



October 2021 Crunch Off Toolkit

**Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska,
North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming**

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What is the Mountain Plains Crunch Off?

In celebration of Farm to School Month, States throughout the Mountain Plains Region (CO, MT, MO, KS, NE, ND, SD, WY) are competing to see which State can get the most “crunches” into a local apple, or other local produce, per capita. Each State is designing its own event with its respective dates and times; please refer to State-specific resources provided upon your registration, for more details.

As a Crunch Off participant, you will join students, teachers, farmers, parents, community members, and local food enthusiasts in celebrating the wonderful produce the Mountain Plains Region has to offer. Your Crunch efforts will encourage healthy eating and support local agriculture while celebrating Farm to School Month and shedding light on the wonderful efforts of our school food service partners.



Steps to Get Started



Register! If you would like to host a Crunch event, register your event here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/79XXHNM>

You must register to be counted!



Create a Crunch Team! Find a group of individuals who are excited about Farm to School and local food. Consider including students, teachers, food service staff, administrators, the PTA, and community members to help you plan and promote your event.



Decide what you will crunch and where you will get it from! Please note each State has its own rules on what items count as “crunchable,” so if you would like to crunch something other than an apple, please refer to the State-specific resources provided upon registration, or reach out to the point of contact in your State, found at the end of this guide.



Create your Crunch plan! You may choose to have a school-wide Crunch in a large assembly, individual classrooms, during breakfast or lunch, with individuals at different locations all at the same time, or at some other time and place. Each State has its own rules (and guidance concerning Covid-19) on where and when Crunches can take place; please refer to the State-specific resources provided upon registration.



Promote your Crunch event! Share your event on social media, print media, school announcements, newsletters, etc. There are template press releases and social media posts at the end of this guide for your use.



How Can I Find Local Products?

- Look for local apples and produce via DoD Fresh, when applicable. DoD Fresh allows school districts to use their entitlement dollars to purchase fresh produce. See the [How to Utilize DoD Fresh to Purchase Local Produce](#) fact sheet for more information.
- Ask your distributor if they carry local apples or other local produce.
- Source apples and produce from a food hub.
- Find a local farmer or farmer's market.

Tips for Success

1. **Get as many people involved as you can!** Once you have decided on where your Crunch will take place, start to spread the word! Get students, parents, food service staff, teachers, administrators and community members excited about your Crunch through social media, newsletters, press releases, PTA announcements and any other way you typically interact with the community.
2. **Be conscious of waste!** For younger audiences, consider using apple slices or halves to reduce the amount of delicious local food that is wasted.
3. **Consider incorporating lessons!** Consider incorporating lessons on farming, soil, the water cycle, photosynthesis, or other relevant topics into the curriculum during the week or day of the Crunch. At schools, local produce can also be incorporated into the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), and the FFVP can serve as the Crunch event! All of this can help get students excited about trying local produce and get them interested in continuing to try local food at the conclusion of the event. There are sample learning activities below, in this guide, for your use.
4. **Consider a field trip!** Farm field trips are a great way to help students get excited about local produce, learn more about the food system, and have a successful Crunch! If a field trip isn't feasible, consider inviting farmers to school to speak at an assembly or conduct lessons in classrooms.
5. **Determine how much you plan to spend!** Remember that if you are spending less than the applicable micropurchase threshold, you do not need to obtain quotes to purchase your apples. If you are spending an amount between your small purchase and micropurchase thresholds, small purchase rules apply (obtain three quotes, and document them).
6. **Share your success!** Consider inviting local media or have a point person to capture the event to share on social media and other outlets.
7. **Be a great communicator!** Communicate early and clearly about when your Crunch is taking place, how people can participate, and why you are crunching.



Crunching During Covid

If your community isn't ripe for large gatherings of people this year, consider the following alternatives!

