HILLTOP™

Issue #21 Fall 2021/Winter 2022

P.26 **Full EFI Certification**

P.6 **How To: Merchandise Organic Apples**

Stemilt®
World Famous Fruit

Stemilt ARTISAN organics®
Delight with Quality

CONTENTS

2 Message from the President

26 Full EFI Certification

6 How To: Merchandise Organic Apples

ORCHARD

4 Highway 28

18 Easy As 1, 2, 3? Not Quite

38 From Our World

CULTURE

2 Message from the President

8 Stemilt's Cultural Norms

10 In The Mind Of *Todd George*

14 Familiar Face *Amanda Vargas*

22 New Face *Kyle Farmer*

SUSTAINABILITY

26 People *A Dream Come True*

FRUIT

6 How To: Merchandise Organic Apples

12 The Apple Awards

20 World Famous Pear Journey

30 Crunch Circle: *How Apples Give You Energy*

32 Four Famous Finds *4 Fall Must Have Items*

36 Redheads Have More Fun *Red d'Anjou Pears*

35 Fruit Q's

36 Recipe *The Best Ever Apple Bread*

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

CULTURE

By: West Mathison

This is my fourth "Message from the President" article since the pandemic started in early 2020. When I wrote the last one in the spring, it appeared as though things were turning around. Cherry season was on the horizon, projections were optimistic, and the feeling of normalcy was close...

Life sure does have a funny way of throwing change at you, doesn't it? If the pandemic has taught me anything, it has taught me how to respond and react to change in a positive manner since change is truly out of our control.

When the cherry season started, the year was trending positively. Projections were coming in high; weather was cooperative and quality starting in our California orchards was some of the best we had seen in years. Then summer started in Washington State and the heat came and overstayed its welcome. With triple digit temperatures for nearly ten days in a row, cherry quality declined, and the wind picked up, leaving our teams scrambling on how to preserve World Famous quality and flavor in the most uncontrollable conditions.

2021 was supposed to be a good year, right?

Even though heat altered our crop outcomes, we've had successful moments, especially with how our teams handled overpowering situations. A few moments stand out to me...how our team throughout the supply chain worked together to deliver World Famous cherries that delighted consumers, despite size challenges. Our field teams at our Mattawa and Capstone ranches installing hundreds of acres of new overhead fogging to create better size distribution, less sunburn, and improve quality of modern varieties, like Honeycrisp and Cosmic Crisp®. We also achieved full Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) certification throughout our entire company-owned ranches and warehouses, being the first apple, pear, and cherry grower to do so!

This year, we expanded volume of Rave® and Cosmic Crisp® apples. We have watched both varieties delight consumers and are excited to watch the growth of the category as supply increases.

Another area we are focusing on is cultural development. Part of Stemilt's existence is to cultivate people, and that means creating an environment to live out our values and cultural norms. To see that through, we created a new position called the Vice President of Human Capital. We found an extraordinary candidate who started with us in the late summer and will be working towards creating an even more engaging workplace that helps us find and train our future leaders of Stemilt.

While the year hasn't been all we hoped it would be, I am in awe of the Stemilt team and how they have been able to adapt to change. They are World Famous!

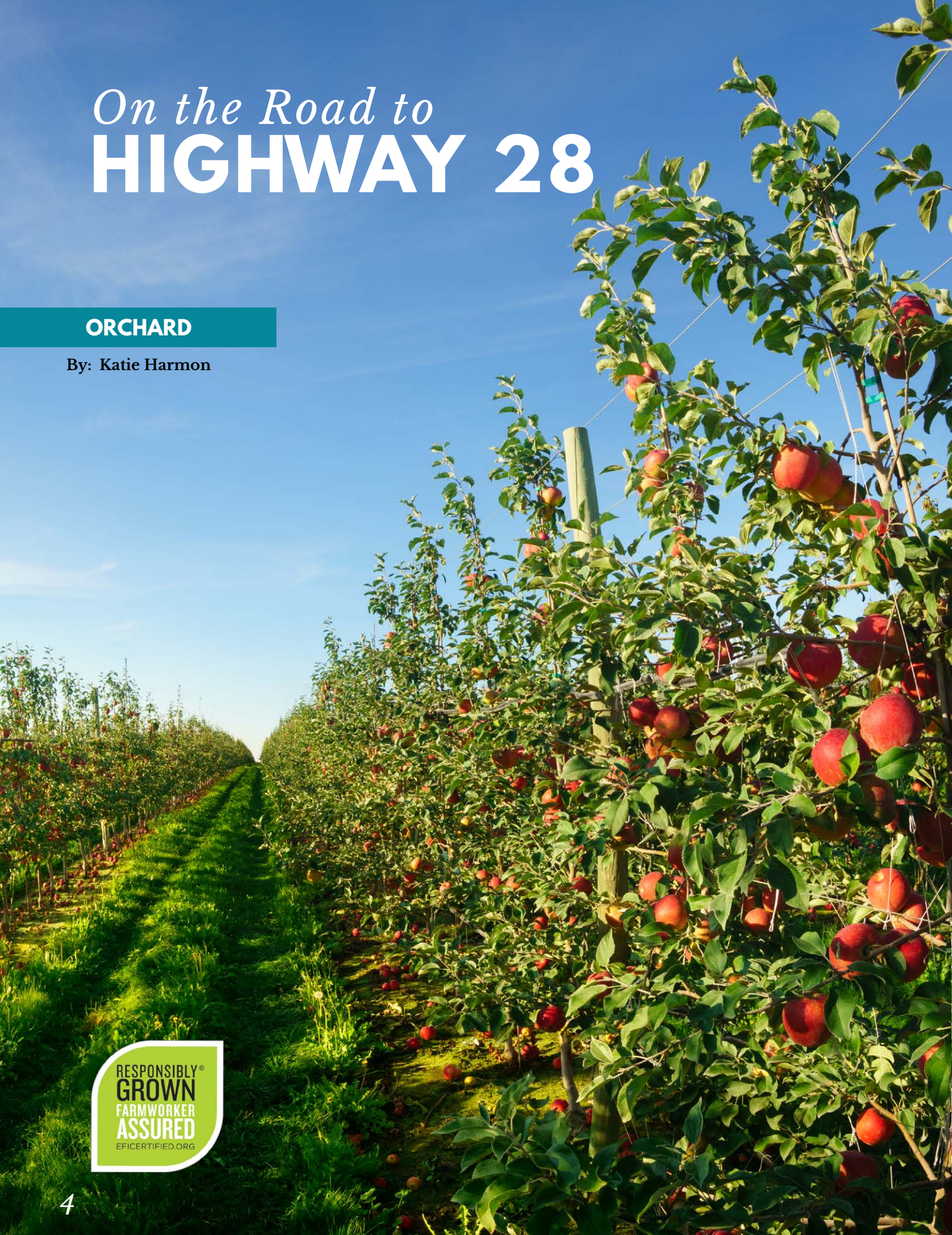
While I hope to say that this will be the last "Message from the President" article written during the pandemic, I will end with this instead: stay healthy my friends. Change is inevitable, but our reaction to that change is always in our control.

Onward,

On the Road to HIGHWAY 28

ORCHARD

By: Katie Harmon



The What:

Highway 28 is a Stemilt owned Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) certified orchard that is home to over 250 acres of organic apples and nearly 90 acres of conventional apples. The high-density Highway 28 ranch has been a centerpiece of Stemilt's orchard operations for almost two decades. It's located near Quincy, Washington, a region known for warm, summer days, cold winters and silt-like soil which helps the team manage water and nutrient intake so they can produce World Famous Fruit.

