Season: Early summer through December.

Nutrition Facts: A medium size apple, about 2 to 2½ inches round, has about 75 calories and provides bulk in the diet, which helps the body digest food. The apple is low in sodium and high in potassium, making it a great natural snack.

Selection: Look for firm, crisp, well-colored fruit. Avoid those with shriveled skins, bruises, worm holes, and decayed spots. Always handle apples gently to avoid causing bruises, blemishes, or other defects.

Storage: Use those with bruises or skin breaks as soon as possible. Apples that are slightly under-ripe should be stored in a cool place to ripen. Once ripe, apples will keep best stored in the refrigerator for a week or longer in the vegetable drawer or in a plastic bag.

Preparation: Raw apples will darken when the cut surface is exposed to the air. Protect cut or peeled apples from darkening by mixing with ascorbic acid or fruit juice, such as lemon or orange. Only work with about five apples at a time to prevent darkening. Mix 1 teaspoon ascorbic acid with 3 tablespoons of water. Toss gently with apple slices.

Apples may be preserved by several methods: freezing, drying, or canning. Please contact your county Extension office for more information.

Varieties: More than 2,500 varieties are found in the United States. The following are a few of the kinds that are easily available and popular in Kentucky: Lodi, Red Delicious, Rome, Winesap, Gala, Jonathan, Cortland, and Golden Delicious.

Apple Betty

4 cups sliced apples
¼ cup apple juice
¾ cup flour
1 cup sugar
½ teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
2 tablespoons butter or margarine

Place sliced apples in a lightly greased pie pan. Pour fruit juice over apples. Mix flour, sugar, cinnamon, and nutmeg in a mixing bowl. Cut in butter or margarine with two knives until mixture is crumbly. Pour crumb mixture over apples. Bake at 375°F for 45 minutes or until apples are tender.

Yield: Eight 6-ounce servings.

Nutritional Analysis: 220 calories, 2.5 g fat, 1 g protein, 51 g carbohydrate, 0 mg cholesterol, 35 mg sodium.

Prepared by Sarah Ball Brandl, Family and Consumer Sciences, Limited Resource Audience Coordinator. Adapted from Kentucky Apples (FSHE-3). Recipe from The Market Basket, Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Farmers Market Nutrition Program. Reviewed by Dr. Terry Jones, Extension Specialist for Horticulture, and Charles Tyron Back, Extension Associate for Horticulture, University of Kentucky.

For more information, contact your county’s Extension agent for Family and Consumer Sciences or visit the Web site for Family and Consumer Sciences, College of Agriculture, University of Kentucky, at <www.ca.uky.edu/agcollege/fcs>