

Washington state breeds new apple

By **NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS**
Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — They call it the Cosmic Crisp. It’s not a video game, a superhero or the title of a Grateful Dead song.

It’s a new variety of apple, coming to a grocery store near you Dec. 1.

Cosmic Crisp is the first apple ever bred in Washington state, which grows the majority of the United States’ apples. It’s expected to be a game changer.

Already, growers have planted 12 million Cosmic Crisp apple trees, a sign of confidence in the new variety. While only 450,000 40-pound boxes will be available for sale this year, that will jump to more than two million boxes in 2020 and more than 21 million by 2026.

The apple variety was developed by Washington State University. Washington growers, who paid for the research, will have the exclusive right to sell it for the first 10 years.

The apple is called Cosmic Crisp because of the bright yellowish dots on its skin, which look like distant stars.

“I’ve never seen an apple prettier in the orchard than these things are,” said Aaron Clark of Yakima, whose family owns several



A Cosmic Crisp apple, partially coated with a white kaolin clay to protect it from sunburn, is picked at an orchard in Wapato.

Elaine Thompson/AP Photo

orchards in central Washington and has planted 80 acres of Cosmic Crisps.

The new variety keeps for a long time in storage and in the refrigerator, said Kate Evans, who runs the breeding program at Washington State University.

And it’s an exceptionally good “eating apple,” she said. “It’s ultra-crisp, very juicy and has a good balance of sweetness and tartness.”

Cosmic Crisps are a cross between the disease-resis-

tant Enterprise and the popular, crunchy Honeycrisp varieties. The Honeycrisp, nicknamed “Moneycrisp” by some growers, was the latest apple to spark a big buzz in the United States when it was introduced a couple of decades ago. It was developed by the University of Minnesota.

“This apple (Cosmic Crisp) has a good opportunity to be a hit with a lot of people,” said Clark, a vice president of Price Cold

Storage, a company with orchards and fruit warehouses throughout central Washington. “It better be, because we are going to have a lot of them.”

Apples are a \$2.5 billion a year business in Washington, which grows about 60% of the nation’s supply, or nearly 140 million boxes. The top varieties are Gala (23%), Red Delicious (20%) and Fuji (13%).

Apples are grown in the arid valleys and brown hill-

sides of central Washington, a few hours east of Seattle, and watered by irrigation projects.

The state has around 1,500 apple growers and 175,000 acres of orchards. About 50,000 people pick some 12 billion apples by hand each fall. The fruit is exported to 60 countries.

With so much success, why was a new apple variety needed?

“A new apple brings excitement,” said Toni Lynn Adams, spokeswoman for the Washington Apple Commission, which markets apples internationally. “A new variety can reinvigorate a market and industry.”

Washington growers, who had watched the market share for sometimes mushy Red Delicious apples plummet over time, were looking to replicate the success of the Honeycrisp, Adams said. “It’s going to shake things up in a great way,” Adams said. “We’re expecting it to increase in volume rapidly.”

Adams could not speculate on how much Cosmic Crisp apples will cost per pound.

“Better quality makes for better returns,” said Clark, the grower. “This is a for-profit deal, man. We’re trying to make some money with it.”

Remarkably, this is the first apple variety developed

in Washington state, which has been known for apples for more than a century.

Scientists at WSU’s Tree Fruit Research Center in Wenatchee spent 20 years breeding the desired apple tree seeds. In addition to helping pay for that research, apple growers need a license to buy the trees and pay a royalty on sales of the fruit.

The trees take three years to produce a crop, said Kathryn Grandy, a member of the team marketing the apple.

“This will be the largest launch of a single variety ever, globally,” she said, and it’s backed by a \$10.5 million marketing budget.

Consumers will not have trouble finding the variety, said Grandy, who works for a company called Proprietary Variety Management and is based in the town of Chelan, in the heart of apple country.

Work on developing the variety began in 1997, said Evans, of Washington State University. The process of cross-hybridization has been used to breed plants for hundreds of years, Evans said, and is quite different from the more controversial genetic modification methods.

“The goal, in my opinion, is to get more consumers eating apples,” she said. “Ultimately that is the goal of any plant breeder.”

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E W K A P S F N I R N W V I S O
H W S E I K T A F X I I F T J , L S W T I
T V W N T W Q N V I H K I I Q :
O P N N I K A M S X .
Saturday's Cryptoquip: LOVEY-DOVEY TYPE WHO IS ALLERGIC TO MOST ALKALINE SKIN-WASHING PRODUCTS: A SOAPLESS ROMANTIC.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals R

10-22 CRYPTOQUIP

X A R B M C L R X U A C R L M C U X L E
G R O O K T M B R O D R W O W R B I O
R O S R C L K A X L O D U X A K C T ,
R C M L G M E I R S S R B G X U K O ?
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