The When:

Highway 28 starts its long apple harvest season in mid-August with Minneiska apples, which you'll know by the brand name, SweeTango®. Harvest continues at Highway 28 until the end of October with the Aztec Fuji apple. This makes it one of the last orchards to harvest at Stemilt!

The How:

Highway 28 has been one of Stemilt's most successful growing regions thanks to its location, soil type, and weather patterns. Warm, sunny temperatures in the summer help the fruit achieve high sugars levels. The cool nights that precede allow the fruit to grow large and achieve brilliant color. Highway 28 could easily be considered every grower's perfect micro-climate.

Organic Apple Varieties:

- Aztec Fuji
- Gala
- Honeycrisp
- SweeTango®

Conventional Apple Varieties:

- Gala
- Honeycrisp
- Cosmic Crisp®
- Test Blocks, including Red Flesh

Fun Facts:

This orchard was named by Stemilt founder, Tom Mathison, so he knew exactly where the orchard was located.

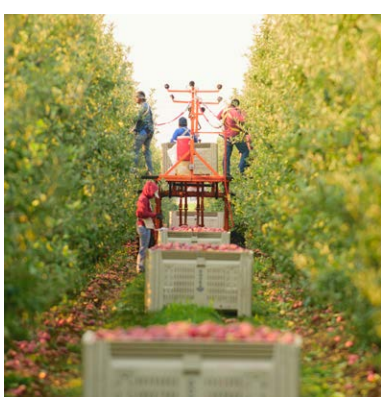
It is the first orchard Stemilt tested harvesting from platforms (instead of ladders) on.

It is organized by variety to improve daily farm work efficiencies and decrease movement. Harvesting and orchard maintenance is methodical and structured.

Highway 28 was Stemilt's first orchard to receive H2A worker housing.

It sits at an elevation of 1,368 feet above sea level.

If you lined up apples one by one, it would take 60,426,432 to get from one end to another of this ranch.



FRUIT

By: Katie Harmon

HOW TO: MERCHANDISE ORGANIC APPLES

Organic used to be a specialty category with limited availability and flavor. Today, it has a home of its own in produce departments across the country. Learn how to merchandise organic apples from Stemilt marketing director, Brianna Shales, and watch your category shine.

1 Carry the Right Mix

When merchandising organic apples, it's best to carry the right mix of apple varieties that fit with your organic consumer's flavor wants. Brianna Shales, Stemilt marketing director explains: "the organic shopper is someone who likely has more disposable income, or they are buying for the whole family and willing to do so at a premium price. The organic shopper has a bigger basket for produce items. Offer a wide variety of flavors so they feel they have options." As a retailer, it is crucial to provide the same great experience to the organic consumer that you do with the conventional consumer. Providing premium quality varieties that offer modern flavors that delight consumers will help you do that.

2 Applying the 4 P's to Organic Apples

For product, it is important that retailers offer mainline varieties – Fuji, Gala, and Honeycrisp. "Product mix should grow at key parts of the year, especially when a limited-time variety is available," says Shales. "But with today's technology, retailers can carry and promote core organic apples all year long, so it is important to do so.

When it comes to price, organic typically trends higher than it does for its conventional counterpart, Shales explains, and should fit in line with the retailer's overall pricing strategy for produce.

Placement of organic varieties is crucial if retailers are looking to increase their organic movement. "An organic display complete with signage to educate the consumer on flavor characteristics, who grows the product, and ways to use each variety will create success," explains Shales.

Retailers should create promotions around 3-5 bulk organic apples, but also include organic packaging options in these or standalone promotions. Organic shoppers have shifted to packaging for organic apples since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Bags are a great everyday item for organics but also can serve as an in-and-out. "With the pandemic, bag movement grew quickly as consumers were seeking a no-touch option," explains Shales. "By offering 3lb. or 5lb. bag options, organic consumers will be more inclined to stock up on mainline varieties in bigger purchase sizes resulting in higher volume movement."

3 The Seasons Matter

Organic promotion is crucial to highlight throughout the various seasons. There is opportunity to place an emphasis on organic apples starting in October to get ads scheduled and build big, prominent displays. Consistent organic apple promotions should happen following a big October and run through the fall and winter months. Another opportunity lies in the spring months around Earth Day in April. Organics have grown in sales, so having consistent promotions with a multi-variety ad in place will make a bigger impact.

4 World Famous Quality

"Consumers don't want to get burned, so it is important to carry products with high quality and flavor," explains Shales. "Stemilt's Artisan Organics™ brand offers both along with a great line up of organic varieties available with near year round availability. Be consistent, create a promotion plan and use Stemilt's Artisan Organics™ brand story to watch your organic category be successful."

Stemilt ARTISAN organics®

By: Katie Harmon

STEMILT'S CULTURAL NORMS

I sat down with Stemilt president, West Mathison, to discuss Stemilt's cultural norms and why he feels they help the company tick.

Building a foundation to support a company's future is not an easy task. Stemilt's executive team, led by president West Mathison, wanted to identify Stemilt's cultural norms by asking themselves: "how do we want people to function and behave within the company?" Acting as pillars to Stemilt's purpose, "to cultivate people and delight consumers through excellence," these cultural norms will not only contribute to business success, but overall organizational health. They are a crucial part in building a World Famous business. They are:

Assume Goodwill - We listen to both sides of the story before we make a negative judgement

Personal Accountability - We attempt to see how each of us be a part of solving or finding a solution

Humble Confidence - We have a voice to humbly discuss what is good and what can improve

Clear Communications - We don't gossip and always look to quickly... resolve conflict

Quickly Resolve Conflict - Address the issue within 24 hours after acknowledging the problem

"It took us about three years before we even talked about them much," explains Mathison. "We wanted to work them in slowly and see how people responded. We wordsmithed them, altered them, and then were able to finalize them to what we saw fit with the company we sought out to be."

Mathison said the team landed on these five because each norm could contribute to the environment that Stemilt is building and seeking to sustain.

"These norms set a path forward and help our employees understand what is expected of them when they come to work every day," Mathison said. "If these cultural norms are defined and lived by, we will build a team who can fulfill Stemilt's purpose and deliver World Famous Fruit."

Mathison believes that these cultural norms will not only help the company grow, but also help the personal growth of Stemilt employees. From learning how to quickly resolve conflict to working towards finding a better solution for the problem at hand, each norm can teach an individual how to work within a team – whether it's their family or their work family.

"Defining these cultural norms helps company growth for years to come," explains Mathison. "Not only will they help us with succession planning, business decisions, and building an irreplaceable team, but they help all of us become who we truly are meant to be: World Famous. Because it's not a destination, but a journey."

> **"If these cultural norms are defined and lived by, we will build a team who can fulfill Stemilt's purpose and deliver World Famous Fruit."**
>
> *West Mathison*
> President

Stemilt
World Famous Fruit
USA
HONEYCRISP
3283
4133
USA
GALA
Delight with Flavor

CULTURE

By: Katie Harmon

IN THE MIND OF *Todd George*

Vice President of Production, Todd George, is one of Stemilt's most intuitive leaders. With the largest group within the company under his wing, Todd's compassion, knowledge, and overall demeanor has allowed him to lead Stemilt's production area to success. Todd sat down to discuss his outlook on obstacles, his motivations and what his dream job would be (it will surprise you).

