



Local FLAVOR

Van Lin Orchards, La Crescent, MN

We welcomed local apples from Van Lin Orchards to the Co-op this week. Shoppers may select EverCrisp, Sonya and Honeycrisp options from this multi-generational, family-owned and operated orchard of nearby La Crescent, Minn. We caught owner Rick Vin Lin via phone on Monday for a quick chat about the legacy his parents, Frank and Helen Van Lin, began back in 1959.

While Frank and Helen started out as dairy farmers, it wasn't long before they began a nursery of dwarf trees imported from Holland. Last fall, La Crosse's WKBT NEWS8000 reported that the farm's grown to hold roughly 28,000 trees. It's a legacy, says Rick, that his 14-year-old daughter, Leah, hopes to steward someday. But, he adds, "she's got to go to college first."

Rick's excited to bring the first of his EverCrisps into production. An apple tree, he notes, takes years of development to reach this stage. "We want them," he says, "to mature and create a solid framework for the fruit." The EverCrisp is a Honeycrisp/Gala cross; it's sweet and juicy, with a good crunch and "tang" - elements inherited from both parents.



RICK VAN LIN & DAUGHTER LEAH



**VAN LIN ORCHARDS
FOUNDER FRANK VAN LIN**

In the fall, Van Lin Orchards is busy with roadside market, area sales (including People's Food Co-op) and supplying the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum AppleHouse. On the farm, the family welcomes back familiar faces and greets new ones. Visit their Facebook for details regarding wagon rides and pick-your-own options. "We do caramel apples too," says Rick. "We keep it simple and family-oriented." This coming season, he hints, may offer an additional tasty option. "We bought ourselves a donut machine. We're looking forward to using it."

Sonya apples, Rick says, "aren't something numerous growers tend to have." He's a fan of this New Zealand-developed Gala/Red Delicious cross. The Sonya's got a distinctly tall, heart-shaped profile. They are sweet, with low acidity and a crunchy-crisp texture.

Spring activities at the Van Lin farm include pruning and planning for upcoming seasons. "We're adding a couple new varieties," notes Rick. "We're working on First Kiss and looking at getting Ludacrisp trees growing." The Ludacrisp was created by the Midwest Apple Improvement Association. It carries a "fruity" flavor Rick adds, "that's sometimes compared to that of a pineapple."

"A lot of us experienced a very large crop this year," says Rick. At Van Lin Orchards, Hazel Technologies was resourced to maximize a quality lifespan for this extended crop. "Hazel Tech" is a 2020 World Food Innovation award-winning ethylene management program designed to slow aging processes. Shoppers may learn more about this non-residue method begun in 2015 by Northwestern University to address food waste here: <https://chicago.suntimes.com/2022/4/25/23036465/hazel-technology-eliminate-food-waste-longer-shelf-life-produce-fulton-market>

