



Peace and Apples

Posted by [Prairie Sundance](#)

[Forum List](#) [Message List](#) [New Topic](#)

[Prairie Sundance](#)

[Peace and Apples](#)

March 13, 2022 12:50PM

Registered: 2 years ago

Posts: 47

Apples may not be able to stop bullets or end wars, but they know no borders, and there is something about them that says “peace” to me. In Chinese, the words for “apple,” and “peace,” are so similar that the fruit has become a symbol of peace. It’s in this spirit that I’ve rooted around the web over the last week or so, trying to find what I could apple-y to celebrate from the Ukraine and Russia. Here’s a start.

In the town of Krolevets, in Ukraine’s Sumy region, there is a 220 year old apple tree that has self- propagated to cover over 10,000 square feet. The variety, known as Lozovka, (“twisted,”) self roots from its branches as they bend down to touch the ground, now forming 18 trunks from the original tree. Local legend has it that the tree was so sad on the death of it’s propagator, Prince Sergeev, (or the death of his wife, depending on the version,) that it bent over in mourning.

The Encyclopedia of Ukraine offers this list of local variety names, of 100 or so native apple varieties: Papirovka, Borovynka, and Doneshta, (summer ripening,) Common Antonivka, Pepinka, and Fall Putivka, (fall,) and Snow Kalvil, P. Symyrenko's Renet, and Champagne Renet, (winter.) Of these, I think I recognize the Antonovka that is a rootstock for many of our trees, as well as Reinette Simirenko, which I’ve read has debated origins. Any more ideas?

Of course, Russia has possibly thousands of apple varieties, and many of you likely have more extensive mental and physical apple encyclopedias than I do, but here are a few that stand out to me. Antonovka seems Russian rather than Ukrainian, (edit: please see Todd’s post below for a little more Antonovka insight,) it grows relatively true to seed and makes a reliable and hardy seedling rootstock, for this reason it is also a likely parent of many of our North American apples. This article from the Alaska fruit growers page [www.apfga.org] delves a little deeper into the importance of Russian apples in the North American pomological experience, apparently the usda distributed hundreds of thousands of Russian scions for trial in North America. Some of the varieties that have stuck with us include Duchess of Oldenburg, Red Astrachan, and Yellow Transparent.

I also like to explore culture and bridge borders through the common “stomach language.” Yabluchnik is a Ukrainian Apple cake which is even better the next day. Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Catherine the Great, and more enjoyed dining on the Russian Pastila, a fluffy pastry made from apple sauce. I haven’t made either yet, but I cook with the kids on Sundays, so we’re going to try Yabluchnik and see how it goes.

As you may have found, the tech giant has made digging up any apple (not Apple) morsels a bit of a pain. I’d be happy if anyone had any other curiosities from that part of the globe to share. Or thoughts and stories about peace and apples. We lost a great force with Michael, (dealing with loss in our close community here as well,) but the trees I’m planting now are with my children in mind, with the hope of a peaceful future in harmony with nature.

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 03/15/2022 09:43AM by [Prairie Sundance](#).

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Todd Parlo](#)

[Re: Peace and Apples](#)

March 13, 2022 04:21PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 301

I agree, apples have no borders. This is an interesting symbol to reflect upon. It is a certainty that musicians, artists, scientists and most others in both the Ukraine and Russia are going nuts right now, having long enjoyed friendships and professional discourse with one another, only to be thwarted by politics. The age old immaturity that will forever plague us. This has been a subject of discussion in our family as my wife is half Ukrainian, half Polish- two countries invaded by despots. The interesting thing, with people and with apples is that we are conflicted. We are all the same, but we are all different. There is an impulse to group things together, to find common ground, and in the case of humans to find peace. We also like to divide because that can be the essence of culture, healthy distinction, and intrigue. Being proud of a Vermont apple, or of being Swedish (I am a bit of both) can be a very cool thing. It keeps things rich, right? I think when it all comes down to it though, we know that it really is just about arbitrary lines and semantics.

