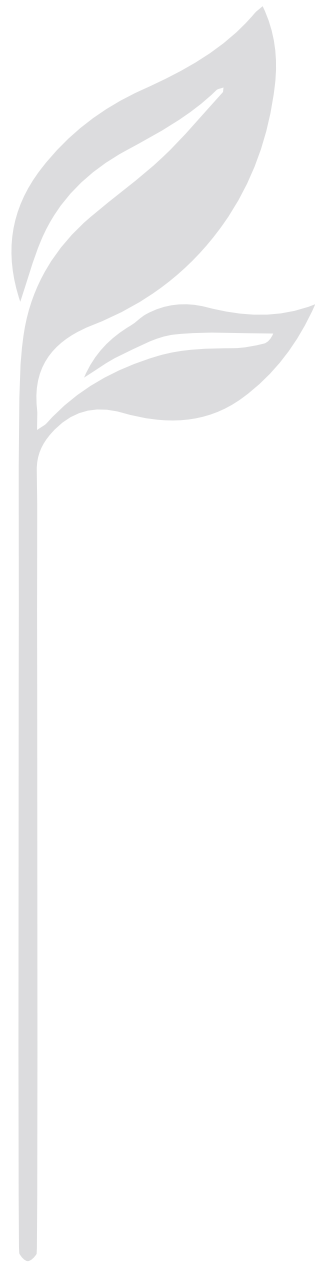

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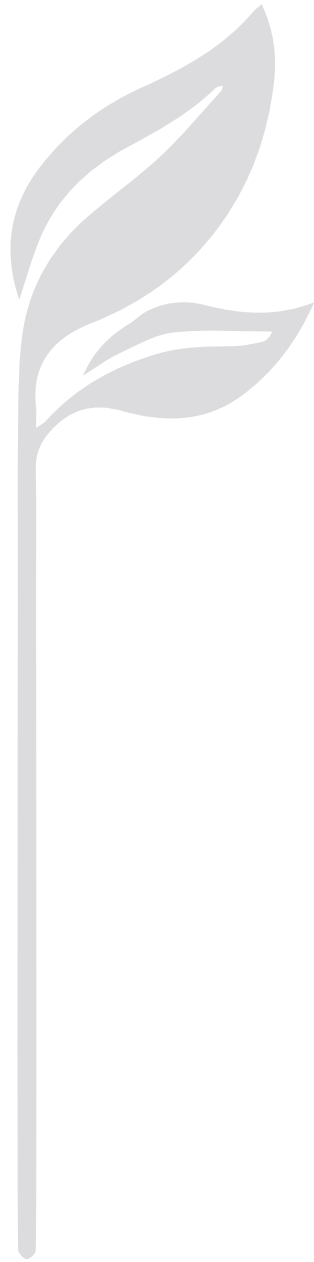


WHY FRUIT?

We chose fruits for this effort because Maine produces so much of it—more than most people realize—and it has been and remains a staple of the diet. Fruits not only taste good, but provide many vitamins, minerals, fiber and antioxidants. They offer flexibility, and are proving to be versatile, far from their long-held place in dessert cooking, and are now used in stews, soups, savory sauces and salsas.

In the 1800s, Sarah Josepha Hale, a widely respected writer and editor, published cookbooks and helpful guides for young housewives. Her writing about fruit is a stern reminder to her readers to take fruits seriously. Thankfully, we live in a more relaxed atmosphere, with better hygiene and knowledge of biology, and can enjoy fruits more widely. Still, modern readers can pluck some nuggets of fruit wisdom in the writings of America's 1841 Mother of Moderation:

Fruits were the diet first allowed man; and it seems that the Eden taste still lingers in our race, for in childhood there is no food so eagerly sought and relished.... That fruits are naturally healthy in their season, if rightly taken, no one...can doubt. And yet the use of summer fruits appears often to cause most fatal diseases, especially in children. Why is this? Because we do not conform to the natural laws in using this kind of diet. These laws are very simple and easy to



ABOUT THE BOOK

In the following pages, you'll find recipes made and recommended by Maine cooks and tasted by many appreciative eaters. Our call for recipes asked contributors to include stories that they associate with the recipe, to demonstrate the social value of cooking for others; some of those stories are included here. They represent the value of taking time to provide tasty, nutritious and appealing food to share with people you love. The recipes include some tried-and-true family favorites, but also some tasty and simple experimental combinations, inspired by our suggestion to think of fruits in new ways. The recipes range across all categories, taking fruit out of the dessert and breakfast food realm, to include stews, soups, appetizers, beverages and a host of other concoctions. Included here are the best results of those trials. Enjoy!

