

NEWS

SnapDragon apple wins outstanding cultivar award



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[Susan Brown](#) and [Kevin Maloney](#) thought they had a winner on their hands when they took their very first bite of an apple seedling that would eventually be named SnapDragon. Proof came earlier this year, when the apple won the outstanding cultivar award from the American Society for Horticultural Science.

About a decade after the release of what was then called NY1, SnapDragon has become one of the many success stories in the long history of [Cornell AgriTech](#), part of Cornell's [College of Agriculture and Life Sciences](#). The last two apple scion cultivars to receive the prestigious award were Empire (1987) and Jonagold (1988), both Cornell varieties developed in the 1940s.

“One grower said they had an NY1 apple from a test planting, and it was the best apple they had in their life,” said Brown, professor of horticulture at Cornell AgriTech. “When we started getting phone calls from growers asking what this apple was and saying how good it was, we knew we were onto something.”

“It’s just a really good apple,” added Maloney, a research support specialist. “If you talk to a lot of people, everybody likes a different type of apple. It depends on what they grew up on, but SnapDragon is a very refreshing, juicy, crispy apple.”

SnapDragon is a cross between Honeycrisp, a popular variety developed at the University of Minnesota, and an “advanced selection” known as NY752 from Cornell. The advanced selection is less susceptible to “bitter pit,” a disorder that affects Honeycrisp. Touted as “sweet with a snap,” by Brown and Maloney, SnapDragon boasts a spicy-sweet flavor with a hint of vanilla.

In addition to the cultivar award, SnapDragon was featured in the August/September issue of Allrecipes magazine. And SnapDragon is the official apple of the Buffalo Bills – the only official apple of a National Football League team.

“Today we have just over 1,000 acres in production in New York state with another 425 acres planned for the next three years,” said Jessica Wells, executive director of Crunch Time Apple Growers, a cooperative of more than 150 growers throughout New York. “Last season, SnapDragon was available in 43 states, a footprint which we expect to expand this year with the addition of a couple of new retailers.”



Outstanding cultivar medals from the American Horticultural Society were given to Brown and Maloney for

the Snapdragon apple.

Crunch Time is the domestic master licensee for SnapDragon, and Proprietary Variety Management is Cornell's master licensee for the apple internationally, where it is being commercialized in Australia, Argentina, Chile, greater Europe, New Zealand, Republic of South Africa, Republic of Korea and India.

Brown said SnapDragon's rise has been somewhat meteoric in an industry where it often takes decades for an apple variety to become commercially successful. She is quick to credit Maloney's work.

"We decided to really fast track this one because of how good the quality was," she said. "My program would not be the success it is without Kevin's efforts."

While the popularity of SnapDragon continues to soar, Brown and Maloney believe the future is also bright for RubyFrost, which Crunch Time calls the ultimate baking apple – plump and tart.

"RubyFrost has great resistance to browning and good levels of vitamin C. The more we looked at it, the more we said this is a good apple," Brown said. "It hasn't risen to the same level of SnapDragon, but some people in other countries are saying it's a dark horse they are willing to bet on."

Brown and Wells agree SnapDragon and RubyFrost are examples of the apple industry and Cornell coming together to produce two apples doing well in the competitive wholesale and retail markets.

"We are grateful for Dr. Susan Brown and her team's work in developing NY1 and NY2," Wells said. "The partnership between New York growers and Cornell University to bring NY1 and NY2 to market as SnapDragon and RubyFrost was well thought out and is proving to be beneficial to the long-term health of the New York apple industry."

Mike Hibbard is a freelance writer for Cornell AgriTech.