

RED WINDSOR

a discovered gem

A relatively new variety of apple, with its roots in Worcestershire, is becoming increasingly popular due to its rich tangy taste. Ali Capper, Chairman NFU Horticulture & Potatoes Board from Stocks Farm in Suckley, tells us more

Images this article: Pippa Sanderson



AVOIDING CONFUSION

Today's Red Windsor apples should not be confused with Early Windsors as they're different in taste and appearance. Early Windsors are a cross between a Geheimrat Dr Oldenburg apple and a Cox's Orange Pippin. Red Windsors were discovered in Suckley and are a natural genetic mutation of Alkmene and Cox's Orange Pippin noticeably redder and less Cox-like in appearance than Early Windsors.

The Red Windsor apple; a wonderful, red, juicy, crisp apple, was first discovered by a Dutch fruit farm manager in Suckley, Worcestershire in 1993 although its history can be traced back much further than this to 1978 when his predecessor had planted new apple orchards in the village.

In the 1970s and '80s, the most popular eating apple in the UK was Cox's Orange Pippin and when the Dutch fruit farmer expanded his farm, he was looking for pollinators for a new Cox's Orange Pippin orchard. As such, he imported the Alkmene apple tree from Holland, a good pollinator because it is regarded as 'an early Cox type of apple'. This was the first time that Alkmene trees had been grown in the UK and he planted three rows of Cox, one row of Alkmene, three rows of Cox and one row of Alkmene throughout his orchard.

By the early 1980s, the Alkmene apples were coming into full fruit production in Suckley but the farm had been bought by a company called Fox Fruit. The farm manager, another Dutchman, was finding it very hard to sell a new variety of apple that no one knew and which had a strange name, so it was decided it would be renamed, firstly as 'Fox Delight' and then as 'Early Windsor'.

Although the original farm where Red Windsors were discovered now no longer exists, Stocks Farm, located nearby,

has recently become one of the most significant growers of this wonderful, red, juicy, crisp apple. In

2014 and 2015, the farm planted 23,287 Red Windsor trees in three of its apple orchards following extensive research into its history, and because it grows well in Worcestershire, cropping heavily. As it was discovered in the county, it is perhaps not surprising that growing conditions are extremely conducive. In Worcestershire, the apple is more tolerant to pest and disease and, while it is related to Cox's Orange Pippin, it has a much better skin finish and is less challenging to grow. Red Windsor is one of the first apple varieties each season to start flowering and the blossom is still out many weeks later, a stunning sight with the Malvern Hills as the perfect backdrop. Not only that, it is a valuable pollinator for many of the other apple varieties and ripens early, so it is one of the first English apples available at the start of the harvest.

The apples at Stocks Farm have to be picked extremely carefully to avoid bruising and they are then packed equally carefully and sent off to Tesco for sale. The supermarket chain has been keen to stock Red Windsor as part of its British Apple packs and shoppers should be able to get their hands on a Red Windsor in most Tesco stores during October and November 2017.

Due to the recent rise in popularity of Gala and Braeburn apples, to the detriment of Cox's Orange Pippin, it is thought that Red Windsor will thrive as a replacement as it has a good, robust apple flavour with aromatic qualities. It is sweet and tangy, and its taste is complex and well balanced.

Red Windsor is once again growing in Suckley, where it started its life, and it is a pleasure to be introducing it to the wider community through Tesco. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on this delicious new variety. Contact us at www.stocksfarm.net, or follow us on Twitter: @redwindsorapples. 

RED WINDSOR IS ONE OF THE FIRST APPLE VARIETIES EACH SEASON TO START FLOWERING AND THE BLOSSOM IS STILL OUT MANY WEEKS LATER, A STUNNING SIGHT WITH THE MALVERN HILLS AS THE PERFECT BACKDROP