Leadership:

I like to lead in a collaborative way where I feel that I am part of my team providing leadership and direction, but also offering support to help my team members be successful. I want to help them navigate roadblocks so they can improve their group and their department, but also on individual levels. I try to lead through awareness. I want to know everyone's job, so if I needed to, I could step in. I may not do it as well as them or know it as intimately, but I could provide support in that way. I also believe compassion is an important aspect to have as a leader. Everyone faces challenges in their jobs so being compassionate and trying to help them overcome those challenges is crucial in creating a strong team.

Obstacles:

I have learned over time that you need to understand the whole story because what you might think is an obvious solution is not. When approaching an obstacle, I first listen to what is going on. Then I ask probing questions to learn more. Once I understand the whole problem, I work to identify a short-term solution to get the issue fixed quickly then I work to find a long-term solution to achieve a substantial resolution that identifies who owns it, establish a process, and how to report on it. I listened to a podcast and one of the sayings on it was this: don't view an obstacle as something negative. Approach it as an opportunity to fix it and never face it again.

Mentors:

A mentor to me is somebody that I value and has a wholistic approach to life. I admire those who can be well balanced, both at work and in their personal lives. My father-in-law is someone I consider a mentor. He is in his mid-80s and has been very successful in life with his family, his marriage, and his career. He inspires me to be better. Other mentors who have inspired me were the last generation, the Tom Mathison generation, who built the industry. The Wades, the Paulys, the McDougalls, and the Thomas's have all played part in building amazing entities that have contributed to the success of the tree fruit industry today.

Motivation:

What motivates me is when everything comes together. When the fruit comes in from the orchard, it's received, taken care of out on the line, trucks go out on time – all that coordination I find enjoyable. There are a lot of moving parts and trap doors that can easily put a kink in the process and being able to be part of the coordination and have good results for us, the growers, and the customers is what motivates me. Another motivator for me is helping our internal team achieve results. If we can remove obstacles and learn how to get better, it makes people feel good about their jobs.

Do Differently:

I don't really think that way, so there really isn't anything I would do differently in my career. If I had to choose anything, I would have come to Stemilt and started working here sooner than 20 years ago. It's been a good ride so far.

Advice:

I always tell people that they should have drive or a passion for what they are wanting to do. I don't think people will find success if they just grind through something because they think they need to. This advice is also applicable to things outside of work. It's important to find things that you really enjoy doing and then stick with them.

Dream Job in Alternate Universe:

I have always been fascinated by the court system. Whenever I am at the courthouse, I like to listen in and see what is happening, so if I had a dream job in an alternate universe, I would love to be a court judge.

By: Katie Harmon

THE APPLE AWARDS

Remember when you were voted "Class Clown" or "Most Likely To Succeed" in your high school year book? Well, we took these life-changing superlatives and brought them into our world to rate some of favorite apples. Wondering who we think our "Loudest" fruit is? What about the fruit with the "Most Upbeat Attitude?" Keep on reading to see which varieties won!

"Most Liked by Parents"

Lil Snappers® Fuji Apples

Why: Lil Snappers® kid size fruit is a hit among parent consumers thanks to the smaller size that fit perfectly into little hands. And of course, the Fuji variety takes the gold here thanks to its sugary-sweet flavor profile and crunchy, crisp bite. It really is like eating candy.

Seasonality: Year-round

"Most Likely To Brighten Your Day"

Golden Delicious Apples

Why: With its gorgeous, captivating golden-hued skin and subtle sweet bite, the Golden Delicious apple will surely bring a little light into your life. You can cook, bake, or snack with Golden Delicious. It makes a wide array of consumers happy, leaving them feeling delighted and satisfied.

Seasonality: Year-round

"Most Upbeat Attitude"

Rave® Apples

Why: Rave® is outrageously juicy with a refreshing, snappy zing and one you just can't stop raving about! As an offspring to the famous Honeycrisp, Rave® is ready to kick off the apple season by offering consumers a premium, juicy crunchy bite but much earlier! Its bright, fuchsia coloring and sweet-tart profile make Rave® an obvious choice for this award.

Seasonality: August – October

"Most Likely to Succeed"

Cosmic Crisp® Apples

Why: Cosmic Crisp®'s driven attitude to expand in volume and delight consumers around the country is why this apple was voted "Most Likely to Succeed." With the perfect flavor and texture balance, long storage capabilities, and natural resistance to browning, this apple has already found a permanent spot in the category and will be sure to find a home in millions of consumer's refrigerators in the years to come.

Seasonality: November – June

"The Loudest"

SweeTango® Apples

Why: With a sweet-tangy flavor profile, SweeTango® was voted loudest thanks to its super loud crunch. In fact, it has the loudest crunch on earth – yes, seriously. It has larger cells than most other apples making for a very audible but very juicy bite that will have you coming back for more and more... and more. SweeTango® is the epitome of fall apples thanks to its fall spices, vibrant acidity, and amazing eating experience. Hungry yet?

Seasonality: August - November

"Teacher's Pet"

Red Delicious

Why: Red Delicious's everlasting presence in the category makes it an obvious choice for Teacher's Pet. Setting the expectation bar early for the apple category, Red Delicious' crimson color, ability to withstand all sorts of conditions and simple, yet tasty flavor profile is what many people think of when it comes to this produce item.

Seasonality: Year-round

"Most Likely to Become Famous"

Honeycrisp

Why: Wait a second, this apple is already famous.... Honeycrisp was the apple category game changer many years ago, now with multiple successors following its footsteps. With its famously sweet, honey-like flavor and uber juicy bite, Honeycrisp has set expectations high. This apple will be signing off on its star at the Hollywood Walk of Fame before we know it.

Seasonality: Year-round

FAMILIAR FACE

CULTURE

By: Katie Harmon

Full of brains, optimism and a contagious smile, Stemilt's Supply Chain Analyst and Special Projects Lead, Amanda Vargas, certainly knows her stuff. Amanda sits down to discuss her journey from starting as a temporary employee to today, where she is constantly striving to improve Stemilt's production department one piece of World Famous fruit at a time.

Amanda Vargas

Tell us how you ended up at Stemilt.

I started at Stemilt in 2007 working on the Rainier cherry line at the Miller Street facility as a temporary employee. I was working nights so I could attend classes at Wenatchee Valley College during the day to earn my Associates of Arts degree. After cherries ended, I was hired full time where I worked in pre-size during the night shift while I continued to pursue my degree. I worked under Janet Aguilar (Stemilt's current Retail Store Manager) and she was the first one who told me that I had real talent. Under her, I worked various jobs and learned the many facets production had to offer. From driving to forklifts to filling in at repack and other areas, I was able to build a foundation of knowledge that helps me in my current role today. In 2010, I had my first son. I took a break from school and realized I need to shift my work-life balance, so I moved into the shipping department as a rotator clerk. I began working under Paul Esvelt, who

was the logistics specialist at the time, and he became my first professional mentor. I went back to school and graduated and wasn't clear on what I would do for a career but knew what I had been doing was interesting and that I enjoyed it. Paul was inspiring and helped me identify what I wanted to be. I eventually started training other employees and taking on random projects within shipping. Paul left to head to our partners, Douglas Fruit, which was around the same time we started on the new Fresh Cube Distribution Center project. Our Information Technology team recruited me when that project began. After that was complete, I realized that IT just wasn't for me, and that's how I found myself in the production group today.

What is your current position and what does that entail?

