Yes, there really was a Johnn Appleseed. About 1800, he (John Chapman) and his brother planted several apple nurseries near Wellsburg (Northern Panhandle of West Virginia).

- **1805:** The Grimes Golden apple variety was discovered on the farm of Thomas Grimes at Fowlersville near Wellsburg. Tradition has it that the tree developed from a seed planted by Johnny Appleseed.
- **1921:** The Golden Delicious was discovered by Anderson Mullins in Clay County and quickly became an international favorite.
- **Today:** West Virginia ranks 10th in the United States in apple production.

Apples have no fat, cholesterol, or sodium. An average apple contains only 80 calories. Apples have 5 grams of fiber and 20% of the daily recommended fiber. Apples contain vitamins A, B6, C, K, and niacin plus iron, phosphorous, calcium, magnesium, and potassium. About 100 varieties are produced commercially in the United States, but 15 popular varieties account for 90% of production.

When baking, try applesauce as a fat-free substitute for oil or shortening.

Choose apples that are firm with no soft spots. Avoid bruised fruit. Look for ripe, well-colored apples. If apples are immature, they will not ripen after being picked. Color is a good indication of ripeness. Knowing the color of the variety you want will help you determine whether it’s ripe. Avoid apples that yield slightly when squeezed; they are overripe.

Leave the peel on whenever possible. The skin is part of the fiber found in apples, and almost half of the vitamin content is just underneath the skin.

Apples are a handy fruit to wash well and eat. However, people tend to eat more apples if they are cut and cored. Some varieties, like Golden Delicious and Gala, are less prone to browning when cut. Toss apples that do turn brown when cut in a solution of water and lemon, lime, or orange juice or ascorbic acid (vitamin C). Drain well. Some also recommend cutting into salt water and draining.

Apples will keep longer if stored in the refrigerator, and they are best if used within three to four weeks. Try to avoid storing apples close to root vegetables and other fruits, because apples can cause them to ripen quicker. Apples are also odor-sensitive and will absorb odors from other strong-flavored items, such as onions.

Late-maturing varieties, such as York, will store throughout the winter if the fruit is hard, mature, and in perfect condition. For most varieties, the optimum storage temperature is 30 to 32 degrees F, with 90% humidity.