

FOOD

The Estherville Daily News is proud to bring you the Food page every Tuesday. If you know anyone who should be featured on this page, please send their names and why you think they should be featured to: Managing editor, 10 N. Seventh St., Estherville, 51334 or editor@esthervilledailynews.com

Slide on in to CENTER CREEK ORCHARD

BY MARY ANN MENENDEZ
STAFF WRITER

Are you looking for a place to take your family, or your significant other for an afternoon of pleasure that is close to home in a perfect autumnal setting?

Look no farther than Center Creek Orchard, south of Fairmont, where the scene is breathtakingly gorgeous. It is also the spot where Gordy and Karen Toupal host their annual Fall Festival every Saturday and Sunday in September and October.

The activities begin during the Labor Day Weekend and go through the end of October.

There is a variety of activities planned, including entertainment. However, the true star for the Toupals is their prized product - apples. Many of the trees are heavy at present with good-looking fruit.

With over 500 trees in their orchard, the couple makes the following favorites available to visiting customers:

Early Season

■ Zestar - crisp, sweet tart, spicy.

■ Sweet Tango - crisp, sweet and juicy, fall spices.

Midseason

■ Sweet Sixteen - "cherry candy" flavor.

■ Honey Crisp - crisp, sweet and juicy.

■ Haralson - juicy, tart, firm.

■ Liberty - crunchy, sprightly.

■ Red Regent - balanced sweet and tart.

Late Season

■ Connell Red - intense, red sweet.

They purchased the place in 2001 where they occupied eight acres. "Gordy said we should produce apples," Karen, a public health nurse, explained. The couple planned the orchard and apple production began in 2004. The three popular choices with apple lovers are the Honey Crisp, Zestar and Sweet Tango.

Described as crisp apples, she said Sweet Tango is the "child" of the Honey Crisp-Zestar cross.

Doing their homework, the Toupals have purchased their apple trees from the University of Minnesota and have attended numerous conventions to become more knowledgeable. "We were told to pick out five old-time favorites, which we have."

Gordy said while growing up in the Kiester, Minn., area, he did have about a dozen apple trees. "It has always been a goal to produce a good quality apple without worms and I've got that figured out."

Quick Fact

The Center Creek Orchard will host its Fall Festival starting Labor Day weekend and continue every weekend through October.

Karen is a native of Plymouth, Mass. It was apparent she truly enjoys the change of colors in southern Minnesota; perhaps it reminds her of New England, known for its spectacular fall colors.

The couple noted they never wax their apples. The fruit purchased at the grocery stores, mostly travels from Washington State or even farther like New Zealand. These mass produced apples are waxed for sealing purposes and for that lustrous shine not produced by nature.

But the apples from Center Creek Orchard are "fresh, refrigerated and never waxed."

And word is getting out about Center Creek Orchard. Visitors have come as far away as North Dakota. "The other day I received an email from a woman in Virginia who wants to purchase Sweet Tango," Gordy said. "When I asked her how she found us, she said she Googled Sweet Tango and our website popped up."



While apples are the gems of Center Creek Orchard, Fall Festival provides plenty of fun for everyone who is young at heart on weekends through October.

Many schools in the area have discovered what a learning experience Center Creek Orchard can provide. Teachers and students arrive in field-trip fashion to experience the orchard and find out what it takes for apples to grow.

A storyteller shares an apple tale with them and students receive an Apple Wise Guys certificate before heading back to the classroom. Buses arriving hail from Swea City, Algona, Fairmont, Burt. "We're still booking," Gordy added, noting field-trip Fridays are filling up fast.

While apples are a seasonal product, Karen and Gordy find there is something to do about 10 months every year. "We redo the brochure and make changes," she said. Gordy noted, "I prune in the wintertime and then start in the early spring with cleaning up the orchard and spraying."

Customers have the choice of purchasing pre-bagged apples or visiting the orchard to pick their own apples.

Another fall activity

offered to visitors is the pumpkin patch where a wide selection of the Jack o Lantern variety will be available for purchase. All sizes are sold for \$5 apiece.

The couple is also offering for sale Emma Krumbie's pies and apple crisp. "They are frozen; the take-and-bake variety," Karen said, adding this is quite convenient for busy families.

With Labor Day right around the corner, the Toupals are making preparation for Fall Festival. Admission is \$6 per person for hours of enjoyment for everyone. There is storytelling, a corn pile, pumpkin patch, scarecrow building, castle bouncer, trike track, hay pile, hay maze, pumpkin painting, apple sling, barrel ride, hayride, petting farm, super slid, kid's corner and a haunted forest.

The slide is an 80-footer and can be used by children of all ages!

Persons needing apples on the weekend, but are not planning to enjoy Fall

Festival can still visit the orchard. Apples are sold \$2 a pound and the one-half peck bags, or five pound-size, go for \$10. Also available for purchase are apple jam, apple jelly and apple butter.

The Toupals are excited with the live entertainment planned on Sundays from 1-3 p.m. Kicking off the series will be the Apple Valley Jug Band from South Dakota on Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 5 and 6 from 1-3 p.m. Karen described the band's music as "old-time jug music with a washboard. It's just perfect for here." The Andrews Sisters Plus One will be performing on Oct. 11 from 1-3.

The couple is always looking for entertaining talent. If interested in performing, call them at 1-507-773-4547.

With the advent of autumn and its glorious transformation of dazzling colors, the orchard is nestled in a great spot to drink in nature's beauty. It is located at 663 254th Ave., Fairmont.

Fall Festival hours are noon-6 p.m.

'An apple a day ... takes a bite out of ailments!

