



The apple's story begins on the ancient slopes of the Tien Shan, or 'Heavenly Mountains', bordering western China and modern-day Kazakhstan. Its ancestors grew wild in forests of fruit trees, a vast orchard that, legend has it, stretched in antiquity all the way to the Caspian Sea.

It was the Romans who introduced this sweet, luxury fruit to British shores – a welcome respite from our native, mouth-puckeringly tart crab apples. Crucially, they also brought expertise in the art of grafting. Without this age-old skill, every apple tree would be unique – each pip resulting in its own variety.

With the decline of the Roman Empire, however, apple cultivation in England fell into disarray. Yet the fruit was preserved in the orchards of monastic orders and, by the medieval period, two main varieties were established: the costard, and the pearmain, the earliest-recorded English apple name.

It wasn't until the 16th century, however, that we began to shake off a long-held suspicion of uncooked

fruit. During the reign of Henry VIII, raw fruit instead became associated with princely luxury, and in 1533, the king's fruiterer Richard Harris planted our first large fruit collection at Teynham in Kent. This sowed the seeds for the county's emergence as the Garden of England, bringing with it the introduction of new apples such as french pippins.

The true golden age of English apples dawned in the late 19th century, when landed estates competed to wow guests with new and superior varieties. London's National Apple Congress in 1883 attracted more than 1,500 varieties, and the national orchard acreage shot up by about 3,000 acres annually in the 1880s and '90s.

Few of the Victorians' favourites proved suitable for commercial success, however, and in the 20th century imports began to take over; between 1950 and 2000, some two-thirds of British orchards disappeared. It's only recently that our rich apple heritage has come back into its own, preserved by the National Fruit Collection at Brogdale Farm in Kent and increasingly by growers. There's never been a better time to take a bite...



Look out for essential Waitrose Weather Blemished Apples (£2/pack): not quite as pretty but just as sweet



**VARIETY:** Ribston pippin  
**WAITROSE GROWER:** Clive Baxter  
**COUNTY:** Kent  
 First grown around 1707 at Ribston Hall in Yorkshire, it's believed to be a parent of cox's orange pippin. The Victorians prized the ribston pippin's rich, aromatic flavour.



**VARIETY:** Blenheim orange  
**WAITROSE GROWER:** Jeremy Linsell  
**COUNTY:** Suffolk  
 Good with cheese and for cooking, this was late-19th-century Britain's best-loved apple. It was discovered around 1740 at Blenheim Park by a tailor, who moved it to his garden.



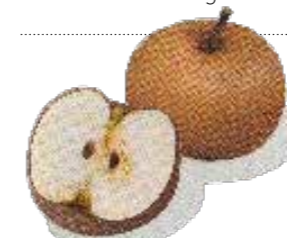
**VARIETY:** Bramley  
**WAITROSE GROWER:** John Portass  
**COUNTY:** Norfolk  
 The popular cooking apple originated in 1809 in Nottinghamshire from pips planted by a young girl called Mary Ann Brailsford. Her tree is still standing.



**VARIETY:** Cox  
**WAITROSE GROWER:** Andrew Lazenby  
**COUNTY:** Hampshire  
 The Waitrose cox is a variant or 'sport' of cox's orange pippin, arguably England's most famous variety and first grown around 1825 in Buckinghamshire by retired brewer Richard Cox.



**VARIETY:** Worcester pearmain  
**WAITROSE GROWER:** Paul Mansfield  
**COUNTY:** Kent  
 Bright and strawberry-scented, this was the favoured early-autumn variety in the late 1800s. It originated in a market garden in Worcestershire.



**VARIETY:** Egremonst russet  
**WAITROSE GROWER:** Jake and Rupert Simpson  
**COUNTY:** Herefordshire  
 A nutty variety that was first recorded in 1872. It probably arose on Lord Egremonst's Petworth estate in Sussex - his fruit gardens were renowned.



**VARIETY:** William crump  
**WAITROSE GROWER:** Clive Baxter  
**COUNTY:** Kent  
 This intense, aromatic, apple received an RHS Award of Merit in 1908. William Crump was the head gardener at Madresfield Court Estate in Worcestershire.



**VARIETY:** Suffolk pink  
**WAITROSE GROWER:** Jeremy Linsell  
**COUNTY:** Suffolk  
 Jeremy is the only grower in the world with this recently discovered variety. Exclusive to Waitrose, it is crisp, refreshing and balanced.

# ENGLISH TO THE CORE

Apples have grown on these shores since Roman times – with all their variety and versatility, this humble fruit is an everyday hero

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