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Hudson River Fruit Distributors continues family legacy

By

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We're in the dog days of summer, but it won't be long before we start seeing signs of autumn, and one of the first hints that cooler days are ahead is the appearance of apples in produce sections.

That means the leaders and staff of Hudson River Fruit Distributors are busy getting those delicious fruits ready for an autumn filled with snacking on crisp, juicy apples and homes filling up with the smells of apple pies baking in the oven.

"This is our 58th season we're going into, which is pretty exciting," said Alisha Albinder, operations manager for Hudson River Fruit Distributors, based in Milton, NY. "We're a fourth-generation family-owned-and-operated company. 2020 has been an interesting year for many people. We're excited for a new crop, the fruit quality and the condition have been great and it looks like it's going to be a very clean crop."

As grower-shipper-packer, Hudson River Fruit Distributors grows 21 different varieties, starting with Jersey Mac, Paula Red, Ginger Gold, Gala and Jonamac in late August. Then the ball will really get rolling in September when Macintosh, Honey Crisp, Empire Red Delicious, Fuji, and other popular varieties hit shelves.

“I’d say the varieties that are growing in popularity and volume for us this year are going to be Galas, Fujis and Everscrisps,” Albinder said. “Those are the ones that are going to be in demand.”

She also expects high demand for Snapdragons, which are known for their crunch, sweetness, and juiciness. Another variety growing in popularity is the RubyFrost, which are sweet and tart and also excellent for baking.

In total, the company will ship 2 million boxes of apples this year, mostly to retailers on the East Coast and in the Midwest.

Obviously, this has been a challenging year because of COVID-19, but the company has managed to continue its work while adopting safety precautions. Weather has also been a factor.

“It’s been a very dry summer, we’ve been irrigating all our crops,” Albinder said. “We’re hoping to get some good rains this week.”

The company also offers lots of packaging options, including poly, mesh, pouch, totes and bins, and it introduced a new high-speed bagging line this summer.

For shipping, Hudson River Fruit Distributors maintains a fleet of trucks, which allows it to keep its customers’ inventories fresh and replenished by delivering partial order and full loads.

Hudson River Fruit Distributors has been going strong for 58 years, beginning with its establishment in 1963 by Isadore “Izzy” Albinder and his son Harold. Izzy began his career in 1932 after emigrating from Russia and selling apples in Brooklyn from a pushcart. When he had trouble finding the quality he wanted, he began developing relationships with growers in Hudson Valley, and some of those relationships continue in the 21st century.

The family runs the operation to this day. Alisha is the great-granddaughter of Izzy. Harold is president, and Alisha’s father, Dan, is operations manager.

“Myself and my father are here every step of the way, we’re really involved in the business and all the intricacies,” Alisha said. “We’re almost like a one-stop shopping shop because we’re growers ourselves. We have almost 500 acres of our own fruit that we grow and then we work with other growers in the state and New England to procure fruit for our customer base.”

And by bringing the best apples to the customer base, the Albinder family continues to build on its legacy.

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