



RECIPE for health

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featured food:

APPLES

By Peggy Crum, MA, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

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. Not to upset your apple cart, but you may want to try something new that you find at the farmers market. The growers themselves can tell you the qualities and how to use them.

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.

Baked Stuffed Apples

Adapted from a [She Knows](#) recipe by Clair Gallam

Serves 4

- 4 red apples, Gala or Fuji if available
- Juice from 1/2 a lemon
- 4 slices of bacon
- 2 leeks, white parts only, washed and sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 T. white wine
- 1 T. heavy cream
- 6 oz. soft goat cheese
- 2 T. toasted pecans
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Working from the stem end, use a melon baller to remove the core from each apple, scooping out the stem and seeds and making a deep hole for the filling; work to within about 1/2 inch of the bottom of the apple. Peel the skin from the top half of each apple. Sprinkle each apple with lemon juice to prevent early browning. Prepare a square or round baking dish by lightly coating it with cooking spray. Place apples in the dish.

Cut the bacon into 1" strips. Cook in a sauté pan over medium high heat until crisp. Remove bacon from pan and set aside. Add leeks to rendered fat and cook 2-3 minutes. Add garlic and cook another minute. Deglaze pan with white wine then add cream and simmer until liquid has mostly evaporated, about two minutes.

Remove pan from heat and stir in goat cheese until blended. Fold bacon and pecans into the mixture. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper as needed.

Scoop about one to two tablespoons of cheese mixture into each apple. Bake in preheated oven for 25-30 minutes, until apples are soft and cheese is bubbly.

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.

- Join us in person at Brody Square Demo Kitchen. Sign-up at health4u@msu.edu.
- Watch online: alumni.msu.edu/livestream.