

# Move over, Honeycrisp: New apple to debut at grocery stores

October 19 2019, by Nicholas K. Geranios

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In this photo taken Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2019, a Cosmic Crisp apple, partially coated with a white kaolin clay to protect it from sunburn, is picked at an orchard in Wapato, Wash. The Cosmic Crisp, a new variety and the first-ever bred in Washington state, will be available beginning Dec. 1 and is expected to be a game changer in the apple industry. Already, growers have planted 12 million Cosmic Crisp apple trees, a sign of confidence in the new variety. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

They call it the Cosmic Crisp. It's not a video game, a superhero or the title of a Grateful Dead song.

It's a new variety of apple, coming to a grocery store near you Dec. 1

Cosmic Crisp is the first apple ever bred in Washington state, which grows the majority of the United States' apples. It's expected to be a game changer.

Already, growers have planted 12 million Cosmic Crisp apple trees, a sign of confidence in the new variety. While only 450,000 40-pound (18-kilogram) boxes will be available for sale this year, that will jump to more than 2 million boxes in 2020 and more than 21 million by 2026.

The apple variety was developed by Washington State University. Washington growers, who paid for the research, will have the exclusive right to sell it for the first 10 years.

The apple is called Cosmic Crisp because of the bright yellowish dots on its skin, which look like distant stars.

"I've never seen an apple prettier in the orchard than these things are," said Aaron Clark of Yakima, whose family owns several orchards in central Washington and has planted 80 acres of Cosmic Crisps.

The new variety keeps for a long time in storage and in the refrigerator, said Kate Evans, who runs the breeding program at Washington State University.



In this photo taken Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2019, Aaron Clark, vice president of Price Cold Storage, talks about how the Cosmic Crisp apples, a new variety and the first-ever bred in Washington state, are grown on trellises behind him in an orchard in Wapato, Wash. The trellis system promotes high yields of fruit and reduces the labor needed to pick the apples. The Cosmic Crisp, available beginning Dec. 1, is expected to be a game changer in the apple industry. Already, growers have planted 12 million Cosmic Crisp apple trees, a sign of confidence in the new variety. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

And it's an exceptionally good "eating apple," she said. "It's ultra-crisp, very juicy and has a good balance of sweetness and tartness."

Cosmic Crisps are a cross between the disease-resistant Enterprise and the popular, crunchy Honeycrisp varieties. The Honeycrisp, nicknamed



"Moneycrisp" by some growers, was the latest apple to spark a big buzz in the United States when it was introduced a couple of decades ago. It was developed by the University of Minnesota.

"This apple (Cosmic Crisp) has a good opportunity to be a hit with a lot of people," said Clark, a vice president of Price Cold Storage, a company with orchards and fruit warehouses throughout central Washington. "It better be, because we are going to have a lot of them."

Apples are a \$2.5 billion a year business in Washington, which grows about 60% of the nation's supply, or nearly 140 million boxes. The top varieties are Gala (23, Red Delicious (20%) and Fuji (13%).



In this photo taken Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2019, a worker snips off the hard stem on a Cosmic Crisp apple, a new variety and the first-ever bred in Washington state,

just after pulling it off a tree at an orchard in Wapato, Wash. Workers cut the stem below the top of every Cosmic Crisp apple to prevent damage to the fruit during transportation and storage. The Cosmic Crisp, available beginning Dec. 1, is expected to be a game changer in the apple industry. Already, growers have planted 12 million Cosmic Crisp apple trees, a sign of confidence in the new variety. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

Apples are grown in the arid valleys and brown hillsides of central Washington, a few hours east of Seattle, and watered by irrigation projects.

The state has around 1,500 apple growers and 175,000 acres of orchards. About 50,000 people pick some 12 billion apples by hand each fall. The fruit is exported to 60 countries.

With so much success, why was a new apple variety needed?

"A new apple brings excitement," said Toni Lynn Adams, spokeswoman for the Washington Apple Commission, which markets apples internationally. "A new variety can reinvigorate a market and industry."

Washington growers, who had watched the market share for sometimes mushy Red Delicious apples plummet over time, were looking to replicate the success of the Honeycrisp, Adams said.

"It's going to shake things up in a great way," Adams said. "We're expecting it to increase in volume rapidly."



In this photo taken Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2019, Aaron Clark, vice president of Price Cold Storage, peers down at a bin of just-picked Cosmic Crisp apples, a new variety and the first-ever bred in Washington state, in an orchard in Wapato, Wash. The Cosmic Crisp, available beginning Dec. 1, is expected to be a game changer in the apple industry. Already, growers have planted 12 million Cosmic Crisp apple trees, a sign of confidence in the new variety. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

Adams could not speculate on how much Cosmic Crisp apples will cost per pound.

"Better quality makes for better returns," said Clark, the grower. "This is a for-profit deal, man. We're trying to make some money with it."



Remarkably, this is the first apple variety developed in Washington state, which has been known for apples for more than a century.

Scientists at WSU's Tree Fruit Research Center in Wenatchee spent 20 years breeding the desired apple tree seeds. In addition to helping pay for that research, apple growers need a license to buy the trees and pay a royalty on sales of the fruit.

The trees take three years to produce a crop, said Kathryn Grandy, a member of the team marketing the apple.

"This will be the largest launch of a single variety ever, globally," she said, and it's backed by a \$10.5 million marketing budget.



