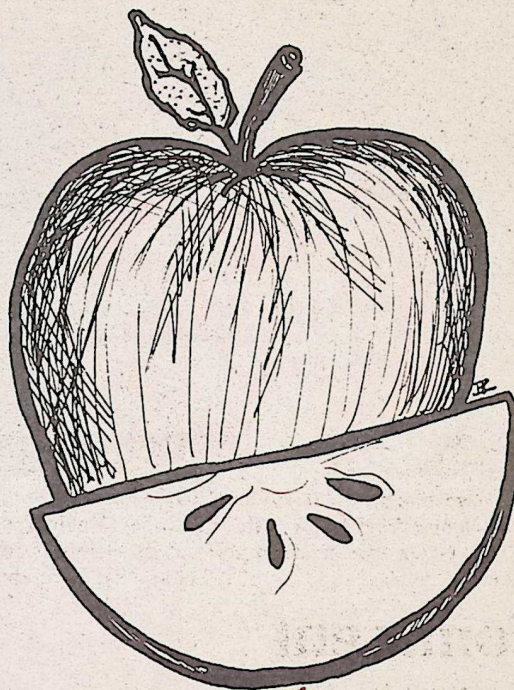


## From Aunt Olivia's Kitchen

## An apple a day

by Lydia Lovell



In addition to the vegetable garden, an old-fashioned single rose that bloomed near the side door, and a scraggle of lilac that shaded a kitchen window in summer, a quince and two apple trees grew in the yard. One of the apple trees didn't amount to much, but the other yielded good crops, year after year.

Since colonial times, apples have been America's favorite fruit; it's not by accident we say "American as apple pie." Lovells, Americans since colonial times themselves, were fond of apple pie, apple sauce, apple crisp, apple dumplings, apple cake, apple fritters, candied apples, baked apples, apple turnovers, spiced apples...you name it. They even ate them raw. Apples were served almost daily...not to keep the doctor away, not for their vitamins and minerals, and not because they provide dietary fiber. All those are good reasons, but we didn't need any excuses.

Different varieties of apples lend themselves to specific uses. Cooking a McIntosh is wasting a good eating apple. It goes to mush. Also best eaten out of hand are Red and Golden Delicious, Granny Smiths, and Northern Spy. (Many years ago, when I was a little girl, someone brought us from New Hampshire a bushel of Tallman Sweets, a mild juicy yellow apple of unforgettable flavor. It amazes me that this variety is not one of the most popular apples in the market today.)

For cooking, choose firm apples such as Cortlands, Rome Beauties or Jonathans. That big old apple tree behind Aunt Olivia's barn was probably a Cortland, though I couldn't swear to it; in any case, it produced enough juicy, slightly tart, tender yet crisp, fragrant fruit to last most of the winter. We began harvesting in September, and stored the apples in barrels in the cellar.

Storing apples successfully takes know-how. Only firm, good-quality, unblemished fruit should be packed. We chose only hard and smooth mature apples to put in the barrels. In summer, the temperature in the cellar seldom reached 70°, and was uniformly near 55° in winter. The air held just enough moisture to prevent the apples from drying out. Most cellars today are too warm and dry to keep apples. Unless you refrigerate them after sealing small quantities in polyethylene bags, buying a barrel wouldn't pay.

Until heavy frost, though, usually sometime around Christmas, you can probably keep apples in a shed or garage if you pack them in corrugated cardboard boxes lined with layers of newspaper and cover them with a heavy rug.

When ready to use apples, either cooked or raw, wash them thoroughly. Most fruit trees have been sprayed with fungicides and/or insecticides; residues will benefit your system not at all. Trim away any bruised or blemished portions of the fruit. Unpared apples retain more nutrients, so you may want to use them unpeeled. In salads, brightly colored skins enhance the appearance; in applesauce, skins lend pinkish hues. To protect cut surfaces of raw apples from darkening when exposed to air, coat with citrus juices before mixing with other ingredients.

