
News from the Orchard

September 14th, 2009

Hoch Orchard and Gardens

32553 Forster Road LaCrescent MN

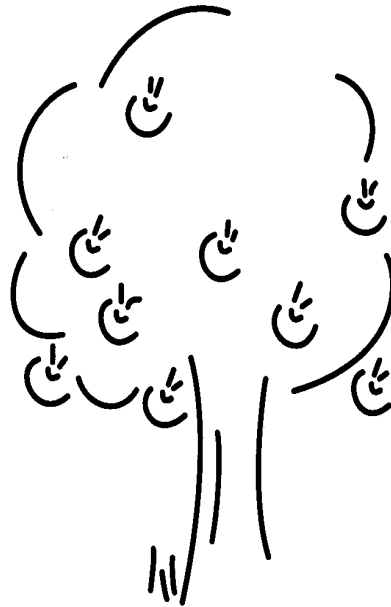
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Apple Fest at Hoch Orchard Sat Sept 19th

Come and celebrate LaCrescent Apple Fest with us at the apple orchard. La Crescent is hosting the annual apple fest Sept 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th. There will be the usual carnival, parade, craft fair and other events in town. On Saturday of the Fest we will have an open house at the Orchard. We will have walking tours of the orchards, tours of the apple packing facility, and cider making demonstrations. And of course we will have apples, cider, and caramel apple sundaes for sale.

Don't spend your whole apple fest in town this year, come out to the orchard and see where the apples are grown. Meet the people who grow your food and maybe even learn a little about how we produce the food. We hope to see you there!

We will be open for tours and sales from noon to 5:00. Don't come early because we won't be home. We are one of the sponsors of the Run to the Edge 5K in LaCrescent and we will be participating in the race. Don't come late, we shut down at 5:00 and don't plan to open again until the 2010 Apple Fest.



Hoch Orchard is not difficult to find, simply take Houston County Highway 6 west out of town. Follow CTH 6 seven miles and turn right onto Forster Road. The orchard is two miles up the road on top of the hill. For those of you unfamiliar with LaCrescent, CTH 6 is marked at the traffic lights so you can just follow the signs through town.

The SweeTango Circus has Begun

SweeTango is the newest apple released from the University of Minnesota's Horticultural Research Center. This apple is a cross between Zestar and Honeycrisp and is really a good tasting apple. It has the tartness of the Zestar and is even more dense and crisp than Honeycrisp. The flavor is richer than either of its parents.

The good news is we have planted 1000 of these trees. Which is the maximum that I am allowed to plant because the University sold the rights of the apple to a marketing group and they control who grows them and how many, but that's another story. The bad news is the trees are only two years old and they did not produce a crop for us this year. But we are expecting our first crop next year. We plan to sell the apples through our favorite coops in the Twin Cities. As far as I know, we will have the only Certified Organic SweeTango in the World!

The marketing group that controls the production and sales of SweeTango is based in Lake City Minnesota and calls itself NBT. This group is starting a local marketing barrage that is hard to believe.

Most of the SweeTango apples are produced on large-scale orchards around the country. Only a few of them are being grown right here in the state that developed them. The vast majority of SweeTango apples were grown hundreds or thousands of miles away and shipped here to compete with our local farmers. Look for the Minnesota Grown logo on your SweeTango apples or go right to orchard and buy them from a local apple grower. NBT is bringing their first crop of apples to Minnesota and is trying to start what they hope will be a nation wide trend. We hope they won't put the last few wholesale orchards in the state out of business in the process. Any orchard large enough to compete with NBT is not allowed to grow more than 1000 trees of SweeTango.

NBT is doing a dance around the Minnesota orchards with an apple developed by the University of Minnesota! It really is a Sweet Tango! It's just not very sweet for the Minnesota wholesale orchards that are trying to compete with NBT.

Hoch Orchard and Gardens should do just fine with 1000 trees of SweeTango. We don't compete with the large scale orchards selling to the big box grocery stores. We don't have any SweeTango apples this year, but we will in the future, and they will be Certified Organic. If you are dying to try the SweeTango this year, ask your grocery store's produce department where the apples were grown. Tell them you only want Minnesota Grown SweeTango! If they tell you they came from Pepin Heights in Lake City, ask if they were actually grown there. If you don't see the 'Minnesota Grown' logo, drive out to your local orchard and get them there, because, if you can't find organic apples, get locally grown apples!

Annual Grape Harvest and Crush Sunday September 27th at 2:00.

Our annual grape harvest and crush is on again this year. After a couple years of rainy summer weather and cracked nasty grapes, we are looking at a pretty good crop this year. The vineyard is now certified organic. The vines have been struggling as we tweaked the organic sprays and fertilizers to try to get good quality grapes with minimal inputs. The past three years have been tough on the vines with disease problems and cold winters. But now we are getting it figured out and production is on the rise again.

If you want to come and pick your own grapes from the vineyard or buy them from us already picked, the price will be \$.75 per pound. If you want to us to crush and destem your grapes at the Harvest party we will charge \$1.00 per pound for the grapes and crushing. Believe me, after spending four hours with three friends destemming enough grapes by hand for two carboys, I can tell you the price is worth every penny.

We will have Foch and Frontenac grapes available for picking and prepicked at the Harvest Party. We will provide some snacks and offer samples of our homemade wines. We will take people to the vineyards around 2:30 and then bring everyone into the packing house for snacks, tasting, and crushing. If you want to pick your own grapes you had better come early.

I look forward to seeing you at the fest or the grape harvest party. Thanks for supporting us in our transition to organic production.

Harry Hoch