



MEDIA RELEASE

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

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Local, Seasonal Ingredients Are Falling Out of Trees, Into Holiday Favorites

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The first documented great idea that ever fell out of a tree took place in 1666, when a falling apple inspired Sir Isaac Newton to formulate some theories about gravity. Great ideas can still fall out of trees – like the idea to make traditional holiday recipes fresh and local with ingredients like apples and pecans.

Apples and pecans fall in Tennessee just in time for the holiday season, bringing a bright, clean taste to dishes sometimes weighed down with heavy herbs and gravy. Using local, seasonal foods at holiday meals is a great way to celebrate the grateful spirit of the early Americans who first feasted with them.

American holiday dishes are still anchored firmly in 18th century New England, featuring Old World herbs and staple foods made new with ingredients that were close at hand. English colonists, and later, citizens of the new republic, used local game and seafood with newfangled produce like pumpkins and corn, creating foods that expressed their newfound sense of self sufficiency and abundance.

Tennessee is short on some original American holiday ingredients – local lobster, for instance – but the holiday association with apples and pecans is a long one. Apples were brought to North America with the colonists in the 17th century, and by 1625, the first apple orchard on the North American continent was blooming near Boston.

Pecan trees, which are technically a form of hickory which produces “drupes” instead nuts or fruits, are indigenous Americans and can be found in most Tennessee locales. The first U.S. plantings took place in Long Island, New York in 1772. Thomas Jefferson planted pecan trees in the orchard at his home, Monticello, in Virginia. George Washington later reported in his journal that Jefferson gave him "Illinois nuts," pecans, which Washington then grew at his Virginia home, Mount Vernon.

Local pecans found on the farm or at a local farmers market are likely to be sold still in their shells, so be prepared to use some simple tools and techniques to crack their shells and extract the treasure inside. A simple hammer and a solid surface will suffice, though specially designed pecan crackers will do a cleaner, more efficient job. Ordinary slip joint pliers or a general purpose nutcracker also can be used.

Once shelled, place the nutmeats in a perforated container or a colander to dry. This allows the pecans to season, giving them a better flavor when eaten. Store the nutmeats in a sealed container.

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Pecans stay fresh for several days on a countertop if not exposed to moisture, for weeks in a refrigerator, and up to a year in a freezer.

Sweet Apple Pecan Stuffing comes from Tammy Algood, food expert and spokesperson for the statewide Pick Tennessee Products campaign. Algood creates recipes featuring foods grown or processed in Tennessee.

Pick Tennessee Products is a promotion from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture Market Development Division designed to help consumers identify and choose products from Tennessee farms. For more of Algood's recipes featuring local, farm-direct products, go to "Cook Now" on the Pick Tennessee Products website at www.picktnproducts.org. Directories for local foods, farms and farmers markets are also available at the website.

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PLEASE FIND A HI-RES DOWNLOADABLE PHOTOGRAPH OF THE ATTACHED RECIPE AT WWW.PICKTNPRODUCTS.ORG. CLICK ON THE FEATURED RECIPE.

Sweet Apple Pecan Stuffing

Yield: 6-8 servings

3 tablespoons olive oil	2 eggs
3 sprigs fresh sage	3/4 cup cream
3 sprigs fresh thyme	1 cup chicken stock
1 large sweet onion, peeled and thinly sliced	1/2 cup apple cider
1/2 teaspoon salt	5 cups sourdough or French bread, torn into 1-inch pieces
1/4 teaspoon black pepper	6 sprigs parsley, chopped
3 Granny Smith apples, peeled and diced	
1 cup chopped pecans	

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease a 13x9-inch baking pan and set aside. Heat the oil in a large sauté pan over medium heat. Add the sage and thyme sprigs and allow to heat for 2-3 minutes. Remove the sage and thyme and discard. Add the onions and cook 15 minutes until caramelized. Season with the salt and pepper. Remove the onions from the pan and add the apples and pecans. Gently sauté 3 to 5 minutes. Meanwhile, in a large mixing bowl, whisk together the eggs, cream, stock and cider. Add the bread pieces, onions, apples, pecans and parsley. Mix the stuffing until well combined. Transfer to the prepared pan. Bake 35 to 30 minutes or until golden brown. Serve warm.

Note: Stuffing can be stuffed into the cavity of a pork crown roast or turkey, or stuffed into winter squash shells.