

prizes at fall fairs for his new red apple, which he called “Hawkeye.”

In 1893, Jesse entered his Hawkeye apple in a fruit show sponsored by the Stark Bros. fruit company, a big wholesaler at the time. C.M. Stark, fruit magnate and fair judge, declared “My, that’s delicious, and that’s the name for it!”. True to his word, Stark bought the tree from Jesse and renamed it “Delicious.” The Stark Company propagated it madly and produced thousands of bushels of the new apple. Then they spent \$750,000 (multi-millions in today’s dollars) to promote it throughout the US and Canada, creating the world’s first mass-marketing campaign for a new fruit introduction. Overnight, or at least as quickly as apple trees can grow, the Delicious apple became a household name. No one seems to know how much Jesse got for the tree.



Ron Berezan’s apple tree in bloom in Edmonton.

Heritage apples form a complex and delicious mosaic of Canada’s horticultural past.

McIntosh and Delicious have been the two most popular apples in Canada for nearly a hundred years. If you were an apple breeder, wouldn’t you stand on the shoulders of these giants? Indeed, many of the new varieties developed during the 20th century are descendants of these proven varieties.

For instance, Cortland is half-McIntosh; Paula Red and Melba are from McIntosh seedlings; Jersey Mac, Jonamac, Scotia Mac, and several other “Macs”

obviously owe their pedigrees to John McIntosh’s legacy. Delicious is one of the grandparents of the excellent Royal Gala apple, and several other introductions from New Zealand and Asia.

Empire

But how could you go wrong by directly crossing McIntosh with Delicious? Wouldn’t that be the ideal way to make a new favourite, even better than the originals? That’s what the New York Agricultural Experiment Station thought, when in 1945 they created the Empire apple, a cross of McIntosh and Delicious. It is more finely textured than Delicious, a better keeper than McIntosh, sweet, and fairly evenly coloured. In Canada and the North Eastern US, it has become

another classic. And by any definition, a 62-year old apple variety is a heritage variety too.

Other heritage varieties that you’ll find in the grocery store:

- Northern Spy (c 1800)
- Golden Russet (c 1850)
- Wealthy (1861)
- Granny Smith (1868)
- Golden Delicious (1890)
- Cortland (1898)
- Gala, or Royal Gala (1934)
- Jonamac (1944)
- Crispin, or Mutsu (1949)

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