BY MARY ANN MENENDEZ
STAFF WRITER

I can still hear my Mom, who was one great apple lover, saying that old worn-out statement: "An apple a day keeps the doctor away."

So, now I know, she was right (once again!) and it is probably very true that this fruit that finds its way into pie, cake, sauce, juice, muffins, crisp, butter, casseroles, jelly, strudel, turnovers, wine, etc., has many healthful benefits.

According to information on usapple.org, research is showing that apples, specifically the peeling, contain certain materials that can aid in inhibiting cancer from forming in the breast. The apple, which contains flavonol, may also lessen the chance of pancreatic cancer. Quercetin has been tagged as the most significant flavonol in reducing this risk.

Other information is showing that apple juice may help in delaying the onset of Alzheimer's disease.

Other studies are indicating the apple may help reduce risks with other cancers including the colon and other digestive "gut" organs.

Researchers are learning the properties of the apple may aid lung function.

Get into the habit of biting into an apple twice a day and your heart will love you for it.

And every mother knows that when there is some distance between you and your toothbrush, grab an apple. It has been considered nature's toothbrush for centuries. By adding a couple of apples to your daily intake, you may find the pounds fall off somewhat faster; perhaps the apple will be known as the waist whittler. If it is a crunch you are craving, get into the habit of grabbing an apple instead of chips or a candy bar.

Remember that everyone needs five a day in the fruit/vegetable category.

A bit of sweet trivia you may not know is this:

The core of the apple forms a star when the fruit is cut sideways.

Check out these apple recipes

Apple-Cranberry Casserole

2 cups chopped apples, unpeeled
1 1/3 cup whole cranberries
1 cup sugar
2/3 cup chopped nuts
2/3 cup brown sugar
1 stick butter plus three tablespoons, softened
2/3 cup oatmeal
3/4 cup flour

Combine cranberries, apples and sugar in an ovenproof baking dish. Mix nuts, brown sugar, butter and oatmeal with flour and pat into dish (mixture will be like a moist paste. Add a tablespoon of water, if needed.) Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes.

Apple-Topped Pork Chops

6 pork chops, bone-in one-inch thick
4 tablespoons flour
1/2 teaspoon onion powder
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 teaspoon butter (optional)
1/2 cup chopped onions
2 1/2 cups thinly sliced cored apples (peel on)

4 tablespoons favorite honey barbecue sauce
3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
Salt and pepper, to taste

Place flour in a shallow dish, sprinkle with onion powder and garlic powder. Stir with a fork until blended. Season pork chops liberally with salt and pepper. Dredge in the flour until well coated. In a skillet, brown the pork chops on both sides in olive oil and butter. Add onions, apples, and honey barbecue sauce and minced garlic. Cover and simmer 45 minutes or until chops are tender.

Sweet Apple Bake

1 cup low-fat milk
Pinch ground allspice
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 tablespoons raisins
1 pound sweet potatoes, pared & sliced
1/4 cup non-fat vanilla or plain yogurt
4 favorite apples

Heat milk, allspice, cinnamon and raisins in heavy saucepan. Add sweet potatoes. Simmer, covered until tender, 15-20 minutes. Mash. Stir in yogurt. Core and slice apples. Spray bottom of 8-inch dish with non-stick baking spray. Spread apple slices in dish, top with potato mixture. Bake at 350 degrees for 35 minutes.

Fareway Fare

Cottage Cheese Cheesecake

BY MARY ANN MENENDEZ
STAFF WRITER

For a mere 99 cents, Fareway customers can purchase 24 ounces of creamy Fastco Cottage Cheese at the Estherville grocery store this week.

That is one tasty and healthy bargain! Cottage cheese is a good source of calcium. A one-cup serving contains 14 percent of the daily recommended allowance. There are also 28 grams of protein packed inside and the calorie count is 163.

Here's a twist on an American favorite. This recipe for cheesecake includes 1 cup of cottage cheese for extra goodness. Think ahead to your Labor Day holiday and plan on whipping up a cheesecake to celebrate the occasion!

Cottage Cheesecake
1 1/2 cups finely crushed graham crackers
1/3 cup butter, melted
1/4 cup sugar
1 cup cream style cottage cheese
2 (8 ounce) pkgs. cream cheese, softened

3/4 cup sugar
2 tablespoon flour
2 teaspoon vanilla
3 eggs
1/4 cup light cream or milk
1 (8 ounce) carton dairy sour cream, optional

Sliced fresh fruit, optional

For crust, in a mixing bowl stir together crushed graham crackers, butter and 1/4 cup sugar. Press mixture evenly over the bottom and 1 3/4 inches up sides of a 9-inch springform pan. Place the pan in a shallow baking pan. For filling, in a large mixer bowl beat undrained cottage cheese until almost smooth. Beat in cream cheese, three-fourths cup sugar, flour and vanilla. Add eggs all at once, then beat with an electric mixer on low speed just until mixed. Do not overbeat. Stir in cream or milk. Pour filling into the crumb-lined pan. Bake in a 350 degree oven for 50 to 60 minutes or until done. Cool on a wire rack for 5 to 10 minutes. Loosen sides of cheesecake. Spread sour cream over top, if desired. Cool 30 minutes more. Remove sides of pan. Cover and chill 4 to 24 hours. To serve, arrange fruit atop cheesecake, if desired.

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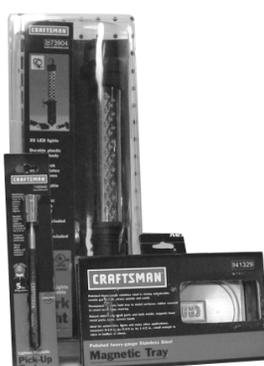
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