

The Great Outdoors

Celebrate the last warm days of the year with an *al fresco* meal—packed in a basket that takes care of the environment you're hoping to enjoy. Irish-born glassblower Simon Pearce and his company of designers and artisans have been Vermont fixtures since 1981. Their Willow Picnic Basket (\$295, including everything) is made from a renewable resource (that would be the willow) and is thoughtfully packed with plates (the Simon Pearce "Belmont" pattern in celadon), glasses ("Essex"), flatware ("Sutton"), and napkins—all of which will elevate any outing from ordinary to unforgettable. That's a good thing, because come January, you'll want to remember this day. — *Christie Matheson*



SIMON PEARCE

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➤ For Yankee's favorite picnic spots, go to: YankeeMagazine.com/10Things

THE SEASON'S BEST 5 APPLES

We asked Yankee's former food editor, Amy Traverso (whose book on cooking with apples will be published in 2009 by W.W. Norton), for her five favorites among the more than 40 varieties commonly available in New England.



MCINTOSH

Although native to Ontario, the Mac is the most popular apple variety in New England. Tender, tart flesh makes it a good match for apple-sauce, cider, and eating out of your hand.



CORTLAND

Sweeter and firmer than the Mac, its juicy flesh holds up to baking and is also slow to brown, making it a perfect choice for salads and other raw preparations.



ROXBURY RUSSET

Possibly the oldest American apple cultivar (mid-1600s), this Massachusetts native has firm flesh and a good balance of sugar and acid. Great for baking and a favorite among cider makers.



BALDWIN

Another Massachusetts native (dating to the mid-1700s), the Baldwin is a terrific all-purpose apple, with crisp, juicy flesh and a slightly spicy flavor.



R.I. GREENING

One of the best pie apples around, the Greening originated in Newport. Crisp and juicy, it's a pleasure to eat out of your hand, and its tart flavor makes a great foil for buttery pastry.

➤ For Yankee's best apple dessert recipes, go to: YankeeMagazine.com/10Things

PHOTOGRAPH BY HEATH ROBBINS, STYLING BY KELLY MCGUILL (BASKET); ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERICK INGRAHAM (APPLES)