

Crunchy, complex: Three new apples released

September 3 2020, by Erin Rodger



Susan Brown, left, and Kevin Maloney look at Pink Luster in a Cornell AgriTech orchard in Geneva, New York. Credit: Jason Koski/Cornell University

This fall, apple lovers can look forward to three new varieties from the oldest apple breeding program in the U.S.—located at Cornell AgriTech in Geneva, New York, part of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALIS).

On Sept. 2, Susan Brown, the Herman M. Cohn Professor of Agriculture

and Life Science, and research specialist Kevin Maloney announced the release of NY56, NY73 and NY109—marketed as Cordera, Pink Luster and Firecracker, respectively.

As an open-release, orchards in New York state and across the U.S. will be able to grow the new varieties without licensing exclusivity. Brown said this gives growers a competitive edge by allowing them to replace older apples with what today's consumers want—crunch, complexity and a new twist on an American classic.

With Cordera, Brown accomplished a challenging task: breeding an [apple](#) that retains both its flavor and texture while also staying scab resistant. Apple scab is a [fungal disease](#) that significantly reduces fruit yield and quality, and poses a major threat for New England growers because it's common in wet springs.

In addition to test plots in orchards across New York state, Wegmans has also been testing Cordera in Canandaigua, New York, for five years.

"Having access to the varieties that Susan Brown and Cornell are working on allows us to look into the future in way that will hopefully expose our customers to new and unique food experiences," said Mark Bowker, orchard crop expert at Wegmans Organic Farm. "For us, disease resistance makes the performance of NY 56 stand out in our orchard. Of course, it always comes down to flavor, and we think it has that too."

Brown spent 23 years working with the best attributes of Honeycrisp and Gala apples to perfect Pink Luster. Its bright pink-red skin, crisp texture and juiciness make this new variety shine. Pink Luster also matures in mid-September, which makes it well-suited for on-farm sales and U-pick operations.

Firecracker is being dubbed a "triple threat"—it's one of few varieties that works well for eating, baking and hard cider production.

"Firecracker has a partial russet skin, and it has a unique combination of acidity and sweetness that produces really complex and evolving flavors," Brown said. "It's ideal for anyone who wants to go on a culinary adventure."

With the addition of Cordera, Pink Luster and Firecracker, CALS will have released more than 69 apple varieties since 1880. The most recent varieties from Brown's breeding program, SnapDragon and RubyFrost, have been highly successful with growers across the state and are also exported to markets in Canada, Israel and Asia.

"Research and thorough testing are crucial in making a really good apple, but that takes a whole team," Brown said. "Research specialist Kevin Maloney, the Cornell AgriTech Field crew, researchers at Cornell AgriTech and the School of Integrative Plant Science, Cornell Cooperative Extension and the New York apple industry all deserve credit in collaborating to help deliver varieties that support the apple industry."

Provided by Cornell University

Citation: Crunchy, complex: Three new apples released (2020, September 3) retrieved 27 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-09-crunchy-complex-apples.html>

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