In addition, you'll find in boxes scattered throughout the book, tips and quirky recipes taken from old cookbooks, outmoded accounts of kitchen practices and expectations of housewives from days gone by, and newspaper clippings from 1912, a collection "saved by Aunt Vin," pasted into an 1896 Yearbook of Agriculture. Cooks owned hair sieves (what?), needed few directions for baking and measuring, and felt personal pride in their own ways of doing

“ No one who cooks, cooks alone. Even at her most solitary, a cook in the kitchen is surrounded by generations of cooks past, the advice and menus of cooks present, the wisdom of cookbook writers.

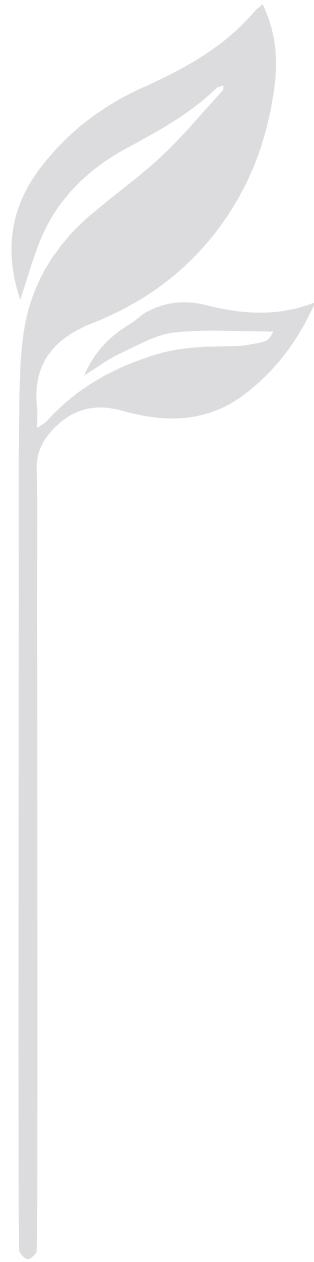
—Laurie Colwin ”

APPLES

HISTORY AND CULTIVATION

Autumn in Maine is known for vibrant displays of foliage which draw caravans of tour buses filled with what we fondly refer to as “leafpeepers.” But, to those of us who live here, fall is apple season, and, as much as we’d like to think apples belong to Maine, they’ve only just arrived, relative to the history of the world. Apples originated in the Caucasus, a mountainous region where Asia meets Europe, between the Caspian and Black Seas. From there, they traveled with people—from Kazakhstan to Egypt and Italy, throughout Russia, across Europe and then to the United States. Portuguese fishermen are thought to have brought the first apples here, where seeds took hold on offshore islands. European settlers arriving from many European cultures with established apple culinary traditions brought both the horticultural and culinary practices with them.

Apples have earned a prominent place in folklore and history: Adam and Eve bit the forbidden apple and were exiled from Eden; Atalanta, a virgin huntress of Greek mythology, lost a foot race and found a husband by stopping for golden apples placed to distract her; Paris gave an apple to the fairest and started the Trojan War; William Tell split an apple on the head of an enemy’s son; Sir Isaac Newton discovered the law of gravity watching an apple fall to the ground; and Johnny Appleseed (John Chapman) wandered the North American continent planting apple trees.



APPLE PUDDING

Peel and boil until tender 3 or 4 apples. Press through a sieve. To 1 cup of the purée add ½ cup of cream and butter. Let cool. Add 3 well-beaten eggs, ½ cup of powdered sugar, the rind of 1 lemon. Mix it all well together and put it in a crust. Half an hour will bake it.

—*Thomas Jefferson's Cookbook*, 1976, page 91

BIRD'S NEST PUDDING

I first heard of this dessert while reading Sue Monk-Kidd's The Invention of Wings. It was a dessert the Grimké family reserved for fine occasions, and I expected it was a complicated dessert to make. Was I wrong! This is a simple dessert, baking whole apples in a batter, and can be served on any occasion, elegant or ordinary. It was a popular dessert in the 19th century, wherever apples were grown. Here is the recipe from the New England Cookbook, published in 1836:

Pare and halve tart mellow apples, scoop out the cores, put a little flour in the hollow of the apples, and wet it so as to form a thick paste, stick a blade or two of mace and three or four Zante currants, in each one of the apples. Butter small cups, and put half an apple, in each one, lay three or four narrow strips of citron round each apple. Mix a quart of milk, with three table spoonsful of flour, six eggs, a grated nutmeg and four table spoons of sugar. Nearly fill the cups with this mixture. Bake them thirty minutes. They should be eaten as soon as done.

BIRD'S NEST PUDDING

A more modern version of pudding that serves 6:

- 6 good quality baking apples, peeled and cored
- 1 C brown sugar
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

NUTRITION INFORMATION

Cranberries are excellent sources of Vitamin C, fiber, and antioxidants. In disease-fighting antioxidants, cranberries outrank nearly every fruit and vegetable—including strawberries, spinach, broccoli, red grapes, apples, raspberries, and cherries. They are also good sources of calcium and potassium, and are low in calories (about 45 per cup, fresh).



