

Wild About Apples

seeking our Michigan's heirloom fruits



Edible Forest

by Marty Kovarik

What do George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Chapman and Henry David Thoreau have in common? The hint was John Chapman, alias Johnny Appleseed, and the answer is a love for apple trees. One of Thoreau's most moving essays was about wild apples.

Since colonization, over three thousand apple varieties have been cultivated in the United States. However, the average person may try only eight to ten apple varieties in his life. Nowadays most market driven apples are grown because they are disease resistant and storage

and transport friendly, not because they have great flavor. However, the more people taste these heirloom or antique apples, the more the direct market opens up. Nurseries and some orchards are now catering to this demand. Apples with real apple flavor, what a revelation! These apples

may also be found on your back forty or abandoned along the roadside. "Wild apples" quite often have more apple flavor than anything you can buy at the store. Some of these apple varieties, such as Summer Rambo from France, were developed as early as the 1500s.

When you do find these old and rare apples, enjoy them. And if you happen upon one of the particularly firm and slightly tart varieties, turn them into the best apple pie you've ever eaten. 🍏

Photo by Brian Bankston

Wild Apple Blackberry Pie

The combination of wild apples and blackberries is the best of both worlds. Tart wild apples add tang and reduce the concentration of seeds that you would have in an all blackberry pie. They also soothe the color and flavor of the blackberries. This pie is better than either apple or blackberry pie.

- 2 cups **blackberries**
- 2 cups **tart wild apples,**
sliced thinly and peeled
- 1 cup **sugar**
- 2 tsp **lemon juice**
- ¼ cup **flour**
- 1 TBL **butter,** cut into small cubes
- 1 **double pie crust**



Wash blackberries and drain thoroughly on paper towels. Combine blackberries, apples, sugar, lemon juice and flour. Let stand 15 minutes while preparing pie crust. Line pie pan with bottom crust, add filling, dot with butter. Moisten rim of bottom crust, add top crust and crimp to seal. Bake at 450 degrees for 10 minutes, then reduce heat to 350 degrees and bake an additional 40 to 45 minutes until golden brown.