In this photo taken Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2019, workers Edilia Ortega, left, and Reynaldo Enriquez pick Cosmic Crisp apples, a new variety and the first-ever bred in Washington state, in an orchard in Wapato, Wash. The grayish coating on some of the trees and apples is from kaolin clay, used to protect the fruit from sunburn. The Cosmic Crisp, available beginning Dec. 1, is expected to be a game changer in the apple industry. Already, growers have planted 12 million Cosmic Crisp apple trees, a sign of confidence in the new variety. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



In this photo taken Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2019, Sagrario Ochoa reaches to pick a Cosmic Crisp apple, a new variety and the first-ever bred in Washington state, in an orchard in Wapato, Wash. The Cosmic Crisp, available beginning Dec. 1, is expected to be a game changer in the apple industry. Already, growers have planted 12 million Cosmic Crisp apple trees, a sign of confidence in the new variety. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)





In this photo taken Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2019, Aaron Clark, vice president of Price Cold Storage, cuts into a Cosmic Crisp apple, a new variety and the first-ever bred in Washington state, after pulling it off a tree in an orchard in Wapato, Wash. The Cosmic Crisp, available beginning Dec. 1, is expected to be a game changer in the apple industry. Already, growers have planted 12 million Cosmic Crisp apple trees, a sign of confidence in the new variety. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



In this photo taken Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2019, Aaron Clark, vice president of Price Cold Storage, bites into a slice from a Cosmic Crisp apple, a new variety and the first-ever bred in Washington state, after pulling it off a tree in an orchard in Wapato, Wash. The Cosmic Crisp, available beginning Dec. 1, is expected to be a game changer in the apple industry. Already, growers have planted 12 million Cosmic Crisp apple trees, a sign of confidence in the new variety. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)





In this photo taken Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2019, Sagrario Ochoa carries a picking bag full of Cosmic Crisp apples, a new variety and the first-ever bred in Washington state, to a bin in an orchard in Wapato, Wash. The Cosmic Crisp, available beginning Dec. 1, is expected to be a game changer in the apple industry. Already, growers have planted 12 million Cosmic Crisp apple trees, a sign of confidence in the new variety. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)





In this photo taken Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2019, rows of Cosmic Crisp apple trees, a new variety and the first-ever bred in Washington state, are seen from overhead as they grow on trellises in an orchard in Wapato, Wash. The trellis system promotes high yields of fruit and reduces the labor needed to pick the apples. The grayish coating on some of the trees is from kaolin clay, used to protect the fruit from sunburn. The Cosmic Crisp apples will be available to consumers for the first time beginning Dec. 1. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)





In this photo taken Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2019, Edilia Ortega dumps a picking bag full of Cosmic Crisp apple, a new variety and the first-ever bred in Washington state, into a bin in an orchard in Wapato, Wash. The Cosmic Crisp, available beginning Dec. 1, is expected to be a game changer in the apple industry. Already, growers have planted 12 million Cosmic Crisp apple trees, a sign of confidence in the new variety. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)





In this photo taken Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2019, rows of Cosmic Crisp apple trees, a new variety and the first-ever bred in Washington state, are seen from overhead as they grow on trellises in an orchard in Wapato, Wash. The trellis system promotes high yields of fruit and reduces the labor needed to pick the apples. The grayish coating on some of the trees is from kaolin clay, used to protect the fruit from sunburn. The Cosmic Crisp apples will be available to consumers for the first time beginning Dec. 1. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)





In this photo taken Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2019, a bin of Cosmic Crisp apples, a new variety and the first-ever bred in Washington state, sits in an orchard in Wapato, Wash. The Cosmic Crisp, available beginning Dec. 1, is expected to be a game changer in the apple industry. Already, growers have planted 12 million Cosmic Crisp apple trees, a sign of confidence in the new variety. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



In this photo taken Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2019, a worker moves bins of Cosmic Crisp apples, a new variety and the first-ever bred in Washington state, into a cold storage facility in Yakima, Wash. The Cosmic Crisp, available beginning Dec. 1, is expected to be a game changer in the apple industry. Already, growers have planted 12 million Cosmic Crisp apple trees, a sign of confidence in the new variety. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)





In this photo taken Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2019, a worker moves bins of Cosmic Crisp apples, a new variety and the first-ever bred in Washington state, to be stacked 12-high into a cold storage facility in Yakima, Wash. The Cosmic Crisp, available beginning Dec. 1, is expected to be a game changer in the apple industry. Already, growers have planted 12 million Cosmic Crisp apple trees, a sign of confidence in the new variety. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



In this photo taken Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2019, Cosmic Crisp apples, a new variety and the first-ever bred in Washington state, sit on the tree ready to be picked at an orchard in Wapato, Wash. The Cosmic Crisp, available beginning Dec. 1, is expected to be a game changer in the apple industry. Already, growers have planted 12 million Cosmic Crisp apple trees, a sign of confidence in the new variety. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)





In this Feb. 12, 2016, file photo, Kate Evans, a lead scientist at Washington State University's Tree Fruit Research & Extension Center in Wenatchee, Wash., tastes a slice of a Cosmic Crisp apple, a new trademarked and focus group-tested apple variety developed by the WSU lab over the last 20 years. The Cosmic Crisp, the first-ever bred in Washington state, will be available beginning Dec. 1 and is expected to be a game changer in the apple industry. Already, growers have planted 12 million Cosmic Crisp apple trees, a sign of confidence in the new variety. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren, File)

Consumers will not have trouble finding the variety, said Grandy, who works for a company called Proprietary Variety Management and is based in the town of Chelan, in the heart of [apple](#) country.

Work on developing the variety began in 1997, said Evans, of Washington State University. The process of cross-hybridization has been used to breed plants for hundreds of years, Evans said, and is quite different from the more controversial genetic modification methods.

"The goal, in my opinion, is to get more consumers eating apples," she said. "Ultimately that is the goal of any plant breeder."

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