

Apples!

By Sara Cabot of [Little Lettice](#)

We are in full-blown apples season right now, with apple-picking and all things apple-y at every turn. But what is so special about apples? Why are they good for us? Where did the term ‘an apple a day keeps the doctor away’ come from?

Why are apples so good for us?

Scientists used to think it was the vitamin C content alone that made apples healthy. But they now know that it’s a combination of **phytonutrients** in an apple that makes it healthy. *(Please remember that healthy doesn’t mean ‘weight-reducing,’ though losing weight can happen with a healthy diet. Healthy means able to fight illness and disease – at the short end this could be a common cold, at the other extreme, cancer.)*

Apples in fact possess anti-cancer, anti-allergenic, anti-inflammatory, and anti-viral properties. Apples should be ingested daily in order to keep these properties at their peak, hence the saying ‘an apple a day.’

Apple skins are particularly healthy, containing roughly 1.5 times as much ‘good stuff’ as apple flesh. This is a good reason for us all to eat whole fresh apples with skin on, and also a good reason to eat **organic** apples (see below).

Why organic?

Apples are on the list of the Environmental Working Group’s ‘dirty dozen,’ i.e., fruits and vegetables found to have most pesticides on them if grown conventionally (i.e., not organically). Therefore, since apple skins are so healthy and we should eat them, it is important that these are **organic apples**.

Local organic apples are hard to find

It’s very hard to grow an organic apple in Massachusetts: it takes a lot of experience and knowledge. Have you noticed that all the organic apples in the supermarket come from Washington state or California?

Many local orchards use what they call IPM (integrated pest management); a posh way of saying ‘we don’t spray indiscriminately.’ But IPM is unregulated, so you don’t know precisely what, how often, and in what quantities pesticides and fungicides are being applied.

The only way to be sure about what has been applied to your apple, is to buy from a certified organic farmer. Organic farmers are highly regulated and annually inspected. The rules are many and the hours of record keeping are long and arduous. But it’s the only way we consumers can have some peace of mind that we are buying food closer to what nature intended.

There is one organic apple orchard that I know of which has been cultivating many varieties of

this fruit for years: [Hutchins Farm](#) in Concord, Mass. They sell their delicious cultivars of apple by the 8# bag or you can buy seconds (slightly bruised or blemished) for making apple sauce or pies.

First food for baby

Apple sauce makes a wonderful first food for baby. (Note: apple sauce is actually binding and is good if your baby has loose bowels, as is banana).

Baby Apple Sauce (from 6 months)

- Peel and core 4 or 5 apples (Red Delicious, Gala, and Macintosh all make lovely apple sauce)
- Cut into quarters and place in a basket steamer over a covered pan of simmering water for about 10 minutes or until soft (but not disintegrating – Macintosh apples lose their shape easily so watch out)
- Puree in a food processor and/or press through a food mill or sieve to get desired consistency.
- It should be quite thick so thinning the apple sauce with a bit of breast milk or formula (you could also add some baby rice for bulk) may be a good idea.
- Freeze leftovers in an ice cube tray.

Quick Toddler Dessert (from 8 months)

Combine applesauce with plain natural yogurt (Seven Stars is a good one) and a sprinkling of cinnamon and/or a drop of maple syrup for a delicious fruit dessert.

Easy Baked Apples (from 1 year)

Serves 4

You will need:

- 4 medium sized apples
 - raisins, chopped dates, figs, pecans
 - honey
 - unsalted butter
1. Heat your oven to 350 degrees F. Wash apples and core.
 2. With a sharp knife cut ever so gently into the skin making an ‘equator’ around each apple.
 3. Butter a shallow dish and place apples inside.
 4. Stuff into each core cavity a mixture of dried fruit & nuts.
 5. Top off with a teaspoon of honey and ½ teaspoon of butter.
 6. Place in oven and bake for about 45 minutes until golden and flesh is soft all the way through (use your knife to test).
 7. Remove from oven and allow to rest (they are very hot at this stage).
 8. Serve warm with whipped cream or Greek yogurt.