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DONNA ERICKSON'S BEST BITES

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By Donna Erickson

PHOTO CREDIT: Donna Erickson



Taste Test Apples and Make a Refreshing Waldorf Salad

Minnesotans don't think of themselves as particularly boastful. But one exception is when fall is in the air, and it comes to answering the humorous question, "How do you like them apples?"

We love them, and we take pride in the fact that the popular Honeycrisp was developed in our state years ago. Another addition to our romance with apple varieties is the First Kiss apple. A child of the Honeycrisp family, it was developed by the University of Minnesota and was promoted as the "first kiss of autumn" at the Minnesota State Fair in 2018.

Eager to grab a taste, I stood in a long line at the apple booth to buy one. It was worth the wait. I took a bite and thought, "Whoa ... this is an exceptional apple!"

Would friends and family agree? A First Kiss taste test with other favorite varieties would answer this question. So, I put together this entertaining apple-tasting game.

First, I purchased six varieties of apples, both to compare with First Kiss and to match apple names with tastes. Cut into bite-sized chunks, I set the apples on separate plates that were numbered 1-7. (I kept track on my hidden answer key.) For reference, I listed the names of the seven apples in alphabetical order on a sheet for all to see.

To play, the "testers" wrote numbers 1-7 on an index card. They tasted samples on each plate and wrote what they thought was its correct name next to the corresponding number on the card. For extra fun, I asked them to star their favorite.

This was a tough assignment! Even though the participants have been chomping on apples for years, comparing apples to apples revealed subtle differences — a challenge indeed! Not surprisingly, First Kiss was a hit.

You might want to do a similar "apple taste test" game using your family favorites and regional varieties to discover the apple of your eye. Then get inspired and cut up additional apples for this refreshing Waldorf salad, a tasty side to a fall meal. Mix crisp apple chunks with crunchy, healthy ingredients and toss with a homemade dressing that features a sweet hint of honey.



WALDORF SALAD

Serves 4-6

— 2 cups crisp apples in chunks, unpeeled
— 1 cup diced celery
— 1/2 cup halved red grapes
— 1/2 cup toasted walnut pieces
— 1/4 cup raisins

Dressing:

— 1 tablespoon honey
— 2 teaspoons lemon juice
— 3 tablespoons mayonnaise

Lightly toss apples, celery, grapes, walnuts and raisins in a bowl. Whisk together dressing ingredients until smooth. Toss with salad ingredients. Serve chilled.

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Donna Erickson creates relationships and community through food and fun. Find more to nourish and delight you at DonnaErickson.com.

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