



Riverwood Orchard sports apple varieties to fit every tastebud

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — When it comes to apples, there's something for every palate.

Whether sweet or tart, and everything in between, there's a perfect apple for you.

Perhaps the most popular apple is the honey crisp.

"In recent history, there hasn't been an apple like this," said Alan Frost, owner of Riverwood Orchard in Monmouth.

Honey crisp apples have such large cells, that when you bite into it, it's a gush of flavor and juices, he said.

"I think that's why people tend to like it so much," he said. "It's just so different. Plus, it's sweet. Most people like a sweet apple. But it does have acid behind it."

Frost has grown apples since 1974, starting with just 2.5 acres in Wenatchee, Wash. He has owned River-

wood Orchard for 25 years. He has 40 acres of trees with 16 different varieties of apples and six different types of pears.

The crop has come early this year, Frost said, and that means a compressed season.

"Usually with gala apples, we do three to four picks," he said. "This year, we'll do two picks."

That means instead of going out to harvest ripe apples multiple times, the trees will be cleaned off earlier. There's still the same number of apples as usual, they're just picking them quicker, Frost said.

The warm spring and summer has not just made the apples ripen faster, but earlier.

"We picked gravenstein in July, and I've never picked apples in July in my life," Frost said.

Frost carries himself with



Alan Frost grows crimson crisp apples, his personal favorite for their hard, dense texture and their sweet, yet tart flavor. The apple crop is, like all of Polk County's crops, early this year after a long, warm spring and summer.

A quick guide

- To check if an apple is ripe, do not squeeze it, as this may bruise it. Instead, check the background color. For bi-color apples, that usually means yellow.
- Riverwood Orchard apples may be found at Roth's Fresh Markets, or in Two Towns Cider's brews.
- Keep them cold to keep them snappy.

authority in his orchards. He understands the trees and the fruit, and doesn't get discouraged by whatever Mother Nature throws his way. "We got that big wind-

storm (Saturday and Sunday) and a lot of the sun-burned apples got knocked off," Frost said.

His apples can be found in Polk County at Roth's Fresh Markets and in school lunches — he works with the school districts to sell fresh produce to them.

Frost also gives tours of his orchard to school kids in Luckiamute Valley Charter School.

"The older kids, I try and tell them a little about botany," he said. That includes explaining about root stocks and grafting, both of which are important to growing apples.

Frost finds great satisfaction in his trees.

"It's the satisfaction of accomplishment," he said. "It's the process. You prune, and you spray, and you nurture the apples. You do all the work to get the apples there and then you pick and then you sell it, and someone comes out here and says, 'I love your apples.'"



The crew is busy sorting honey crisp apples by size, careful to spot any bruised ones along the way.



Riverwood Orchard sits in the rolling hills of the Cascade foothills on the outskirts of Monmouth. It benefits from the cool breezes microclimate of the Willamette Valley.



Apple trees at Riverwood Orchard are grown to be short, limiting the use of a ladder to harvest them.

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