- Encourage kids/parents to crunch at home. Help them find local apples/produce and send home worksheets that they can complete.
- Consider a Zoom, Google Hangouts/Meet, or other technology platform for everyone to crunch together virtually, in a socially distanced manner; if possible, build this into kids' learning time.
- Encourage the submission and compilation of selfies, of everyone crunching simultaneously but separately.
- Use hashtags – such as #MountainPlainsCrunch -- to post and collect images from social media.
- Promote crunches in the classroom or in other small groups as allowed.



Resources

Crunch Time Activities

- Conduct taste tests with apple (or other produce) varieties.
- Host a cooking contest, class, or demo for apple recipes.
- Set up an apple themed photo booth for the Crunch event.
- Read apple themed books (see suggested reading list at the end of this guide).
- Ask students to describe verbally or in writing how an apple looks, feels, tastes, and smells.
- Ask students to write a story about an apple or reflect on the field trip to an orchard/farm.
- Ask students to count the seeds in an apple.
- Ask students to weigh and measure the circumference of an apple.
- Discuss the life cycle of an apple, how it grows, and photosynthesis.



- Put apple slices into cups with different liquids (water, soda, vinegar) and ask students to hypothesize what will happen in each experiment. Observe for a week and reflect on each hypothesis.

Learning Activities for Middle and High School

- [Apple Cider Lesson](#) from Edible School Yard
- [Food Miles Lesson](#) from Sustainable Schools Project
- [Youth Leadership Curriculum](#) from Institute for Ag and Trade Policy
- [Nourish for Life Curriculum](#) from Center for Ecoliteracy
- [National Agricultural Literacy Curriculum Matrix](#) from National Ag in the Classroom

Learning Activities for Pre-K and Elementary School

- [Preschool Apple Activities](#) from The Educators' Spin on It
- [25 Apple Themed Activities for Preschool](#) from Pre-K Pages
- [National Agricultural Literacy Curriculum Matrix](#) from National Ag in the Classroom
- [Farm Field Trip Guide](#) from Green Mountain Farm to School (VT)
- [Apples, Apples, Apples Lesson Plan](#) from Scholastic

Sample Announcement to Families for Remote Crunches

Dear Families,

This year _____ (school/center/organization) will be participating in the Apple Crunch on _____ (date). Given the challenges imposed by Covid-19, this year's will be a _____ (virtual/individual) Crunch.

We encourage you to review the sample lessons/complete the sample activities we have sent home. At _____ (time), all children are encouraged to crunch into their apple (or other local produce). Please send a picture of this crunch to us at _____ (contact information).

OR

At _____ (time) please have your child log into the his/her class's _____ (technology platform name) and have his/her apple ready. We will all conduct our Apple Crunch together as a group, virtually.

Sincerely,

_____ (Name)

Sample Photo Release (for any pictures taken)

School/Other Entity Name

CONSENT/RELEASE FORM

I consent to the sale, reproduction, and use, royalty-free, of motion picture films, video, recorded sounds, and still photography of me by the Entity Name for all purposes including, but not limited to, education, training, trade, display, editorial, advertising, promotion, art and exhibits.

In giving this consent, I release the Entity Name, its officers, employees, nominees, and designees from liability for any violation of any personal proprietary right I may have in connection with such sale, reproduction, and use.

I am more than 21 years of age.

Signature & Date

Address

City State Zip Code

Consent of Guardian

Minor Name _____

I am the parent and/or guardian of the minor named above, and have the legal authority to execute consent and release. I approve the foregoing and waive any rights to the above.

Signature & Date

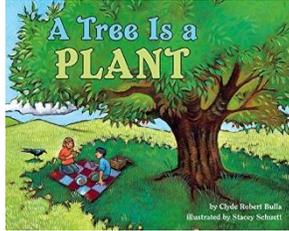
Recipes

- [Baked Apples](#)
- [Apple and Cheddar Whole Wheat Quesadilla](#)
- [Apple Pie Smoothie](#)
- [Apple Cake](#)
- [Apple Sauce](#)