CRANBERRY VINAIGRETTE

Makes 1 cup

- 3 T olive oil
- 2 T minced shallots or red onion
- 1 C whole cranberries
- ½ C cranberry juice
- ½ C orange juice
- 2 T red wine vinegar
- 2 T honey
- ¾ tsp salt
- ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper

Heat 1 T olive oil in a small saucepan over medium heat; add shallots. Cook until softened, stirring continually. Set aside. Bring cranberries and the two juices to a boil in a small saucepan. Boil until reduced to 1 C, about ten minutes. Puree mixture in a blender with remaining oil, shallots, vinegar, honey, salt and pepper, until smooth. Pour into a glass container and refrigerate.

CRANBERRY AND RICE JELLY

Boil and press the fruit, strain the juice, and, by degrees, mix into as much ground rice as will, when boiled, thicken to a jelly; boil it gently, stirring it, and sweeten to your taste. Put it in a basin or form, and serve to eat with cream.

—*Early American Cookery*, Sarah Josepha Hale, 1841, page 92

PEACH CHUTNEY CHICKEN

Heritage House Restaurant, Skowhegan, Maine

- 1 T cumin
- 1¼ C of fresh orange juice
- ¼ C olive oil
- 1 T hot chili powder
- 6 boneless skinless chicken breast
- 1 C of local honey
- 1 C of chicken stock
- 4–6 medium ripe peaches, peeled and chopped
- 1 tsp finely chopped organic garlic
- ¼ C diced shallots
- 2 T chopped fresh chives
- 1 T peach schnapps

Whisk together cumin, orange juice, oil, and half of the chili powder. Marinate chicken in this mixture for at least 1 hour or overnight. In large sauce pan combine chili powder, honey, stock, peaches, garlic, chives and schnapps and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for ½ hour stirring occasionally until thickened.

Grill chicken for 20–30 minutes or until juices are clear. Top each chicken breast with chutney.

Serves 4–6

PEACH PIE

This recipe makes a delicious pie; put a rich undercrust on pie tin; drain canned peaches and put the fruit in the crust, hollow side up; take two eggs, pinch of salt, one tablespoonful of sugar and beat; then add milk enough to cover peaches; sweeten more if not to your taste; pour over the peaches and bake in hot oven; let cool before serving.

—from the clipping collection of Aunt Vin, 1912

RHUBARBTINI #1

This was served at our first tasting and it was one of the hits of the party!

2 oz vodka
3 oz sweetened rhubarb juice*
muddle a lime

* to make rhubarb juice thinly slice 4 C rhubarb and cover with water. Cook for 30 minutes. Strain through cheesecloth. Use pulp with yogurt, ice cream or over pound cake. To the still warm juice add sugar, 1 tablespoon at a time to taste. Shake ingredients with ice and strain into chilled martini glass.

RHUBARBTINI #2

Muddled lime and citrus vodka, topped off with rhubarb juice, serve in a tini glass with a shaved ice sugared rim (or maybe just mix it with vodka!)

BRIDAL SHOWER COCKTAIL

from the *Sable Kitchen & Bar*, Chicago

This recipe requires some prep ahead of time to make the syrup, but it is well worth the effort!

ice
2 oz vodka
¼ oz Campari
¾ oz rhubarb syrup (below)
¾ oz fresh lemon juice
dash of bitters (Fee Brothers Old Fashioned or Angostura)
1 oz chilled club soda
2 long, thin slices of rhubarb stalk, for garnish

To make syrup: In a glass baking dish, combine ½ lb chopped rhubarb with 1 C sugar, 8 oz water and a pinch of salt. Bake in a preheated 325° oven for 1 hour, stirring every 15 minutes, until the rhubarb is very tender. Let cool. Then press through a fine strainer. Refrigerate up to a

TO MAKE STRAWBERRIES COME EARLY OR GRAPES

Water yr staberries once in three dayes with water wherin hath been steeped sheeps dunge or pigeons dunge, & they will bear much earlier. Plants waterd with warme water will come up sooner & better then with cold water or shours. As for grapes, If ye branches of A vine be drawn into a roome wherein A fire is kept, [it] will make the fruit to ripen a moneth sooner then without dores. Allsoe, any other berries, fruits, or flows watered with ye afore sayd dung steeped in water, will make ym come early.

