Michigan's apple season starts in August, really gets going in September, and continues well into October. Thanks to controlled atmosphere storage, it's unlikely that one bad apple will spoil the whole barrel. Freshly harvested apples are put to sleep until it's time to go to market. MSU researchers have perfected this process, now used industry-wide, so you can say "How 'bout them apples" year round.

If you grew up with a backyard apple tree, you probably used the same kind of apple for every purpose. We ate an apple a day and gave some away! With 20 commercially-grown varieties of Michigan apples and hundreds of cultivars available from family farms, there is no need to compare apples and oranges. This guide compares apples to apples, a great way to view the features of the most common and popular Michigan-grown apple varieties. With so many varieties, it seems a shame not to try a little of each, dabbling in the wide array from sweet to tart, crunchy to soft, big red to little green apples.

If you like to pick your own apples, keep in mind that apples continue to ripen after harvest, particularly the late varieties, such as Delicious, Ida Red, Fuji, and Braeburn. Bite into one you just picked and you'll no doubt be sorely disappointed. During ripening, starches break down into sugars producing a fruit with a sweeter taste. Some apples need to be stored for a number of weeks before they are palatable. Fresh from the market, they're ready to eat. Keep your apples refrigerated as they will overripen quickly when stored on the countertop.

This month's recipe may not be as American as apple pie, but it's a great way to enjoy the taste of autumn and just may become the apple of your eye.

Recipe demonstration on September 16 at 12:10pm.
- Join us in person at Brody Square Demo Kitchen.
- Sign-up at health4u@msu.edu.
- Watch online: alumni.msu.edu/livestream.

Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski, Executive Chef for MSU Residential Dining Services, used the rendered bacon fat to gently cook mild-flavored leeks, then folded in toasted pecans and crispy bacon to make this savory twist on baked apples a truly memorable dish.