

Food & Drink

Nothing says fall like crisp, tasty apples

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Correspondent

Nothing says harvest-time like a crisp Ontario apple: You can almost taste autumn in the clear-flavoured crunch. And no matter what your taste, there's an Ontario apple to suit it, from the traditional McIntosh to the Crispin, Golden Delicious and Empire.

Great fall memories include cool, sunny days spent picking apples fresh from the tree. There are many orchards around the Markham area which offer a wide variety of apples to choose from and an abundant supply of fruit to pick. Just remember: Turn the eye to the sky!

Selection: When selecting apples look for fruit that is firm, solid and free of wrinkles and bruises, with clean and well-coloured skin. Remember that not all apples are red! There are many different varieties, all of which vary in colour, so make sure you are judging their unique colours correctly.

Storage: When you get your apples home after a day of picking or purchasing, the first thing you should do is to remove any that are overripe or bruised. Bruised apples will cause others to spoil more quickly — but don't discard these apples. Soft and overripe apples are great for use in sauces and pies. A few apples can easily and safely be stored in their original bag in the refrigerator, where they should keep for a month.

Larger quantities should be kept in a cool, dark and well-ventilated area such as a fruit cellar or garage. Cold, humid storage ensures that apples maintain their crisp, juicy texture and flavour.

Preparation: To prevent chopped apples from browning, dip quickly in a weak salt solution of 1 tsp. (5 ml) salt to 5 cups water, or toss in a little lemon juice. Cooking choices are unlimited when using apples. Tart varieties, with high to medium acidity and a firm texture, are usually best for cooking. Less acidic varieties are preferred raw.

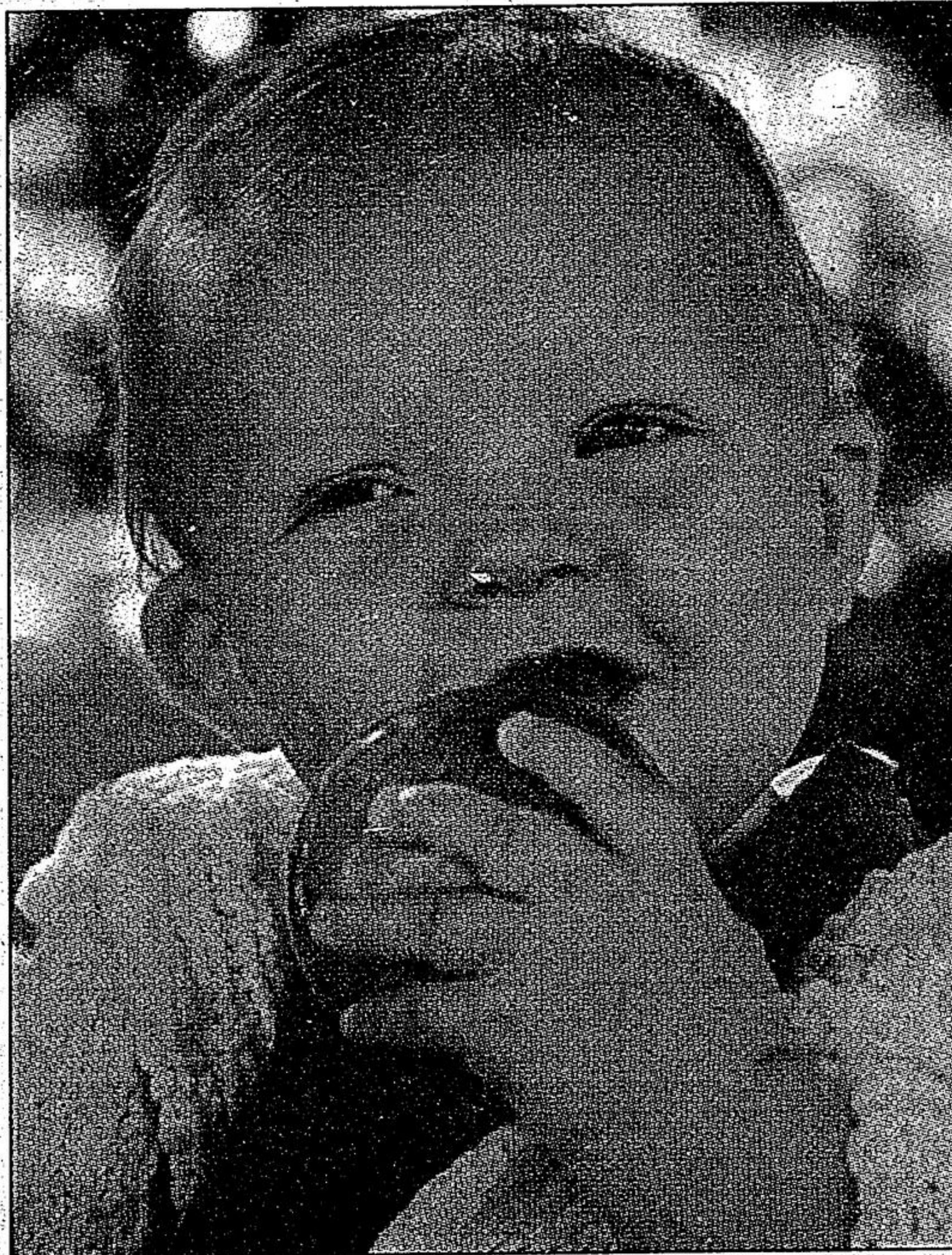
Freezing: If you wish to freeze apples, first slice them (and peel if you wish). For best results, use firm apples, and pack them in a sugar solution. For every 4 cups of sliced apples, dissolve 1/4 tsp (1 ml) of ascorbic acid powder in 1/4 cup (50 ml) cold water, to prevent browning. Sprinkle over the apples and stir gently. Then add 1/4 cup (50 ml) of sugar. Pack fruit in freezer bags or containers and store in the freezer for up to one year. Before using, frozen apple slices should be thawed for one hour or more.

