



The Post-Standard

Apricots give summer a golden glow

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Staff, news service reports

Most people have never tasted a perfectly ripe, fragrant apricot or felt juice run as they bit into it or wondered at how the tangy flavor even seems to well on the tongue after swallowing.

In this country, most apricots are grown in California and shipped long distances to market. Resignation is such that most recipes call for dried fruit. A Lebanese saying: bukra fil-mishmish, or "tomorrow in apricot season," translates roughly as "dream on."

Apricots ripen in July, narrowly beating the fierce heat of summer. The result is a glorious thing: dreamily fragrant, glowing yellow, with a blushing orange-red cheek where the fruit faced the sun.

Central New Yorkers are fortunate to have easy access to the apricots grown at Red Jacket Orchards in Geneva, in the Finger Lakes.

An article in the July issue of Gourmet magazine praises Red Jacket's golden globes. Red Jacket grows apricots on 20 acres of its 500-plus acre farm near Seneca Lake, making it the largest planter of apricots east of the Rocky Mountains.

In peak season, the Nicholson family, which owns the orchard, sells 1,200 pounds of apricots a day at its stall at the Union Square Greenmarket in New York City, where they're snapped up by hungry chefs and everyday cooks alike.

Red Jacket apricots are available at Wegmans supermarkets. The orchard has a "fruit outlet" on routes 5 and 20, about one mile west of Geneva. During the summer, it's open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday to Saturday and

9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sundays. The apricots are also available by mail order.

For more information, call (800) 828-9410 or go to www.redjacketorchards.com.

The apricot harvest continues through mid-August.

But there is no time to waste. If you can, buy a case. Buy enough for everyone in the house to have one, two, make that five (they're not much bigger than a golf ball, at the largest a Hacky Sack).

Then have a plan. Make a tart. Better yet, make jam. If you can't do it immediately, simply halve and stone them and freeze them in Ziploc bags. Save 10 pits for every 5 pounds of fruit, because the kernels inside will be needed as flavoring.

These will impart an almond note. Apricots are in the genus Prunus, along with plums, peaches and almonds, and they have a special affinity for almonds. The kernels go in the famous amaretti cookies, which, by the by, are superb with jam.

But don't overdo it. In small amounts the kernels are delicious; in medium amounts, bitter; in absurd amounts, a potentially lethal source of cyanide.

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