Years ago I tried to get into my orchard as many of the cold hardy apples as I could get my hands on. That included a fair amount of the antonovka strain. Among these are the following. Note the locations- these are where they were received from, not necessarily their true origin:

Antonovka 1.5 pounds former Soviet Union
Antonovka 172670-B
Antonovka Debnicka
Antonovka Kamenichka Ukraine
Antonovka Mitchurin Finland
Antonovka Monasir
Antonovka Ottawa
Antonovka Polutorafuntovaya Former Soviet Union
Antonovka Shafran Former Soviet Union
Antonovka Zheltaia

This brings up the point that researching origins can be very difficult indeed, and can quickly lose its meaning. Antonovka Kamenichka, Kandil Sinap, Salute, Slava Pobeditelyam, Oporto, etc. have all been described in literature as originating in the Ukraine, and not originating in the Ukraine. We might also discuss what origin is. Genetics, then they are all Kazakhstan transplants. Pollination and growth, then from those particular regions. We infuse meaning and culture into things when we make these regional distinctions. I have attempted to get every named variety from Vermont into my Vermont orchard. The thing is, there are no naturally occurring *malus domestica* in north america, just crabs. The genetic path of any one of those apples is long and winding for sure. That won't stop me from enjoying them as Vermont natives though. Its cool.

On the Ukraine front, we can bet that most of the Antonovka progeny in the US right now originated at least as seed from the Ukraine. This has simply to do with commerce. Most of the seed nurseries imported their material from the Ukraine. To complicate the rest of it, a good deal of the data of scion, seed and plant sourcing from these regions is tagged as Soviet Union, which includes a lot of existing and distinct countries, and incidentally a grand germplasm mess.

Let's come back around to this idea of peace. Apple nerds around the world care a whole lot less about politics than they do about the natural world. The scientific community and the naturalists have a very long history of side-stepping the infantile behavior of their species and getting on with things of meaning. There are plenty of Russians that are mortified about what is happening. We should remember the scientific debt we owe to the likes of Michurin. We should remember what Vavilov suffered from the likes of Lysenko and Stalin. The Ukraine, Russia and every other country for that matter will have knowledge, technology, culture, and yes apples that the rest of the world is better for. And in every one of those places there will be idiots trying to make a mess of things. Perhaps the lowly apple makes the rest of us better than that.

[Reply Quote](#)

[Prairie Sundance](#)

[Re: Peace and Apples](#)

March 15, 2022 09:03PM

Registered: 2 years ago

Posts: 47

Thank you Todd for that education on and reminder of the common ancestry and long journey that apples have taken to get here, just the kind of encyclopedic knowledge I was hoping to call on. And some neat metaphors to play with. Just as all apples are no longer Kazakh, adapting to the new climates and conditions they arrived in to become uniquely wonderful new varieties, we are no longer all African. I think an ability to recognize our shared beginnings can help us remember our brother and sister hood, though, while at the same time celebrate the sweet diversity that we have become. It is a delicate balance, however. Tip toe-ing that line of celebrating and maintaining cultural traditions with pride can help keep us from all melting down into the same red delicious blah while at the same time valuing our connections. But we've got to deny the temptation to take that cultural pride to the point where it is susceptible to the exclusionary honey crisp nationalistic fervor that despots use to drum up support for these wars, and make these wars possible.

When I look at my own ancestry I see that all too often the desire to maintain cultural identity in the face of oppression, (Cajun, Irish, and more,) has drawn an element to use that cultural identity to justify excluding others, drawing lines that are all too often based on very superficial characteristics for their own advantage, (both cultures only relatively recently joined the modern designation of "white.") "Real" Ukrainians break up Roma camps and deny African students access to train cars at the same time as they flee an army trying to reconquer Russia's "rightful" cultural territory. What an intricate web we have spun ourselves.

It is good that fruit growers and others are able look beyond our "leaders" short sightedness, but in many places and times that is not possible. Those that are doing the things of meaning are often swept up unwillingly in the war games of despots. My best friend in school fled Yugoslavia after witnessing gun battles in his uncle's orchard, olive groves are military targets in the Middle East, and some of the battles of Normandy took place in the French cider orchards. This is without considering the ways in which fruit production has fueled wars of conquest, installed dictatorships, and profited from slavery and exploitation.