Today, I am Stemilt's supply chain analyst and special projects lead. I focus on a variety of production areas, like creating and analyzing reports and working on repack and aged inventory. I am also involved with several internal team projects that Stemilt is working on, where there is a lot of collaboration and meetings. Every day is different. It's fast paced, busy and I am constantly interacting with people. I enjoy it all!

Why do you like your job?

I enjoy the diversity of my job. I rarely get bored with it. I work with a wide array of people and I learn so many different aspects of the company and the broader industry. I have such a passion for learning, so being able to interact and have cross-departmental work has really contributed to my love for my job.

What are some things that make it harder to like?

The biggest challenge I face is time management and prioritization. If only I could have more time at work during the day and then more time at home too, it would be much easier!

What's the best piece of advice that you like to live by?

I am constantly striving to better myself and my family. Whether it's my personal life and ensuring I am providing what my family needs or in my professional life, I believe I can always be better. Paul Esvelt taught me this saying that I still think of today: "expect what you accept." Basically, if you are willing to accept whatever it is then it will continue to be at that level. I use that with my kids a lot and here at work. I also always try to be positive and have an optimistic outlook at life.

"I have such a passion for learning, so being able to interact and have cross-departmental work has really contributed to my love for my job."

Amanda Vargas
Supply Chain Analyst & Special Projects

Can you tell us a little bit more about your family and what you like to do outside of your work?

All my hobbies outside of work involve my children! I have two boys, an 11-year-old and 3-year-old, and a 5-year-old daughter. Those three keep my husband and I busy, but we are constantly striving to introduce them to new things and stay active. We like going to parks, camping, riding bikes, hanging out in our cul-de-sac. I am trying something new and coaching my daughter's soccer team which has been fun. We took my oldest white water rafting for the first time this summer. It's important to me that we are involved parents that provide new and exciting experiences for them. When I do have time for a little self-care (which is rare), I am a really big fan of reading or following the real estate market. I also like to go to the gym or I meet with a bunch of ladies and we play the dice game, Bunco. Life is constantly busy and fun!

Who is a mentor of yours?

Like I mentioned earlier, Paul Esvelt has been a mentor to me. He really opened my eyes. He was able to take on everything and show me that it was possible, and I am grateful for that.

Todd George is another mentor that I really look up to. He is extremely intelligent and has this analytical mindset. He will randomly spit out facts that I just don't believe. So, I fact check and he is always right. It's incredible. I also admire his leadership style. He stays super calm and collected so I often find myself asking him for advice about both my professional and personal life.

Dennis Howell (past Director of Planning) and Darcey Dahl (Stemilt Functional Analyst in our IT department) are also people I admire. They think differently and they have challenged me to do the same quite often.

What is your favorite Stemilt fruit?

A good ripe summer pear is my absolute favorite. They are just so juicy and sweet. A close second would be the Cosmic Crisp® apple.

LIGHTNING ROUND

Old or Current Nickname:
My grandpa used to call me "Red"

Morning Bird or Night Owl:
Night Owl

Current Binge-Worthy Show:
Grey's Anatomy

Sweet or Salty?
Sweet

Rave® or SweeTango® Apple?
Rave®

Could have dinner with anyone, dead or alive:
Tom Mathison

Bucket List Adventure Item:
A hot air balloon ride

ORCHARD

By: Katie Harmon

EASY AS 1, 2, 3? NOT QUITE.

How Stemilt Plants an Apple Orchard

Some may think that planting an apple orchard is as easy as counting to 1,2,3... but believe it or not, planting a new orchard is years in the making.

"Planting an orchard is a calculated, well-thought-out process that requires an immense amount of planning and strategy for it to be successful," explains Robin Graham, Stemilt Ag Services (SAS) General Manager. "As much as we would like to be able to just start buying trees and putting them in the ground, there are many steps we must take before we even start digging."

Before the Stemilt team is even "scratching dirt," they first must determine what variety is needed and where it will be planted. Once those two points are identified, they can start getting to work. Often, the planning of a new orchard starts in the winter, simply because it is the quietest time of the year.

"The winter months are great for our teams because they allow us to strategize and determine our approach for the upcoming season," states Graham. "When we know we are going to plant after the first frost, we can do a lot of the prep work ahead of time to ensure we are maximizing our team's time."

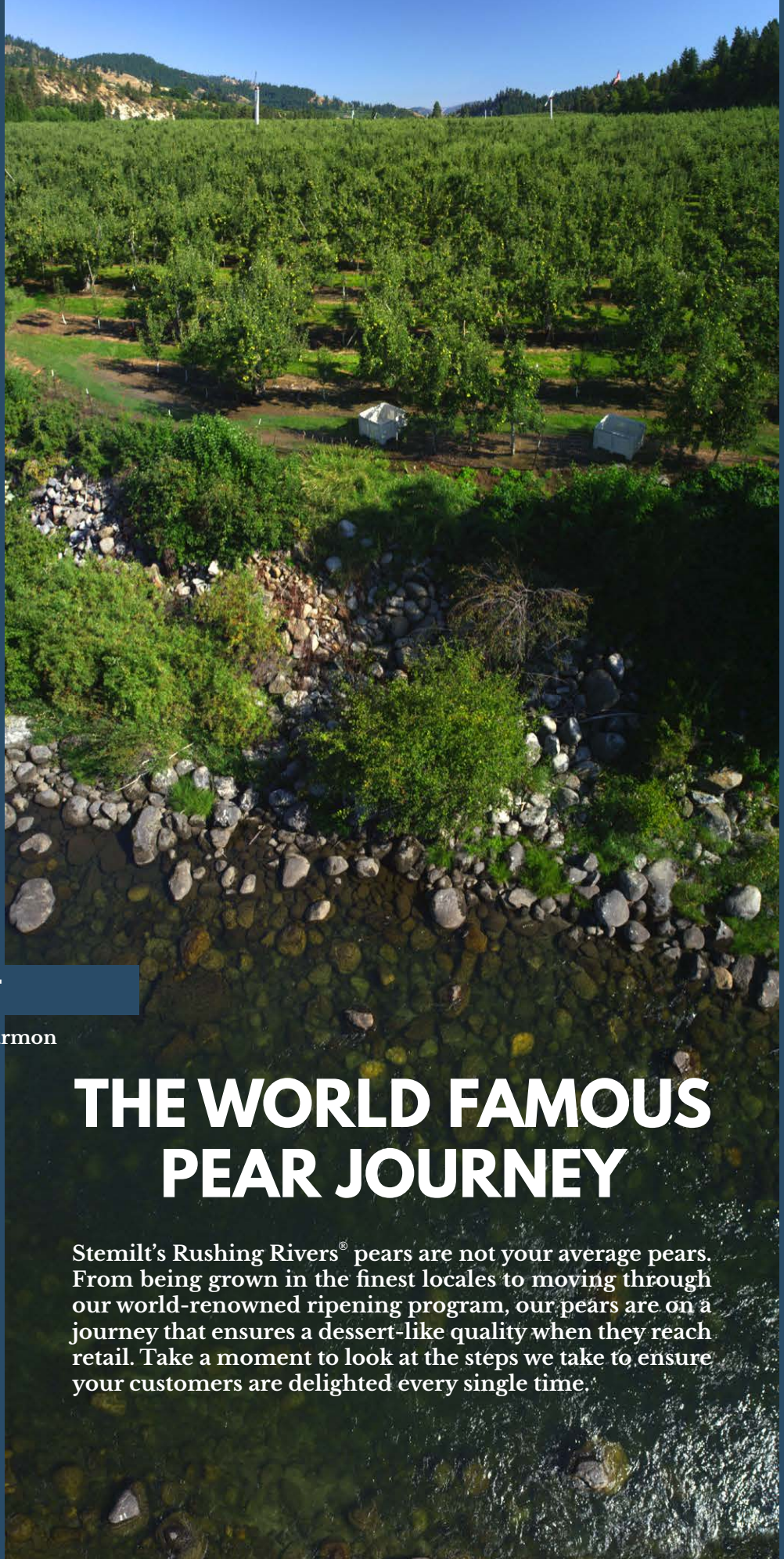
While planting the trees doesn't start until early spring, the prep work beforehand is crucial to ensure success. First, the teams map out orchard rows with a tractor powered by GPS technology to ensure accurate locations for every post and every tree. Next, the ground is softened where the tree will eventually be planted. The irrigation system is built out entirely, beginning with trenching and ending with a finished main line and sprinklers that can be placed at different levels of the tree depending on water needs. A machine will dig post holes for crews to easily install posts and bring the trellis system (which is either vertical or v-shaped) up quickly. Crews run wires from each post and tension those properly to complete the trellis system.

