



# News Release

## Holiday Entertaining Twist: Host an Apple Tasting Party

*Author Domenica Marchetti provides tips on discovering apples while creating memorable traditions*

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Vienna, VA – This holiday season, home entertaining expert Domenica Marchetti suggests a trend-worthy twist on the wine and cheese tasting party. The author of *Big Night In* (Chronicle Books, 2008) says, “Embrace the season’s bounty and involve the whole family: host an apple tasting party!”

The holiday table inspires us to create treasured traditions at home, including exploring new foods and flavors in the company of friends and family, Marchetti says. “Apples effortlessly fit into any type of menu or gathering, from casual get-togethers to elegant soirees. And while apples are so abundant, many varieties remain largely undiscovered.”

More than 2,500 apple varieties are grown in the United States, and about 20 of them are widely available at supermarkets nationwide, according to the U.S. Apple Association ([www.usapple.org](http://www.usapple.org)). “Yet, many consumers gravitate to the same two or three varieties,” she says. “An apple tasting can be a fun and rewarding experience for your guests as they sample the range of flavors, textures and colors along the apple spectrum and compare notes.”



To host a **fresh apple tasting**, Marchetti offers the following tips:

- Select three to six apple varieties, including sweet and tart. One suggested lineup: Golden Delicious, Gala, Jonagold, Braeburn, Fuji, Honeycrisp, and Granny Smith.
- Line up whole apples of each variety on a large, rustic board. Identify each with a simple place card, and place sliced apples for sampling in front (provide small tongs or toothpicks for safe handling). *TIP: to prevent browning, dunk apple slices in vitamin C-fortified 100% apple juice.*

- Set out a bowl of toasted walnuts as a palate-cleanser. Provide notepads and pens for note-taking.
- Let the fun begin! Have guests sample varieties one at a time. Challenge them to note unique characteristics, such as size and shape. What color is the skin? Is the flesh firm or soft, white or cream-colored? What is the apple's aroma? How juicy or crisp is it? Finally, have them describe the flavor—sweet, tart, spicy, floral, etc. Does one variety emerge as a favorite? *TIP: For adults, refrain from drinking alcohol during the tasting as it will dull the taste buds.*

Once all the apples have been sampled individually, showcase their versatility through creative pairings, from artisanal cheeses, fresh herbs, and sweet and savory spreads, Marchetti suggests.

“You may also choose to incorporate an assortment of delicious apple products,” she says. “Include apple butter as a dip for rustic bread, or serve dried apples. And don’t forget to toast to your guests with a steaming cup of apple cider or a festive apple cocktail!”

See Marchetti’s suggested Host Your Own Apple Tasting Party “Pairings and Simple Recipes” (attached), or visit [www.usapple.org](http://www.usapple.org) for inspiration.

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The U.S. Apple Association (USApple) is the national trade association representing all segments of the apple industry. Members include 40 state and regional apple associations representing the 7,500 apple growers throughout the country, as well as more than 400 individual firms involved in the apple business. USApple's mission is to provide the means for all segments of the U.S. apple industry to join in appropriate collective efforts to profitably produce and market apples and apple products.

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## Host Your Own Apple Tasting Party Pairings and Simple Recipes *By Domenica Marchetti*

**Apple and cheese pairing.** Display cheeses on a large slab or cheese board, and fan apple slices around them. Select three cheese varieties, and provide a separate cutting or spreading knife for each. The pairing possibilities are infinite but here are some of my favorites:

1. A robust, creamy-crumbly aged cheddar such as Fiscalini bandaged cheddar paired with a crisp, sweet-tart apple, such as Honeycrisp.
2. A gorgeous blue cheese, such as Achelse Blauwe, from Belgium, (or spicy Mountain Gorgonzola from Italy) with a tart apple, such as Granny Smith or Newtown Pippin (one of Thomas Jefferson's favorite apples), or perhaps the sweet-tart Pink Lady.
3. Chaource or another rich triple-crème cheese with a lightly flavored sweet apple, such as Golden Delicious or Gala.

**Bread and Apple Butter.** Experiment with spiced apple butter and thin slices of fresh bread - baguette, whole grain, walnut-raisin and cornbread are great options.

**Spinach Salad with Fresh and Dried Apples, White Cheddar, and Bacon.** Toss together fresh baby spinach leaves with chopped dried apple pieces and thin slices of apples, such as Ginger Gold, Honeycrisp or McIntosh. Sprinkle with bits of crispy bacon and toss with a vinaigrette made from bacon drippings and red or white wine vinegar. Crumble aged white cheddar on top. Serve in a large decorative bowl with small plates stacked nearby.

**Apple and Prosciutto Carpaccio.** Arrange very thin slices of imported Prosciutto di Parma on a ceramic serving platter. Top with paper-thin slices of unpeeled apple. Choose a sweet, crisp variety such as Fuji or a crisp, sweet-tart variety such as Cameo, which resists browning, or Pink Lady. Scatter a few shavings of imported Parmigiano-Reggiano over the apple slices and finish with a few drops of walnut oil and fresh ground black pepper. Have tongs on hand.

**Smokey Apple & Butternut Squash Soup.** Visit [usapple.org](http://usapple.org) for a great apple and butternut squash recipe. When you're finished cooking, keep the soup hot on a buffet table by setting it out in a slow cooker set to 'warm.' Serve the soup in demitasse cups with small spoons. Garnish with a dollop of crème fraiche and a scattering of chopped dried apple, if you like.

**Apple Sorbet.** This is a fresh alternative to apple pie, and an elegant addition to an apple tasting party. You can make the sorbet using several varieties of apples, or—if you are feeling particularly ambitious—make a trio of sorbets, each spotlighting a single variety. Choose highly flavored apples, such as Honeycrisp, Newtown Pippin and Ginger Gold. Combine chopped apples with cider or apple juice, sugar, and a squeeze of lemon juice. Cook until the apples are tender. Puree in a blender and chill; then freeze in an ice cream maker.

**Apple Beverages.** For drinks, serve both cold hard cider, and hot mulled cider spiced with cinnamon. Keeping the mulled cider on the stovetop will perfume the entire house and add to the inviting atmosphere of your apple tasting party.

**BONUS IDEA:** No apple tasting party is complete without apple décor! Greet guests with a large decorative basket of apples on a front table, or on the front porch. Fill a pretty bowl with an assortment of fresh apples for a colorful centerpiece. Arrange with votive candles for added impact!

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