



The different Pearmains

Posted by [Claude Jolicoeur](#)

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[Claude Jolicoeur](#)

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November 24, 2012 06:27PM

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 226

This is an old thread that was at the Grou.ps site and that I had kept on my HD as backup. I am putting it back here.

Claude

C.J. Walke wrote, probably in 2009:

Can someone describe some of the different Pearmains (Blue, Grey, Worcester, etc.)? Where do the color names come from? I just ate a Grey Pearmain. Thanks.

I replied:

Hello C.J. I know it's already 3 months you wrote your question, but better late than never!!! Pearmain is an old word used for apples that had something in common with pears, in the shape or in the taste. Sometimes it was used for an apple that was better than a pear, as in Passe-poire in French. Sometimes also the name is used for apples that have an elongated shape. The oldest Pearmain is probably the Winter Pearmain, which dates back to about 1200 - there are reports of it growing in the Norfolk County (England) by that date, and also in Normandy (France) in 1211, under the name Permaine. I have 24 apples in my database that have the word Pearmain in the name or as a synonym. There is about the same number in Beach's Apples of New York. Most of these apples are English, and many are cooking apples. They are not very well known in this continent... Some of the names are: Adam's Pearmain, Baxter P, Claygate P, Herefordshire P, Hormead P, Lamb P, Mabbot P, Merton P, Worcester P. - I have never seen any of those... Of the colored Pearmains, there is the White P, or White Winter P, from Indiana c1800. The Golden P, or Golden Winter P, which are synonyms for the King of Pippins - see Wiki. The Pink P has pink flesh. And the Blue P, which is probably the better known of the P family, from New England, c1800, fully described in Beach's Apples of NY - see this thread, page 80 of volume 1. However, I never saw any reference to a Grey Pearmain anywhere. I would be curious to know where you got this apple from...

C.J. Walke replied:

I appreciate the response, regardless of the time. The grey pearmain came from Out On A Limb CSA, started by John Bunker of Fedco trees. Here is the link to the CSA's blog: outonalimbcsa.wordpress.com. Grey Pearmain was the featured variety for that pick-up and can be found a few varieties down from the top of the page. The fruit came from the Apple Farm in Fairfield, Maine. Thanks for the reply.

Current update:

Since this conversation, I have had the occasion to talk with John Bunker about Gray Pearmains and to eat a few. I even grafted it in my orchard. It is an excellent apple, one of the best I have eaten...

It is an apple that was found in a couple of old trees in an orchard near Skowhegan Maine. For a long while John had thought the name Gray Pearmain wasn't the true name and that the apple was probably known under another name anciently. However, we found a reference to this name an annual report of the Maine Pomological Society of 1885, and referencing a grower in Skowhegan... So it is probably the same!

Claude

[Jolicoeur Orchard](#)

Zone 4 in Quebec

Author, [The New Cider Maker's Handbook](#)

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[Todd Parlo](#)

[Re: The different Pearmains](#)

January 06, 2013 02:58AM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 301

This discussion brings to mind how convoluted things can become as regards variety names. Pearmain is one in a long list of monikers that attaches itself to far too many candidates. What struck my attention in the dialog above are the color names which accompany pearmain, ie- blue pearmain. Oddly, many dictionary definitions state pearmain means a red apple, which of course is ridiculous, since so many pearmain apples are not red in the least. A quick look in the inventory of pearmains will show us pearmains of all colors, of all shapes (negating the notion of pear shape), and all flavors (there are far more non pearmains with pear flavor than pearmains with). Here at the farm we have an apple called 'three sisters' which is small, round, yellow and tastes strongly of pears when ripe, but blue pearmain not in the least nor does it look like one for that matter). Since there is no review board for apple naming, they are often born on a whim.

I originally intended to comment more fully on the pearmain confusion, but I think for those interested, John Bunker wrote a perfectly comprehensive commentary on the subject. Go to outonalimbcsa.wordpress.com and scroll toward the end of the blog.

Perhaps later we can all comment on pips, pippins, seedlings, reinettes, pommes, oranges, bananas, and strawberry apples, with a codlin thrown in for good measure.

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