"The amount of prep work it takes to get ready for an orchard planting is quite a bit, but our teams do an incredible job making it happen and seeing it through to the end," explains Graham. "Once the prep work is done, we wait until the weather is warm enough to start planting."

As the weather warms and the threat of frost decreases, it's time to plant the trees! Not only is it important to wait until the weather is warm so the trees can avoid frost damage, but the orchard also needs water from the irrigation system which is turned off during the cold winter months. The irrigation system that waters farms throughout the Columbia Basin in Washington state is drained in the late fall to avoid freezing and damaging pipes and filled back up again in the early spring. Once the weather is warm, the planting and irrigating begins. Because of the prep work already completed a couple of months in advance, crews can plant thousands of trees in less than three days – talk about efficient!

"Planting an orchard is no easy feat, yet our teams deliver on World Famous consistency every time," explains Graham. "Once the trees are in the ground and you start watching another orchard come to life, it's easy to get excited knowing that more World Famous Fruit is only a few years away from delighting consumers all over the world."

> **"Once the trees are in the ground and you start watching another orchard come to life, it's easy to get excited knowing that more World Famous Fruit is only a few years away from delighting consumers all over the world."**
>
> *Robin Graham*
> General Manager, Ag Services



FRUIT

By: Katie Harmon

THE WORLD FAMOUS PEAR JOURNEY

Stemilt's Rushing Rivers® pears are not your average pears. From being grown in the finest locales to moving through our world-renowned ripening program, our pears are on a journey that ensures a dessert-like quality when they reach retail. Take a moment to look at the steps we take to ensure your customers are delighted every single time.

1. Locale + Farmers

Our pears are grown in the best locales in the world. Surrounded by alpine peaks and planted in nutrient rich volcanic soil, this is where pears thrive. The Wenatchee and Entiat river valleys are considered a microclimate of sorts, thanks to the mountains that trap cool air during the warm summer months. Our pears are tended by the most experienced pear growers in the industry, resulting in great sizes, excellent qualities, and dessert flavors.

2. Storing

After pears are harvested, they are transported down to our facilities to be stored, packed, and shipped. Depending on variety and storability, pears move through a series of small steps that ensure quality. Tunnel rooms, methodical stacking pallet structure, and state-of-the-art ripening rooms influence both quality and flavor. Our production teams cater to each pear lot to provide the right post-harvest touchpoints to fruit so that it leaves our facilities in great condition to drive retail sales and delight consumers.

3. Packing

Our pears are packed and shipped based on customer demand and forecasted supply. No anti-ripening agents are applied (and haven't been used since 2018) and they move through the packing cycle that has been tried and proven by our R&D team, the best in the industry.

4. Unbelievable Flavor

When our pears hit your store shelves, consumers will be able to pick up a pear with confidence knowing they are getting dessert flavor quality. And guess what? Great flavored pears lead to happy consumers, more sales, and contented retailers. That's the Rushing Rivers® pear difference.

NEW FACE

CULTURE

By: Katie Harmon

Food Safety is not an easy area to dive into, but the challenges haven't stopped food safety manager, Kyle Farmer, from leading a World Famous program at Stemilt. With a passion for creating a culture of food safety, Kyle talks about his job, what makes him tick, and the advice he likes to live by.

Kyle Farmer

Tell us how you ended up at Stemilt.

I graduated from the University of Idaho in 2007, where I got an English degree and minored in environmental studies. I always had an interest in natural sciences and knew I wanted to pursue something in that realm. I worked some odd jobs right out of school but was able to put my natural sciences passion to action when I got a job at McDougall & Sons as their food safety manager. I worked there for five years when I saw the food safety manager position open at Stemilt. Stemilt is known for being a leader in all things tree fruit, so I was excited to learn they were hiring. I had known the previous food safety manager, Eva Lauve, through workshops so I was able to reach out to her. I interviewed for the position and was lucky enough to get it! I have been at Stemilt for almost four years now.

What is your current position and what does that entail on a day-to-day basis?

Stemilt has a commitment to deliver consistently safe quality product that is in line with our retail partners. Each day in food safety, we conduct microbiological testing and analysis, risk assessment, training, and work closely with supervisors to ensure they are educated on the most current food safety practices. I also work closely with a lot of other departments on customer relations and retailers looking for more information on certificates.

Why do you like your job?

I love knowing that what we are doing is contributing to the reason people look to buy Stemilt's product. Consumers and retailers know they can buy our fruit with confidence. It is high quality, premium World Famous Fruit. I also really enjoy working with people. I have an awesome team. We all bring special skillsets to the table which helps us all do our jobs well, which means there is a lot of trust.

What are some things that make your job harder to like?

There are many rules and regulations that are in place within the food safety industry that can make it challenging. It is something you always must be mindful of to decrease your chance of mistakes. When something does go wrong, people get frustrated, so it's learning how to work with those people to ensure we don't make the same mistake twice. Food safety is a high demand department, so it is important we work together as team so we don't feel burned out, or get disconnected from one another.

> **"If I can explain the things we are doing and why we are doing them, people are more inclined to comply and follow than to question or just not do it."**
>
> *Kyle Farmer*
> Food Safety Manager

Advice you like to live by:

One piece of advice I like to live by is this: "clearness is kindness." I really like to live by this motto because there is so much truth to it, especially in my job. If I can explain the things we are doing and why we are doing them, people are more inclined to comply and follow than to question or just not do it.

Another piece of advice I like to live by is that "a humble heart goes a long way." This stems from my pastor. I am an energetic person and sometimes when I approach things, I'm not thinking, and people can misinterpret what I am trying to do. No one likes to be told what to do, so approaching people humbly with the purpose of clarity will increase the likelihood that working together will go smoothly.

Tell us about your family and what you like to do outside of work?

I have been married to my wife, Kaitlyn, for 10 years this past summer. We have three kids: Lewis (9), Charlotte (6), Isla (3). We are really involved at our local church. I play the drums there actually. We also like spending time outside and being on the water when we can. We paddleboard and go swimming. The kids are extremely busy so that takes up a lot of our time.

Who is a mentor to you?

A mentor that I really look up to is our church's head pastor, Mike Wilson. He has been in my corner the last several years, especially when I was transitioning into this job. He is always willing to offer a piece of sage advice that has helped me improve my leadership skills and be able to approach different behaviors. Before I came to Stemilt, I was working alone, so I have really had to work on becoming the best leader I can be to lead my team to success.