APPLE FACTS

- One medium apple contains about 80 calories and is a good source of fibre and Vitamin C.
- How many apples are there in a pound? About three medium apples.

- Canadians consume an average of 10.7 kilograms of fresh apples each year.
- The apple tree now grows (in many different varieties) in almost every corner of the globe — from Japan to Madagascar to South Africa, New Zealand, Russia, China, England, France and flourishes across much of North America.

• Ontario's 1996 apple crop yielded 426,300,000 pounds on 26,372 acres, brought to market with a farm-gate value of \$55,419,000.



FIRST CRUNCH: Little Brodie, 11 months, can't wait to take a bite of this fresh apple just picked from one of the local apple farms. Whether you enjoy eating them right off the tree or making delicious homebaked creations, apples are a favourite all year long. Photo by STEVE SOMERVILLE

Ensure meat you buy is well inspected

Food for Thought



Lisa Cartwright

When purchasing meat, consumers should only buy meat which has been federally inspected.

While consumers have the option of purchasing both municipal and provincial inspected meat, Evan McDonald from Village Grocer in Unionville recommends people avoid both.

Meat that has been provincially inspected has met only the standards from one province. Federally-inspected meat uses standards from each province, plus some additional ones, he said.

"Federal inspected meat can be shipped across provincial borders."

Once killed, the skin, head and feet of the animal are removed and it is ready to be inspected.

Each carcass is individually inspected and cut in the mid-section. This enables the federal inspector to check a number of requirements including disease and age, among other things.

If the animal passes the rigorous testing, it gets a blue stamp of approval. If not, the carcass is disposed.

The approved meat is then graded. There are two grading systems used: numbers — one to three — and letters — A to AAA, said McDonald.

The numbers determine the amount of fat cover the animal has. The thicker the fat, the higher the number.

"A lazy cow has led a more pastured life. It doesn't have high muscle tone."

This makes the cow less lean and more tender.

The letters show the amount of marbling — or fat — in the meat itself. The more fat running through the meat, the higher the fat content and the more tender the meat.

Whether the store carries A#1 meat or the highest quality, any meat that ends up on a grocery-store shelf is good quality because it passed Canada's regulations first.

SIMPLE APPLE DESSERT SQUARES

Simple to prepare and easy to carry for outdoor enjoyment, this dessert is so attractive with fresh fall apples (see photo).

They're so easy to make the kids will be asking to help you prepare them. Serve with ice cream or whipped cream, if desired. Serves 12.



RECIPES

- 1 1/3 cups (325 mL) all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) granulated sugar
- 1 1/2 tsp (7 mL) baking powder
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) salt
- 1/4 tsp (1 mL) nutmeg
- 2/3 cup (150 mL) milk
- 3 tbsp (45 mL) butter or margarine, melted
- 1 egg
- 4 Ontario apples, cored and sliced
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) chopped nuts
- Topping:**
- 1/3 cup (75 mL) granulated sugar
- 1 tsp (5 mL) cinnamon

In bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder, salt and nutmeg; mix in milk, butter and egg until smooth. Spread evenly in greased 13 X 9 inch (3 L) baking dish. Arrange apples on top. Sprinkle with nuts.

Topping: Mix sugar with cinnamon; sprinkle on top. Bake at 350 degrees F (180 degrees C) for 45 minutes or until apples are tender. Cool in pan. Cut into squares.

GRILLED CHICKEN AND APPLE POUCHES

Easy-does-it foil pouches contain chicken with apples and onions-flavoured with

mustard and herbs for a simple grilled or baked main dish. Enjoy outdoor cooking with wonderful fall-fresh Ontario apples.

- Serves 4
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) vegetable oil
- 1 large Ontario onion, thinly sliced
- 3 medium Ontario apples, cored and sliced
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) honey mustard
- 4 boneless skinless chicken breasts (1 lb./500 grams)
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) dried basil
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) dried thyme
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) salt

In large skillet, heat oil over medium heat; saute onion for 5 min. Add apples, cook 3 minutes.

Spread mustard over both sides of chicken. Place individually on 4 pieces of greased double thickness of foil. Sprinkle each with 1/8 tsp (0.5 mL) basil, thyme and salt. Divide apple mixture among chicken. Wrap tightly, making 4 pouches.

Grill over medium-hot coals for about 30 minutes, turning pouches every 10 minutes, until chicken is no longer pink inside (Or bake at 350 degrees F/180 degrees C for 30 minutes).

To serve, remove chicken and apples from foil and place on plates; pour juices over top.