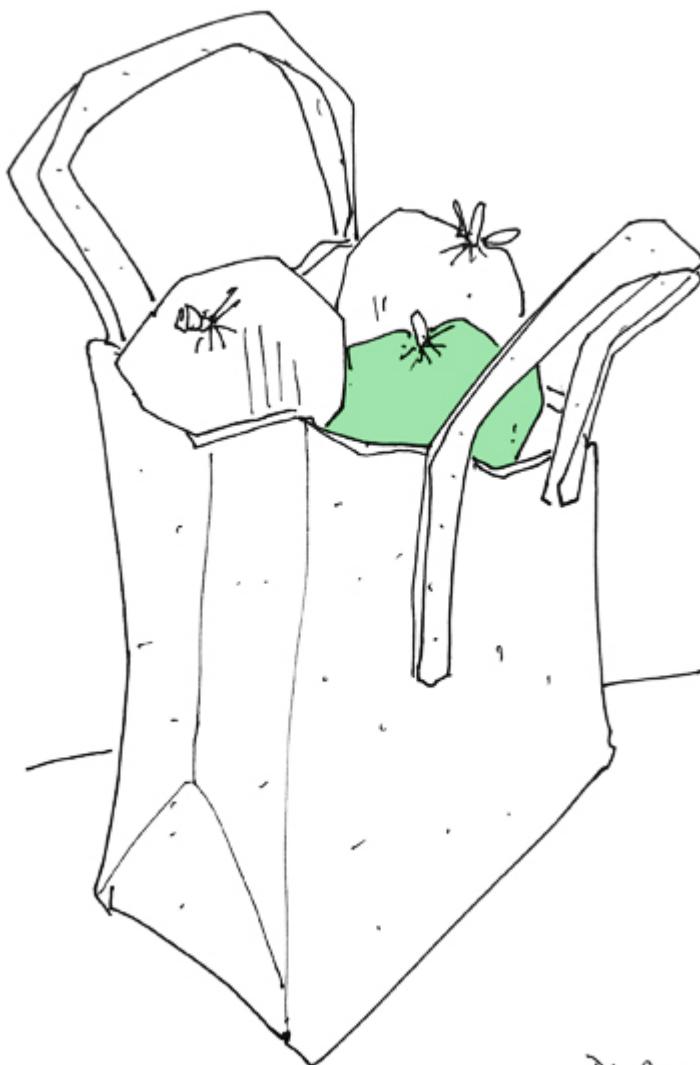


Illustration credit: John Donahue

## MORE APPLE "SPECIES"

The Reine de Reinette, known as a dessert apple, also has a convoluted history. It became known in France, Holland and England around 1770 and was called something different in each place. It tastes as good by any of its names, with juicy, subtly crunchy flesh and rich, complex flavor with lush notes of citrus and tropical fruit.

The Lamb Abbey Pearmain apple is named after the place where Mary Malcomb discovered it in 1804, growing on a tree in her backyard garden in Kent, southeast of London. She was awarded a medal for it in 1819 by the Horticultural Society of London. Its firm flesh is intensely flavored with a good sweet/tart balance and pineapple notes.

John McIntosh bought a farm in Ontario in 1811 and discovered apple saplings with especially good fruit. He transplanted them to his garden, and only one survived—to become the parent of every soft, juicy, sweet/tart/spicy McIntosh you've eaten.

Maria Ann "Granny" Smith discovered the apple that bears her name. A midwife and orchardist, the British-born Australian transplant decided to cultivate an apple tree she'd noticed by a creek on her farm in 1868. She gained posthumous fame when it began to become widely grown at the end of the century.

The Golden Supreme was discovered in 1890 in West Virginia—or was it Idaho in 1960? Its soft but crisp flesh is mellow and sweet with a lighter, less complex echo of the Golden Delicious's honey and pear notes.

Cortlands were developed at Cornell University in 1899. Sweet and juicy with a hint of tartness, they're great for fruit salads because they're slow to brown.

Fujis aren't named for the mountain in Japan, but Fujisaki, the town where they were developed in the 1930s. The crisp, firm, juicy flesh has one of the highest sugar contents of any popular apple, and their taste confirms that. Their flavor brings to mind fresh-pressed apple juice.

The Gala was developed the same decade, in New Zealand. Its crisp, soft, juicy flesh is mild and very sweet.

The beautiful Pink Pearl was developed in 1944 in California. Crisp and juicy, it has stunning rosy-pink, tart-sweet flesh.

The Empire was half-discovered, half-bred at Cornell in 1945. It's firm, crisp and juicy, with a tart flavor, and doesn't bruise easily.

The Ginger Gold was discovered among the surviving trees of a Virginia orchard after Hurricane Camille in 1969. It has crisp, fine-textured flesh that's sweet with mildly

tart overtones, and is slow to brown.

Sweet Sixteens were developed over 31 years at the University of Minnesota, making its debut in 1978. Its crisp yellow flesh is very sweet, with a distinctive, complex, rich flavor that's sweet and spicy with vanilla, cherry, anise, bourbon and nutty notes.

The Honeycrisp was developed at the University of Minnesota over 31 years and released in 1991. The blockbuster fruit earned the university ten million bucks before its patent expired. With a juicy, snappy-crisp—but not hard—texture and a syrupy, slightly tart sweetness, it “changed the whole game,” said Fred Wilklow, the owner of Wilklow Orchards, another Coop supplier.

The Zestar!® (yes, the annoying exclamation is part of its trademarked name) was released in 1999 by the University of Minnesota. Crisp and light, its unique flavor is sweet and tangy with brown sugar notes.

SweeTango®, another patented University of Minnesota apple, has its own website. Released in 2006, its crunchy, juicy flesh is sweet and tart, with notes of citrus, honey, spice and maybe some brown sugar.

Sweeties, developed in New Zealand, were introduced in 2012. The firm, crisp, juicy and somewhat coarse pale yellow flesh is mild, very sweet and subtly spicy.