Favorite Stemilt Fruit.

I am a huge fan of Skylar Rae® brand cherries. They truly are the sweetest cherry you'll ever eat®.

LIGHTNING ROUND

Old or Current Nickname:
Farmer

Morning Bird or Night Owl:
Night Owl

Current Binge Worthy Show:
The Chosen. It's on its own app – very good watch.

Sweet or Salty?
Salty

Rave® or SweeTango® Apples:
SweeTango®

Could have dinner with anyone, dead or alive:
Jesus, followed by Elvis Presley

Bucket List Adventure Item:
There are a few things I would like to do: snorkel on the Great Barrier Reef; visit the Mediterranean, like Israel and the Greek Islands. I really would like to eat some delicious Mediterranean food.

SUSTAINABILITY: PEOPLE

By: Katie Harmon

A DREAM COME TRUE: FULL EFI CERTIFICATION

Having happy, healthy employees is the key to any successful business and Stemilt president, West Mathison, knows that. To make Stemilt's purpose of cultivating people and delighting consumers through excellence a reality, the Stemilt team went the extra mile to earn Equitable Food Initiative certifications across its entire company...and became the first apple, pear, and cherry grower to do so.

Stemilt president, West Mathison always likes to say: "Treat people like they matter because they do."

Since taking over the helm at the young age of 28, Mathison has worked tirelessly to instill this mantra throughout the company. The desire to cultivate people is part of the company's purpose, the reason for Stemilt's cultural norms, and why the company embarked on achieving full Equitable Food Initiative certification.

In 2019, Stemilt began working with EFI on a pilot program. EFI is dedicated to bringing together growers, farmworkers, retailers, and consumers to transform agriculture and improve the lives of farmworkers. After experiencing EFI's pilot program firsthand, Mathison quickly saw the value in EFI's training program and standards. He recognized the program and its certification as a way to build a culture around continuous improvement to help Stemilt on its journey to cultivate people and delight consumers through excellence.

"EFI's mission to train and support farmworkers on the front line parallels our dedication to cultivating a team of World Famous players and helping them grow and learn," explains Mathison. "Seeking full certification across our entire operation was an easy decision to make after moving through the pilot program. It instilled a confidence within our employees that not only strengthened the product but helped them improve as well."

Mathison's mission to receive full certification across its entire operation became a reality in August, with Stemilt becoming the first apple, pear, and cherry company to do so. The new certifications bring EFI standards and continuous improvement practices into all Stemilt-owned orchards and warehouse facilities and represents over 3500 employees.

"This is an important milestone for Stemilt. Being the first tree fruit company to achieve full EFI certification across our organization is an incredible accomplishment for our teams," states Mathison. "Most of this training and work occurred during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the perseverance our team showed to bring full certification to reality is a true testament of their dedication to provide consumers all around the globe World Famous fruit."

The full certification comes just shy of a year of Stemilt's Quincy, WA orchard becoming EFI certificated. There are more than 300 rigorous standards around labor practices, food safety, and pest management that a farm or facility must meet to achieve EFI certification. The standards also emphasize collaboration, respect, and creating a culture of food safety.

"Each facility or ranch is led by an EFI leadership team made up of a group of cross-functional individuals," explains Mathison. "They are taught EFI's soft skill training around leadership, communication, problem solving, and conflict resolution and then tasked with putting those newfound skills to the test through a collaborative project approach around continuous improvement. The leadership team structure promotes better engagement and helps us find leaders within the organization."

These projects not only put EFI training skills to practice, but they also help the organization improve upon existing and new processes. With nearly 100 employees trained under the EFI umbrella and three team members that can train others on EFI standards, Stemilt has made improvements within their social and pest management areas, safety, and the well-being of employees.

"All of the employees who are part of the EFI certification process have demonstrated their desire to improve and help Stemilt fulfill its purpose," explains Mathison. "We have only just earned this full EFI certification, but I know the impact that it will make will be substantial for years to come."

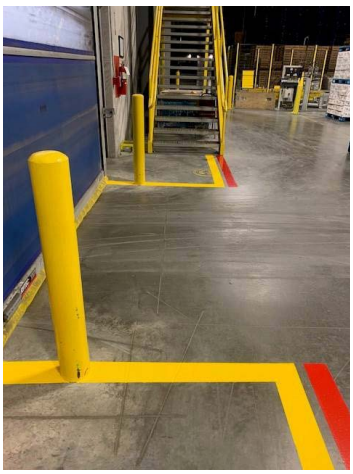
> **"Most of this training and work occurred during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the perseverance our team showed to bring full certification to reality is a true testament of their dedication to provide consumers all around the globe World Famous fruit."**
>
> *West Mathison*
> President

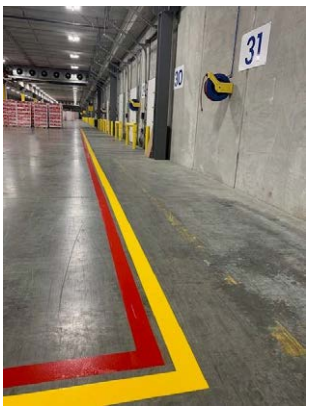
Stemilt's commitment to continuous improvement and EFI standards were apparent while moving through the EFI certification process for the orchard and warehouse areas of its business. Kevin Boyle, director of new product and business development for Equitable Food Initiative, explained that being the first apple and cherry company to achieve broad certification solidifies Stemilt's dedication to their employees and products.

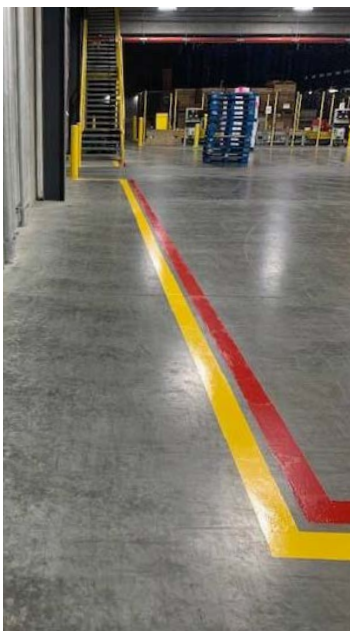
"Stemilt has been a leader in developing its workforce through training and improvement processes, so it's not a surprise that they became the first apple, pear and cherry grower to certify its entire Washington-state operation," said Kevin Boyle, director of new product and business development, at Equitable Food Initiative. "Their work throughout the pandemic is testament to their dedication and commitment to the certification process, as well as to their product quality and team culture."

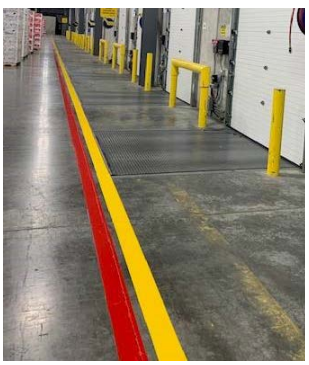
To maintain certification, Stemilt will move through two years of verification audits that take place annually and one re-certification process that occurs prior to the end of the three-year certification. These audits ensure that all food safety and pest management standards and work involvement indicators are being met.

