

Apple Hill bounty perfect for sauces, pies



Vicki Price is busy basking pies at the Apple Pantry Farm in Apple Hill. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

CAMINO – It's apple season. And while these sweet and tart orbs are full of nutrients, sometimes it's better to alter them in ways that makes them not be so healthy.

Pie is normally my first choice for what to do with the haul I bring back from Apple Hill this time of year. And while the ones I have left will become a pie, I used many of them for applesauce.

I have fond memories of mom canning applesauce when I was growing up. She spoiled me. I turn my nose up now at what is on store shelves. Most are way too sweet, and some don't even

taste like apple.

Like a lot of foods, there is a tremendous amount of personal preference. Sweet or tart? Just how much cinnamon is the right amount? Chunky or smooth? I'm one who likes cinnamon, but wasn't sure what others thought. Apparently they agree with me. But the samples I made lacked the amount of cinnamon I would have put in if they were just for me.



A slew of apple varieties to choose from.

I don't have a food mill, which would have made the sauce smooth enough to serve a baby. I used a potato masher to make the chunks of apple smaller, but I would still describe all that I made as chunky.

The biggest revelation is that what I've known all these years about Golden Delicious was thrown in the trash this week. Mom had advised me to, "Stay away from Delicious." This has been our family mantra for pies and it was her same warning for applesauce, in particular for Red Delicious. And while I will stick with that philosophy for pies, others and I are saying yes to Golden Delicious for sauce.

Vicki Price at Apple Pantry Farm swears by Golden Delicious for her pies and sauce.

“It’s the best because of the high sugar content. You really taste the fruit,” Price, who lived in South Lake Tahoe for 30-plus years, told *Lake Tahoe News*. She likes not having to add as much sugar to her products because it’s naturally in the fruit.

Peter Jivanove at Mother Lode Orchards said to use Empire apples.

“It’s the best of both worlds – sweet and tart,” he said of that varietal.

Jivanove also said a number of bakeshops in the Apple Hill area buy Golden Delicious from his orchard.

Candy Tusso would only use Pink Ladies if she could get them all the time. On Saturday she was using Granny Smith because that’s what was available.

(I grew up using Pippin for pies, with Granny Smith the backup because they are more readily available in grocery stores.)

Tusso, who is at Apple Ridge Farms, also likes the density of Arkansas Blacks.



O’Halloran’s is one of the older orchards in Apple Valley. Apple Hill Growers Association turns 50 in 2014.

For Donna O'Halloran of O'Halloran's it's all about mixing Romes, Wine Sap and Golden Delicious. But she admits if she were to ask her employees their preference, each would likely have a different answer.

(She also said Golden Delicious always make a good pie, and that Red Romes make an impressive baked apple.)

At Hangtown Kid Apple Orchard they are trying to grow Gravenstein, which is a popular apple in Sebastopol. Cindy Cogswell is filling in for her sister, Gail, on this particular day. (Gail and John Palmer own the orchard.) That's what they prefer for pies because they are more tart.

Apples are usually in season September-December. The growers in Apple Hill have mixed thoughts about freezing them. But having cold storage – like, a garage in Tahoe in the winter – should keep apples into the spring.



More than 750,000 people visit Apple Hill each year.

When the sauces were warm, I liked the Wine Sap-Golden Delicious-Red Roma best. Chilled, I liked the Golden Delicious best.

Seven women at the AAA office in Carson City tasted the five versions of applesauce made from the fruit the growers recommended. It was a blind tasting and until they read this they haven't known what they tasted.

Here is what they had to say:

- **Golden Delicious**

Vanessa – Spicy, good for sweet things.

Kathy – Nice and sweet. (Tied for favorite with Arkansas Black.)

Susan – Sweet, with cinnamon.

Angie – Sweet, cinnamon, yum! My favorite.

Dawn – A bit bland. More cinnamon.

- **Arkansas Black**

Deb – Right combo sweet and tart. All needed more cinnamon.

Kathy – Nice and sweet. (Tied with Golden Delicious.)

Angie – Tart, OK.

Dawn – Nice and tart, but too chunky.

- **Wine Sap-Golden Delicious-Red Rome**

Angie – Mushy, OK.

Dawn – Mellow. Not enough kick.

- **Pink Lady**

Angie – Sweet, OK.

Natalie – Tart enough to stand up to the cinnamon.

Dawn – Tangy, but needs to be smoother.

- **Empire**

Angie – Mushy, OK.

Dawn – Blah, blah, blah.

Apple Sauce

6 medium Golden Delicious apples

1/8 C sugar

2 tsp cinnamon

Dash nutmeg

Slice the apples like you would for a pie. Put in medium saucepan on low heat. When slightly mushy, add the remaining ingredients. Keep stirring.

Adjust flavoring to your preference.

Use potato masher or food mill to make sauce less chunky.

Eat warm or chilled.