british APPLES

Amongst the few thousand UK varieties of apple are the delightfully named Foxwhelp, Sheep's Snout, Hogshead, Ducks Bill, Black Wilding, Brown Cockle, Monstrous Pippin, Burr Knott, Bastard Rough Coat, and Slack-my-girdle.

Some varieties of apple are not ready to come off the tree until December .

Some dessert apples are best stored for a month before use and other varieties best stored in a cellar from October to March. In 1870 when the UK population was less than half of today's population, 186,000 acres of fruit trees were grown. Today this figure is 44,000.

Only 20% of the apples sold in the UK are grown here.

In the last 10 years China has already planted more orchards than there are in Eastern Europe.

***Apples you have heard of***

Gala is one of my absolute favourites for fresh eating. It is heart-shaped with distinctive yellow-orange skin with red striping. Gala is just the right size for snacking and is great in salads, good for baking and very good in applesauce.

Braeburn has high impact flavour. The crisp, aromatic Braeburn blends sweetness and tartness just right for snacks and salads. It's also good in baking, applesauce and for freezing. Braeburn colour varies from greenish-gold with red sections to nearly solid red. Braeburn was discovered as a chance seedling near Nelson, New Zealand in 1952. Its probable parents are Lady Hamilton and Granny Smith.

Cox’s Orange Pippin - our most popular dessert apple. This variety, a pale green apple flecked with orange or brown russet tones, arrives in September and is available in stores and markets through to April. It holds its shape well and lends itself perfectly to the caramel-oozing Continental tarte tatin.

Jonagold is a blend of Jonathan and Golden Delicious apples, offering a unique tangy-sweet flavour with firm flesh. Jonagold is excellent both for eating fresh and for cooking.

Unusual apples

Ashmead’s Kernel - not the prettiest of the bunch but a fantastic apple all the same. This one is a late-season apple harvested around October but which is best from November and goes right through to January. It is greenish-yellow with brown russet tones and magnificent crisp flesh. Most probably found in specialist farm shops and markets but fairly rare.

Howgate - another early variety available from the end of July through to the end of August. It's a round apple with yellow-green skin often flushed with shades of orange and brown. This is a good cooking apple, rivalling Bramley in the crumble stakes but unlikely to be found outside markets and farm shops.

Lord Lambourne - a greenish-yellow apple with broken stripes of red that is beautifully crisp, tasting of lemon and rosewater. This is a mid-season apple that I think is one of the very best

Worcester Pearmain - a distinctive red-flushed apple with firm flesh and a superb strawberry flavour. It is available from the end of August through to mid-September in stores and farm shops.