Does this mean that it is our duty as fruit growers to promote peace? I am admittedly biased, as I already believe it is a basic duty of all of humanity, but I think that if our concern is the holistic, then we must consider the whole- the social, economic, and spiritual, as well as the organic and natural elements, and orcharding with peace as a priority is a part of that. I know that it may feel like a lot to ask of folks who may be working overtime just to keep their trees healthy and their fruit saleable without the toxic gunk of conventionality, but I think that oftentimes working to promote peace can take surprisingly little energy, and can reap more benefits than expenditures. Are there things that others are doing or have done to promote peace and equality in their orchards? Have you noticed the impact it has had on your interactions with your community?

We are on the front end of our orchard journey here, but, (and possibly because of this,) I'm full of hope and intention. I look forward to hearing from others about their experiences and feelings as well.

There is actually a "Peace Orchard," [www.peaceorchard.co.uk] in Coventry, started by a world war 2 veteran to remember the orchards he fought in to defend Normandy. It is now used by students and the community as a place to learn conflict resolution, connect with nature, and share public art. Are there lessons we can take from them to incorporate into our own Orchard outreach?

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Prairie Sundance](#)

[Re: Peace and Apples](#)

February 10, 2023 11:15PM

Registered: 2 years ago

Posts: 47

In my quest to gather Ukrainian apple varieties I came into contact with a couple of brothers who have an orchard in Zaporizhia, near the heaviest fighting right now. They've sent me a package of 23 apples and pear varieties from their region, and a list of varieties they're looking for from the states. Fedco was one place that was glad to help me supply their scions, and asked me to write something to explain the project.

I'm including it here as an update to my original post.

After our now eight year old daughter was born I began grafting fruit trees for a small market orchard. We initially planned to plant all heritage fruit varieties with known disease resistance. We planted about 20 or 30 trees a year, and as I got more into varietal selection I realized I was drawn to varieties from countries affected by war and US involvement-apricots from Afghanistan and Iran, plums from Israel and the former Yugoslavia. Throughout the planting I recalled a good friend from college's stories of his childhood in Yugoslavia, and of how his uncle's plum orchard was overtaken by the war, becoming a part of the front lines of the battle ground before he fled there with his mother and brother. I was so grateful to not have to raise my own children in those conditions.

In 2021 we had nearly completed filling the three acres dedicated to the orchard project. Then, that winter, after Putin's invasion of Ukraine, I was overtaken with an intense desire to make our orchard a "peace orchard." Helped by fruit enthusiasts and orchardists around the world,

I have since gathered a half dozen plums, cherries, and apricots from the region, as well as a couple dozen apple and pear varieties. I'm still looking for more plums from the former Yugoslavia, and cold hardy, disease resistant fruit varieties from Syria, Israel and Palestine, as well as other regions experiencing conflict. I'd love to have space for fruits from South Asia and the African continent as well, but feel limited by our zone, 4b/5a.

I'm not sure where this project will go. We're a low income family and we're financing it on our own. This year I'm starting a bed of Dolgo Crab seedlings to graft the apples onto, planning to sell them as a benefit for, or offer them directly to the Ukrainian refugee community here. I also hope that the symbolism of these fruit varieties sharing the space, and through publicly promoting peace and cultural understanding, we will have a lasting impact. I'm sure the idea will continue to evolve as we move forward, looking for more ways that our little orchard can become a Peace Orchard.

In my research I found that there is a "Peace Orchard," already in existence in Coventry, England, planted by a World War Two veteran. [www.peaceorchard.co.uk]

It is a working orchard as well as a community space for public art, music, and programming to help children learn conflict resolution. I think every orchard ought to be a Peace Orchard. How can you help promote peace and cultural understanding in your fruit growing?

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Newer Topic](#) [Older Topic](#)

[Print View](#) [RSS](#)

Sorry, only registered users may post in this forum.

[Click here to login](#)

This [forum](#) is powered by [Phorum](#).