—*Martha Washington's Booke of Cookery*, 1749, pages 163–164

HOW TO PICK, USE AND STORE

Strawberries won't ripen after picking. Avoid limp, wilted, moldy or bruised berries or those with white or green parts. To harvest strawberries, pick them with caps on to retard spoilage, and remove the caps after rinsing and just before you use them. They should be refrigerated in a shallow container as soon as you pick them. They are not good keepers, but can be stored in the fridge for 1–2 days, and will keep better and stay firmer if the stems are left on. Martha Stewart offers this tip for hulling the berries: push a plastic straw up from the bottom of the berry which will remove both the white center and the hull.

When you're ready to use them, wash them gently by swishing them in a bowl of cold water—do not soak. Berries washed after hulling lose more nutrients and can get mushy. Dry on cotton dish towels or paper towels. Sweetness varies with the type. Some taste better after freezing, and others are best eaten fresh. Strawberries are delicious eaten whole, but their flavor is released more potently if they are mashed or crushed.

Although strawberries can be dried, canned, preserved in jams or jellies, they taste best and are most nutritious if frozen. Prepare them for the freezer the way you want to enjoy them throughout the winter—sliced, chopped/mashed, or whole. Adding a little sugar to mashed berries can help maintain flavor and color. They are easy to freeze—whole berries can be individually frozen on a cookie sheet and when completely hard, tossed in a freezer bag. You can remove the correct amount each time you want to use them. Chopped or mashed berries, slightly sweetened, should be frozen in serving-sized freezer bags for use over ice cream, in

smoothies, or eaten plain. A slightly thawed berry eaten as a February snack can bring back summer—at least for a moment or two! Frozen berries will keep safely up to a year.

Strawberry jam is a Maine favorite. For best results, follow the directions that accompany commercially available pectin. Sure-Jell and Ball are easily available varieties; Pomona, a brand available in health food stores and some canning supply sections of cooking and farm supply stores, calls for much less sugar and yields a fruitier-tasting jam.

FOR PRESERVING STRAWBERRIES:

Take two quarts of Strawberries, squeeze them through a cloth, add half a pint of water and two pound of sugar, put it into a sauce pan, scald and skim it, take two pound of Strawberries with stems on, set your sauce pan on a chafing dish, put as many Strawberries into the dish as you can with the stems up without bruizing them, let them boil for about ten minutes, then take them out gently with a fork and put them into a stone pot for use; when you have done the whole turn the sirrup into the pot, when hot; set them in a cool place for use. Currant and Cherries may be done in the same way, by adding a little more sugar.

—*The First American Cookbook*, Amelia Simmons, 1796, page 39

NUTRITION INFORMATION

Raw strawberries are low-calorie fruits, rich in potassium and providing 100% of the RDA of Vitamin C for an adult. They also contain antioxidants and fiber. One serving of cooked, canned, or frozen berries is equal to about a half cup. For fresh berries, use one cup as a serving size.

There's no need to worry about limiting your serving sizes if you eat fresh, raw berries. Only by adding sugar or high-fat products—like a pie crust or whipped topping—will you add calories and fat. Choose serving methods that will provide you with the best source of nutrients while limiting fat and sugar.



STRAWBERRY HAND PIES

Makes 9 servings

- 2-crust pie pastry
- 1 $\frac{2}{3}$ C fresh or frozen strawberries, quartered
- 2 T sugar
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cornstarch
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 1 large egg, beaten
- coarse sugar, nutmeg, or cinnamon, optional

Prepare pastry according to directions. Chill.

Prepare filling:

In a saucepan over medium heat, combine the berries, sugar, cornstarch and lemon juice. Cook until the mixture starts to thicken, about 5 minutes. Transfer to bowl and cool to room temperature. Roll out dough, and cut into 18 rectangles, approximately 3x4-inch each. On half of them, put a heaping tablespoon of filling. Beat one large egg and brush it around the edges. Cut a vent in each of the remaining rectangles (with a knife or a very small cookie or biscuit cutter). Lay the vented rectangles on top of the filled ones. Press the edges with the tines of a fork. Brush tops with remaining beaten egg. Sprinkle with coarse sugar or cinnamon or nutmeg, if desired. Space evenly on a baking sheet. Bake in a 350° oven until a light golden brown. Cool in the pan.

STRAWBERRY RHUBARB AND CREAM BARS

Sue Fournier

- 2 C flour
- 3 T cornstarch
- 1 C chopped pecans
- 5 C chopped rhubarb
- 1 C butter, melted
- 1 C sliced strawberries
- $\frac{1}{4}$ C sugar
- 8-oz package cream cheese, softened
- 1 C confectionary sugar

NOTES

When we began this project, Gary related a comment he'd heard about cookbook writing: the real challenge is not getting started, but knowing how and when to stop. But now we have stopped, and it's your turn to get started. You can make like Aunt Vin and paste new recipes here, you can make notes, or you can create your own!

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RESOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

This list includes sources of the old recipes we've used in this cookbook, as well as helpful information about food preservation, shopping for fruit locally, and growing your own. Welcome to the club!

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