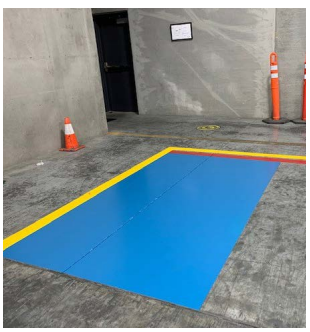
"The EFI certification not only communicates our commitment to high quality fruits, but it also ensures our workers that we are building a culture that is employee centric and shows them that they matter to us," explains Mathison. "By teaching these skills, we are building confident employees who are committed to delivering fruit that is 'Responsibly Grown, Farmworker Assured.' That is one of the most rewarding things of all."











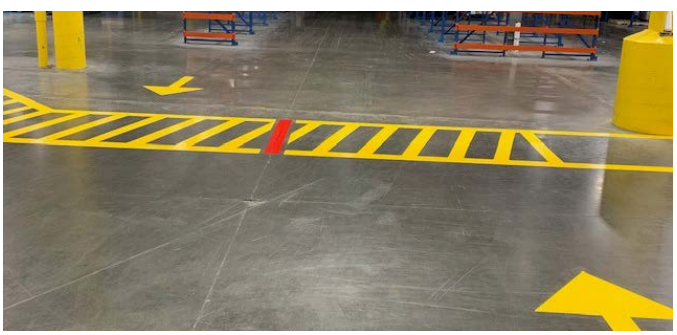
EFI PROJECT UPDATE

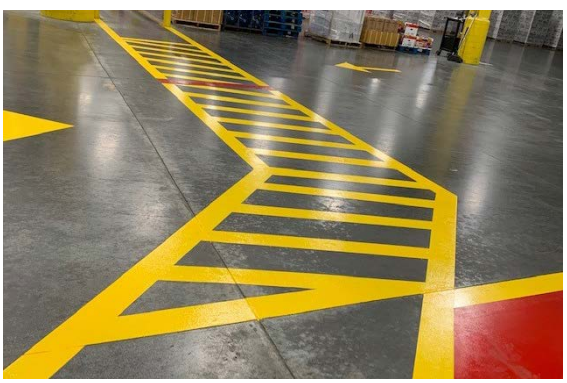
The Project:
Updating Pedestrian Traffic Walkways in the Fresh Cube Distribution Center

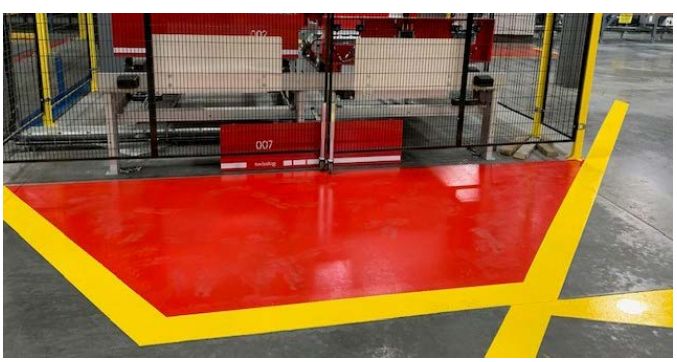
The Problem:
Congestion area within the Fresh Cube, especially in the shipping and receiving areas. It creates a hazardous work environment for pedestrians and forklift drivers.

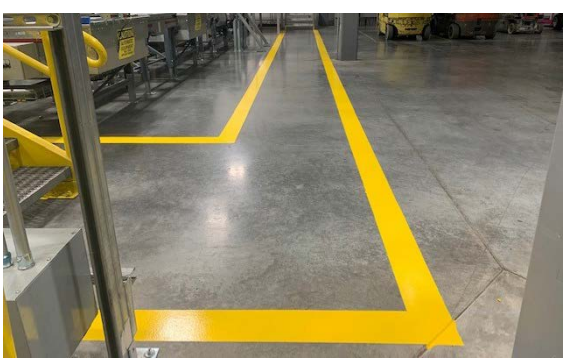
The Resolution:
Using EFI's training standards, the group was able present a series of tactics that increased pedestrian and forklift safety. Safety protocols were recommunicated among staff and those who frequent the Fresh Cube often. Signs and walkway strips were also implemented along with re-painting areas that had faded over time. The group created designated areas for buyers, inspectors, and samples to ensure the safety of visitors and more organizational steps were placed for order set up to alleviate congested areas for both pedestrians and drivers.

The Takeaway:
EFI's continuous improvements bettered the health and safety of employees by helping a group of individuals, who are all impacted by the same set of obstacles, work together to identify and resolve the issues at hand.









CRUNCH CIRCLE

FRUIT

By: Katie Harmon

HOW APPLES GIVE YOU ENERGY

Feeding your body the right things to keep it energized, happy, and healthy is key to a successful day. While it's easy to grab an item off the shelf that markets "energy," it could be filled with the ingredients that aren't necessarily the best to fuel your body. Apples, on the other hand, are an excellent snack option that not only fill our bodies with natural and wholesome ingredients, but also can provide plenty of health benefits along the way. Let's dive in.

The What:

Just like a car needs gas to go, people need food to thrive. If the tank requires regular gas to run but you put in diesel, do you think it will work? Maybe for the first mile or two, but after that things will break down... fast. Carbohydrates, which are found in apples, provide the body glucose that are then converted to energy to support the body and everything that helps it function. While carbs get a bad rap, there are actually good ones and bad ones. The good carbohydrates, the ones we want in our tanks, can be found in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and other various unprocessed food items which help our engines run.

The Why:

Choosing foods, like apples, that provide your body "good" carbohydrates help you avoid spikes in blood sugar levels. You know those times after you eat something high in sugar (like a piece of cake at your co-worker's retirement celebration) and you instantly feel like taking a nap? That's because of bad carbohydrates and sugars. They enter your blood stream, spike your glucose levels so you are full of energy, but then burn out fast affecting your body functions, mood, and energy levels.

The How:

Once you consume an apple, the carbohydrates from that apple break down into glucose and enter your bloodstream. Because the carbs in the apple break down slowly, it helps you keep a sustained energy level, leaving you feeling fuller longer and more satisfied overall.

The Bottom Line:

Enjoy more apples! They help you stay fuller longer and also taste great.

Sources:
Carbohydrates: Quality Matters
How Apples Give You Energy

Stemilt short code links:
stemilt.com./hilltop-21-cc1
stemilt.com./hilltop-21-cc2

FOOD ROOTED IN A BETTER MOOD®
have a plant®
fruitsandveggies.org
PRODUCE FOR® BETTER HEALTH FOUNDATION

FRUIT

By: Katie Harmon

FAMOUS FINDS: FOUR FALL MUST HAVE ITEMS

Ahh, fall. Crisp air, leaves changing colors, and new flavors entering the produce department mix. These four Famous Finds are hand-picked for the autumn season and with great promotion planning and execution, are sure to ignite your category.

1

Artisan Organics™ 5lb. Fuji Bag

Why They're Famous: Delight organic consumers by giving them what they want: an organic apple variety in a 5lb. bag so their apple supply never runs low. Fuji is a delicious, sweet treat and offers a healthy alternative to shoppers who are looking to satisfy their sweet tooth with nutrition in mind. The 5lb. bag is a great in-and-out or everyday item to provide enough fruit to shoppers looking to feed their family only the best premium organic apples.

Availability:

Year-round

2

Bosc Pears

Why They're Famous: This bronze beauty is the epitome of fall flavor. With notes of cinnamon and nutmeg, biting into this crisp and juicy pear will take you straight to the perfect autumn day. Beyond its flavor, Bosc is famous in the fall season because of its ability to bring color to multi-variety pear ads. Plan bulk promotions with green and red pears, or consider a 3lb. Lil Snappers® bag to attract parents looking for convenient kid snacks to the pear category.