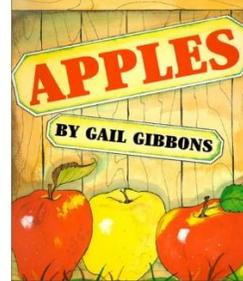


Suggested Reading

[A Tree is a Plant](#) by Clyde Robert Bulla



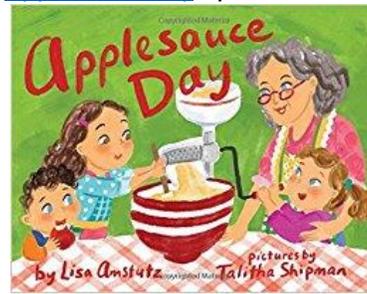
[Apples](#) by Gail Gibbons



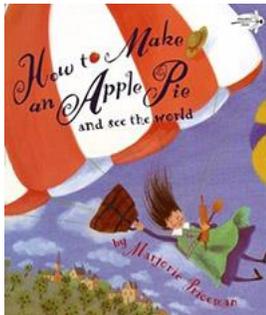
[The Seasons of Arnold's Apple Tree](#)
by Gail Gibbons



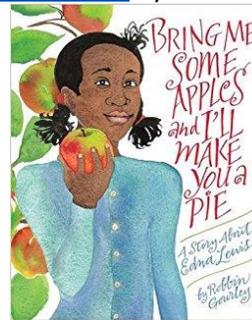
[Applesauce Day](#) by Lisa Amstutz



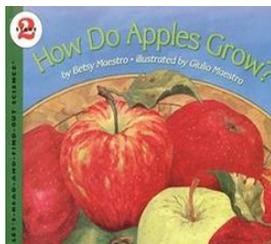
[How to Make an Apple Pie and See the World](#)
by Marjorie Priceman



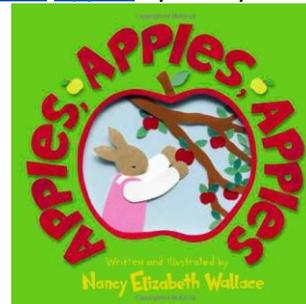
[Bring Me Some Apples and I'll Make You a Pie: A Story About Edna Lewis](#) by Robbin Gourley



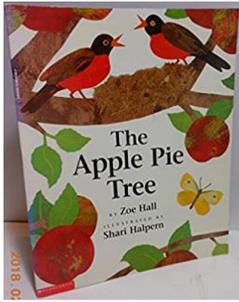
[How Do Apples Grow?](#) by Betsy Maestro



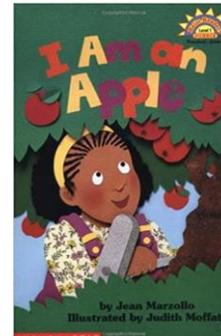
[Apples, Apples, Apples](#) by Nancy Elizabeth Wallace



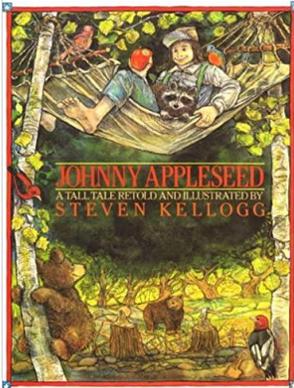
[The Apple Pie Tree](#) by Zoe Hall



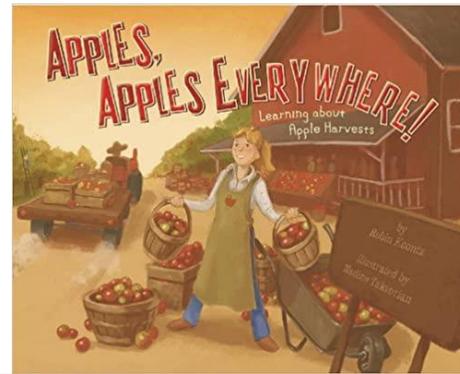
[I Am an Apple](#) by Jean Marzollo



[Johnny Appleseed](#) by Steven Kellogg



[Apples, Apples Everywhere!](#) by Robin Koontz



Contact information

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- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;*
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or*
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.*

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