

What's behind the new apples hitting supermarket shelves?

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TORONTO -- New apples lining grocery market shelves with names like Cosmic Crisp and Koru are giving the more "established" apples like Red Delicious and Granny Smith a run for their money.

The new apples are the result of companies trying to cater to fruit-lovers' changing taste buds by introducing new varieties into the market that are sweeter and long-lasting.

Washington State University is the innovator behind the Cosmic Crisp apple. The developer claims that the fruit is so resilient it can survive one year of refrigeration.

The university believes the apple has so much potential for profit that it has allotted a \$10 million marketing budget for the new type.

"Apples are now being trademarked by big marketing agencies and seeds are being patented. It's a big business," Cara Rosenbloom, a Toronto-based dietician and food journalist, told CTV News Toronto.



Cathy McKay, who is the chair of Ontario Apple Growers association, told CTV News Toronto that the old varieties of apples have not "satisfied customers for 15 years or so."

"Consumers want a much sweeter product," she said. "89 per cent of Canadians prefer sweet tasting apples [and] 11 per cent prefer tart. We have to guess, as growers, what consumers will want ten years from now. Right now people are looking for hard, crisp apples."

Less than half of all apples sold in Ontario are grown in the province, according to McKay, and a research lab in the Niagara Region is looking to capitalize on the public's changing tastes.

"What Washington has done with the Cosmic Crisp has been a huge success, and we'd love to do the same thing," Rachel LeBlanc, an apple breeder with Vineland Research and Innovation Centre, said.

Experts say the sweet taste of success takes time. It can take typically 20 to 30 years of painstaking research and trial and error to bring a new breed of apple from the orchard to the supermarket.

In 2011, Vineland chose a number of parent seeds from popular apples, and planted close to 30,000 trees.

Factors like weather, durability and resistance to disease narrowed their potential crop to 200 trees. Of those, 20 apples are currently being tested with the goal of getting a handful of varieties to market by the end of the decade.

“We have three breeds we’re really excited about. It’s kind of like a needle in a haystack. We decide which parent seeds we want to cross together and then pare it down based on which ones we think can be commercial varieties.” LeBlanc said.

“It’s complicated but we will definitely have something that competes with Cosmic Crisp.”

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