Aunt Olivia used apples in dozens of ways, sometimes

when we didn't even know it. Her secret ingredient for moist and delectable meatloaf was applesauce! First she made the **Applesauce**, using two pounds of apples; 1/3 cup water, 1/4 cup sugar, and a pinch of cinnamon. She left the skins on, but you can pare them if you wish. Core and slice, trim away bruises. Boil water, add apples, cover, and simmer until tender, about 15 minutes. Stir occasionally to prevent sticking. Remove from heat. For a smooth sauce, put through a food mill or sieve, or leave somewhat chunky. Add sugar and seasoning, and mix thoroughly. Serve hot or chilled, or use in **Applesauce Meatloaf**.

1 cup soft breadcrumbs	3 tbsp. chopped onion
3/4 cup applesauce	2 tbsp. chopped celery
1 1/2 lbs. ground beef	3/4 tsp. salt
1/4 lb. ground pork sausage	1/8 tsp. pepper
1 beaten egg	

Mix above ingredients thoroughly and pack into 9x5x3" loaf pan.

Stir together 1/2 cup applesauce, a tbsp. vinegar, 1 tbsp. brown sugar, and 1 tsp. prepared mustard and spread on top of meat in pan. Bake at 250° about 1 1/2 hours.

Serve with broccoli spears or carrots, a cucumber and tomato salad, and either baked or parsley potatoes. Pumpkin pie makes a good dessert.

Apples, like pineapple, complement ham, and since apples were a staple at Aunt Olivia's and ham was a meat all of us swore we could eat three times a day, Aunt Olivia served it often and in various guises. For **Apple-Ham-Bake** for six, you will need:

4 cups cooked ham	1 beaten egg
ground up	1/2 cup milk
1 cup finely crushed	1/4 tsp. ground cloves
saltine crackers	1/2 tsp. dry mustard
1/4 cup finely chopped onion	

Mix all ingredients and pack

Mix all ingredients and pack into a greased 9x9x2" baking dish. Corningware is excellent, although Aunt Olivia used Pyrex.

Before putting in a 375° oven, core, pare and slice 3 or 4 good-sized apples and arrange on top of the meat, overlapping the slices slightly as you make rows. Mix 1/4 cup of honey with 2 tbsp. melted butter and pour evenly over the apples. Bake uncovered for 40 minutes.

Green peas, vegetable salad, and hot rolls will complete the main course; orange sections mixed with sliced bananas for dessert? A perfect choice.

In the fall of the year, apple cider can be found at many roadside stands and most supermarkets. Even though apples grew in her dooryard, Aunt Olivia bought cider from an orchard owner. We children drank it to wash down ginger cookies, animal crackers, doughnuts, or graham crackers, enjoying it hot or cold. Some of the menfolk liked to let cider "harden" a bit, so Aunt Olivia set aside a gallon and turned responsibility for it over to Uncle Henry, who seemed happy to oblige.

Every now and then when Aunt Olivia expected company on a chilly fall evening, she'd make **Mulled Cider**, a treat especially appreciated a warmer-upper. For six servings:

1 quart apple cider	1/2 tsp. whole cloves
1 tsp. whole allspice	2 2" pieces stick cinnamon

Combine all ingredients and simmer, covered, 20 minutes in a saucepan. Strain and return to pan to keep hot. Serve in mugs. Garnish with a thin slice of lemon for each mug.

Although Aunt Olivia never served **Apple Punch** (probably because frozen orange juice concentrate wasn't available in her day), this is a refreshing beverage to serve a group. It yields 18 half-cup servings:

1 quart apple juice	1 quart chilled ginger ale
1 6-oz. can of frozen orange juice concentrate	

Mix apple juice and orange juice. Chill. Just before serving, add ginger ale. Pass ginger cookies.

Apple recipes abound in Aunt Olivia's cookery scrapbook and recipe box. We'll share more another time; meanwhile, scout around. Good apple orchard country stretches from Rhode Island and Connecticut, through the western part of Massachusetts, and on up toward the Canadian border in Vermont and New Hampshire. There's no lovelier time of year than fall in those parts of New England.