

Apples The Apple Orchard

Amanda Janke Kuse came from Ozaukee County, Wisconsin. Her father planted and maintained a large orchard there. When she married Walter Kuse, she and her husband combined their knowledge about raising fruits. Walter Kuse grafted some of the apple varieties from her home on trees at Medford. She told stories about her home and the orchard there. We recorded some of those stories.

The Orchard at Grandpa's

There were lots of fresh apples as Gustav Janke had planted a large apple orchard. Some of the trees remain to this day. There were Snow Apples, Duchess, Red Astrachan, Yellow Transparents, a Winter Russet (Gelbe Sussapfel) and Wolf River apples. Like the early settlers, apples also came from many places. The Duchess originated in Surrey, England, around 1800. The Red Astrachan had come from Russia. W. A. Springer near the Wolf River, in Fremont County, Wisconsin, first raised the Wolf River. Its existence was first recorded in 1875. Gustav Janke was always ready to try new things. Trees in his orchard were planted only a decade or two after the time when the Wolf River was first recorded. Gustav grafted various apples onto good rootstocks. Some trees therefore bore more than one type of apple.

The trees were planted far enough apart so horses and a mower could be used to cut the grass. Trees were trimmed so nothing would catch on the machinery.

Preservation

Not a lot of apples had to be preserved because fresh ones were available during much of the winter. They were eaten raw as well as cooked, baked, dried, and canned. A whole pan full of cored, baked apples with brown sugar and cinnamon hot from the oven tasted very good. Crab apples were preserved with sugar and canned.

Apple Juice, Apple Cider, and Vinegar

Amanda Janke Kuse remembered picking up forty sacks of apples for cider. The less perfect ones were put into pails and thrown over the fence for the eager cows. Apples were taken by the wagonload to the cider mill at Boltenville near Waubeka, Wisconsin. Grapes were also taken along. On the return trip there were barrels of apple juice and one of grape juice.

Big, full-sized barrels were used to store the cider. They were larger than a keg. The barrels were purchased but family members did not remember how they were made or where they were obtained. Sometimes there were as many as three barrels in the basement. Two were for cider and one for wine. Fifty pounds of sugar were added to each barrel of apple juice. To add the sugar, part of the apple juice had to be siphoned out through a hole in the top of the barrel.

That juice was used to dissolve sugar in a kettle. It was then poured back into the barrel through the hole. A preservative, probably obtained at the cider press, was sometimes added. Finally, the container was corked.

There was hard cider and sweet cider. Hard cider had no sugar added. At first, it was regular apple juice but then it fermented into hard cider or vinegar. Sweet cider had sugar added and therefore stayed sweet and kept until the next year.

Snow apples were juicier than most of the others and therefore made the best cider. Other apples were mixed with this variety.

Gustav Janke had cider everyday for breakfast and at other times when he was thirsty. It was served in a medium sized glass.

Dried Apples

Apples were dried in the sun. They were covered with cheese cloth. Apples were also hung on a string to dry. Dried apples were stewed. Frugal housewives, with only a few apple trees, probably cooked the peels, squeezed out the juice through a cloth sack, and made jelly from that juice. Only a few dried apples were made because so many fresh winter apples were stored in barrels in the cellar. The dried apples were hung in a cloth sack in the dark, dry attic storeroom.

They were not served with dried prunes but simply stewed with sugar. Families like the Jankes had many apple trees and shared their peels and less perfect apples with livestock.

Bibliography

Bultitude, J. (1983). *Apples: A guide to the identification of international varieties*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.