

## From Orchard to Market

By John Shields

Leaves falling from trees ablaze with color are a sure sign that fall is upon us. There is a clean crispness to the air, and not surprisingly, a crispness to the fruits of the season. Although I crave the stone fruit of summer—peaches, apricots and plums—in their season, by the time fall rolls around once again, I am more than ready for my daily apple (you remember what they say), and yearn to cook with tart apples and sweet earthy pears.

For the past few decades, when shopping at the grocery store, there were maybe two or three varieties each of apples and pears. But as we return to traditional forms of growing and marketing produce, we find ourselves awash in a plethora of local varieties. We have much to be grateful for living in the bountiful region of the Chesapeake. We have the best of the best when it comes to seasonal fruit and vegetables. While this is a tremendous culinary blessing, the choices can seem overwhelming.

The good news is we have experts at our disposal, right at our local farmers markets. Over the years, regular shoppers like me develop relationships with favorite farmers. Developing relationships with the farmers at market is the best way to get tips for cooking, storing and eating the myriad of seasonal varieties, including fall fruit.

For expertise on local fruit, I make my way to the stand of Black Rock Orchard at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Street Waverly Farmers Market in North Baltimore. Dave Hochheimer knows—and grows—his fruit. With his wife, Emily Zaas, and their two children, he owns and operates the Lineboro, Maryland orchard started by his father, Bernie, in 1971. Dave has been operating the farm full-time for 27 years and Emily joined him eight years later.

“We are fortunate that Bernie, who learned the fruit business from scratch, had the foresight to plant such



Photo by John Shields

### BAKED MUTSU APPLE SLICES

*When baked, the Mutsu (also known as Crispin) apple has an unusual, yet delicious quality. With the skin left on the apples hold together during the baking process. The result is a baked apple with an amazingly smooth and creamy texture. When Emily is making baked potatoes, she puts the pan of covered apples in the oven, and bakes them the same amount of time that it takes the potatoes to cook. In this case Emily adds little or no sugar to the recipe and then serves the apples as a side dish.*

- 2 large Mutsu apples, cut into quarters, skin on, core removed
- 4 tablespoons butter, softened
- 4 tablespoons brown sugar or honey

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Toss the apple slices with the butter and sugar or honey. Place in a baking dish or baking pan. Cover tightly with foil and bake for about 45 minutes.

Serve hot or warm. Serves 3-4.

### EMILY'S FAVORITE APPLE PIE

*After visiting with Dave and Emily, I came home and immediately whipped up this pie and can see why it's Emily's favorite. The flaky pastry encases a not-too-sweet filling. The rectangular shape of the pie means the filling is not too deep, providing more crust in each serving. Don't know about you, but I love piecrust.*

- 2  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups flour
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup butter
- 1 large egg
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup milk
- 10 large tart apples
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 cup cereal flakes (corn, wheat, or a similar type of cereal)

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Place the flour into a mixing bowl and cut the butter in with a pastry cutter, your fingertips, or in a food processor. If using a food processor, use the pulse feature, taking care to only get a course mixture. You don't want to over process. Beat the egg and the milk together and mix with the flour mixture to form a stiff dough. Divide the dough into two pieces and refrigerate.

Peel, core, and thinly slice the apples into a bowl. Mix the sugar and cinnamon together and mix with the apple slices.

Roll out one ball of dough to fit the bottom and sides of a 12x9-inch Pyrex baking pan. Sprinkle with the cereal flakes, leaving a  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch border around the edges of dough. Spoon the apple mixture over the flakes. Roll out the remaining dough and place over the apples. Seal by pinching the edges together and brush with a little milk to help brown the top of the pie.

Place pie in oven and bake for 1 hour. Remove pan and place on a wire rack to cool. Pie may be served warm or cold. Serves 10-12.

## PEAR CLAFOUTIS

*Sounds exotic doesn't it? Don't be intimidated by the name. A clafoutis is a simple French custard-like dessert. It is traditionally made with pitted cherries, but adapts itself to a number of types of fruit—pears being one of them. It is an easy choice for a quick, yet elegant dessert.*

4 large free-range local eggs  
6 tablespoons sugar  
¼ cup flour  
3 tablespoons butter, melted  
1 cup milk  
2 pounds ripe pears (about 6 pears), peeled, cored and thinly sliced

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Butter a 9x9x2-inch cake pan. Place eggs and sugar in a bowl and whisk well. Add the flour and mix thoroughly. Pour in the butter and milk, whisking until well blended.

Pour enough batter into prepared pan to make a thin layer. Arrange pear slices on the batter (a spiral pattern is nice) and then pour the remaining batter over the pears.

Bake for about 25 to 30 minutes, or until just slightly firm. Serves 6.

favorite. A perfect apple pie made with pucker-up tart apples, like Dave's favorite fall cooking apple, the Ida Red, or a staple like a Granny Smith, is in my book one of the most wonderful experiences known to mankind. Emily agrees and her rectangular apple pie is proof. Like me, Emily believes that pie is great for dessert, but may be even better for breakfast.

Pears can be used much in the same ways as apples, perfect for pies, tarts, and even baked like an apple. I often substitute them for apples when preparing a tarte tatin. They are perfect for poaching and serving with cr me anglaise. Don't forget that there are other alternatives to applesauce like pear sauce, or pear butter. Emily says, "the Anjou pear is one of my favorites, with its semi-sweet, tart overtones." It definitely is a winner for baking or just eating. But by far the favorite Zaas-Hochheimer fruit-eating experience is a simple plate of perfectly ripe sliced pears or apples, with nuts and bits of good quality chocolate. Emily feels it should be on every restaurant menu.



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a wide variety of fruit," Emily says. While Bernie gave them a great start, Emily and Dave constantly endeavor to add varieties to their already diverse production. They are now growing over 40 varieties of apples including Red and Yellow Delicious, Paradise, Ginger Gold, Granny Smith and Stayman Winesap, just to name a few. In recent years, Dave has added Mutsu, Gala, Jonagold, Winchester, Nittany and the wildly popular Honey Crisp. "When types of fruit are not selling, we'll remove them by bull dozer and plant new varieties that we hope will be more popular," says Dave. "It's basically a trial and error thing."

The 32<sup>nd</sup> Street Market on Saturday is not Dave and Emily's only venue. "We go to two markets on Sunday and three others during the week," Emily says. "Four of our markets are in the Baltimore area and the rest in D.C. and its surrounding suburbs."

I often go to the market early in the morning and Dave rattles off the types of apples and pears they are selling that day. It is often before my coffee has kicked in, so I need to write down all the names. Baking with apples and pears is my

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