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2019 Washington apples as plentiful as they are diverse

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The 2019 Washington apple crop is projected to ring in at 137 million boxes and is largely expected to be of high quality and color due to favorable spring weather and a mild summer. One might well ask how all those apples will find homes, yet needn't look much further than the growing diversity of commercial apple varieties. "Although the crops are getting bigger in Washington, the mix is getting so much more precise," said Roger Pepperl, marketing director of Stemilt Growers. "This makes the crop easier to sell and to have demand on what we sell."



"Beyond the leading varieties of Red Delicious, Gala, Granny Smith, Fuji, Golden Delicious, Cripps Pink and Honeycrisp, there are numerous proprietary varieties entering the scene," stated Toni Lynn Adams, communications and outreach coordinator of the Washington Apple Commission. "Gala is projected to surpass Red Delicious in volume this year, and there is a lot of excitement about the debut of the new WA-38 cultivar, marketed as Cosmic Crisp." Most Washington shippers will have Cosmic Crisp, a commodity apple exclusive to growers in

Washington state. The apple debuts commercially on Dec. 1 and is expected to reach massive volumes by 2022.

Honeycrisp continues to be on fire with no obvious end to demand. Volumes are increasing with a new early strain called Premier, which harvests in late August. “This allows for early entry into the marketplace and will take away the need for late storage of old crop and for many of the Southern Hemisphere shipments,” explained Pepperl. “We also have a new Royal Honeycrisp, which is a late storage Honeycrisp that allows us to pick with good starch reserves and have an outstanding late storage apple that consumers will love.” These new strains are making Honeycrisp a much better season-long experience.

“With the increase in test plantings and the cultivation of new varieties and natural genetic strains of apples that carry remarkable attributes, consumers have a world of excellent options available to them,” added Rochelle Bohm, brand manager with CMI Orchards. The Wenatchee, WA-based grower-shipper boasts six of the top 10 branded apple varieties in the United States. “We can also deliver branded organic options with Envy, Ambrosia, KIKU, Kanzi and Smitten apples.” It’s reported that 13 percent of the entire Washington apple crop is organic this season.

“This is our (Stemilt’s) first big crop of Rave,” said Pepperl. “It ships the first week of August on so we are right in the deal now. It is crazy juicy, full of flavor and beautiful color red. We are in many retailers across America as we speak.” Stemilt has two other trademarked varieties in SweeTango and Piñata.

Shippers are anticipating smaller fruit this season, which brings plenty of opportunities for bag business and child-oriented programs. “Additionally, consumers are increasingly concerned with healthy living and apples are very well positioned to fit into specialized diets such as the Whole 30 and Weight Watchers trends,” said Bohm.

The state’s nutrient-rich, volcanic soil and dry, arid climate with abundant water supply, provides an ideal environment to grow wholesome and quality apples. “Washington apples are produced and packed by progressive orchardist and industry members who implement sustainability and strict food-safety standards into their daily operations,” said Adams. “What makes Washington apples special are the people behind them — people who’s objective is to produce and pack the finest fruit they possibly can for people worldwide.”

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