Availability:

September through April

3

Gala Apples

Why They're Famous: Anyone who likes apples has tried a Gala apple before. With its subtle, yet sweet vanilla flavor profile and crunchy bite, there is a reason this apple leads the category in volume. Gala should be a regular part of the apple promotion mix, and is best when advertised alongside other mainline and specialty varieties in multi-variety ads. Pouch bags are a great vehicle to drive volume sales of Gala, and Stemilt has 3lb. and 5lb. options available.

Availability:

Year-round

4

Bartlett Pears

Why They're Famous: This classic bell-shaped pear is full of sweet, juicy goodness that stands as the poster child of pears. Bartlett is a regular fall mix as a bulk option, and is available organically too. It's a great feature item in three-variety pear ads and certainly should be a focus during December's National Pear Month. Lil Snappers® bags are a great school snack item that are easy-to-merchandise with display ready cartons.

Availability:

August - February

GET FAMOUS FINDS IN YOUR INBOX

Do you want monthly Famous Finds updates from Mike T. and the Stemilt team? Yes? Good. Just let your Stemilt rep know and our team will get you on the list so you are always in the know!

Topics include:
- Must-have packaging options
- Bulk varieties
- Merchandising tips
- Promotion ideas

And more!

By: Katie Harmon

REDHEADS HAVE MORE FUN: Red d'Anjou Pears

This striking red pear surely turns heads. With beautiful crimson color skin that lights up the shelf and a zesty, citrus-like flavor on the inside, red d'Anjou pears are a treat. They are pleasantly sweet and come with a juicy bite making them perfect to eat fresh, paired with cheese or in heated applications, like baking or poaching.

KNOW IT ALL

The Same, But Different

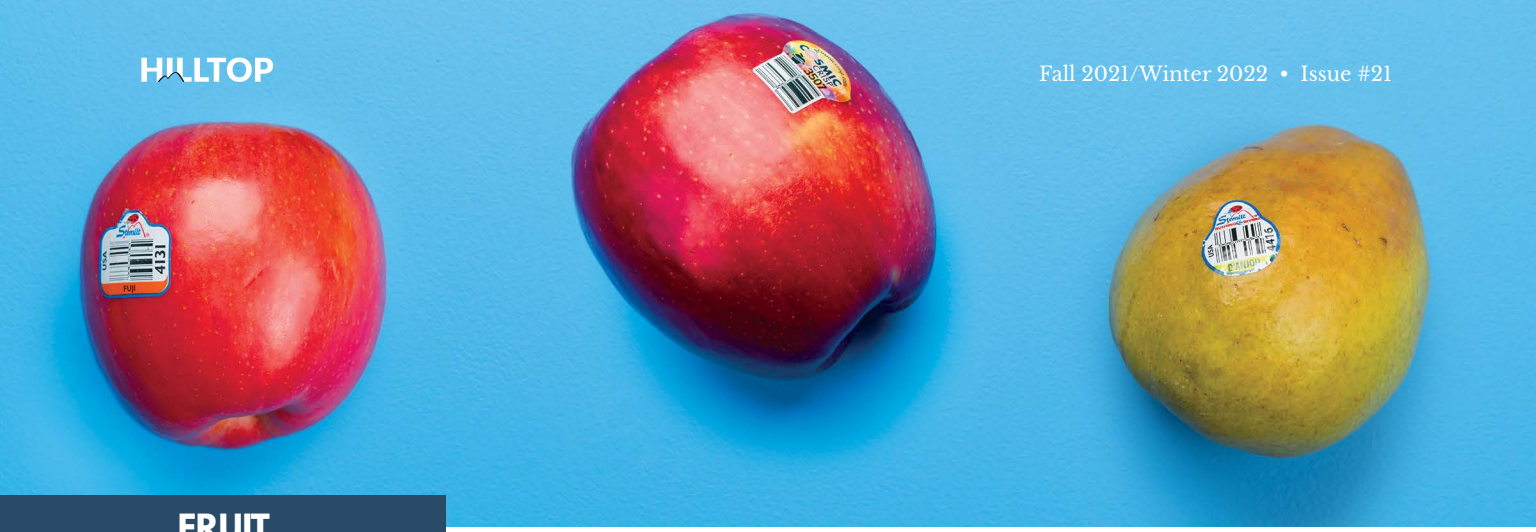
Red d'Anjou pears are very similar to their green counterpart, the green d'Anjou pear. They have a similar flavor profile and ripening process, just come in different colors!

Born in the Northwest

The Red d'Anjou pear was discovered growing on a pear tree in Medford, Oregon in the 1950s. Usually, mutations such as these go unnoticed, but the red d'Anjou was so striking it was an exception!

Color Me Impressed!

The red color of the d'Anjou pear is what sets it apart from others in the category. Its striking red skin makes a statement and only slightly changes when it ripens.



FRUIT

By: Katie Harmon

FRUIT Q's

As tree fruit experts, we get lots of questions around our products. Let's look at some frequently asked questions we have gotten around our apples and pears this year.

Q. Why does my organic apple feel waxy?

A. If your organic apple is feeling waxy, it is actually the apple's way of trying to hydrate itself as it is feeling a bit dry. To help prevent this from happening, we apply a very thin layer of Apeel™ to most organic apples. Apeel™ is plant derived and made up of materials that exist in the peels, seeds, and pulp of all fruits and vegetables to create a protective extra peel that seals in moisture and keeps oxygen out.

Q. How do I get my pear to ripen? I thought they ripened on the tree.

A. Pears are harvested mature, but they don't fully ripen on the tree. If the grower waited until the pear was ripe to harvest, it would be overripe by the time it made its way to the store. If you want to ripen your pear, keep it at room temperature next to other ethylene-producing fruits (like bananas) to help speed up the process. Once it is ripe, enjoy immediately or place in the refrigerator until you are ready to eat.

Q. How long will my apples and pears keep in the fridge?

A. For pears, the answer is pretty straight forward 3-5 days if ripe when placed in the fridge. Apples are a different story and can vary by variety. For example, Cosmic Crisp® apples can last quite awhile in the fridge, however, a Gala or a Fuji apple should be consumed within one to two weeks of purchase.

HEY STEMILT!

Here's what our Stemilt fans had to say about our fruits:

Mary from St. Louis, Missouri said:
"I just ate a sweet, juicy, delicious, melt-in-your-mouth Stemilt d'Anjou pear. Wow!"

Diana from Saucon Valley, Pennsylvania said:
"My husband and I just bought your pears and without a doubt, these are 'the best pears in the world.' Thanks!"

Ellen from Manhattan, NY said:
"I just ate your organic Fuji apples. It's THE best apple. Where else can I find them?"

FRUIT

2 loaves | 3:45 hours | 35 minutes | 4:25 hours | Difficult

THE BEST EVER APPLE BREAD

They say slow and steady wins the race and this apple bread recipe is no exception. While this bread may take an afternoon to make, it is deliciously sweet and the best you've ever had.

INGREDIENTS

Bread:

3/4 cup water (¼ cup if using sourdough starter)

3 tsp active dry or instant yeast, not rapid or quick rising yeast (or 1 cup sourdough starter)

2/3 cup milk

3 TBSP white granulated sugar, divided

4 TBSP unsalted butter

1 large egg

1 tsp vanilla

1 tsp salt

4 cups all purpose flour, plus more, as needed (3 cups + more if using sourdough starter)

Apple Filling:

2 Stemilt Pink Lady® Apples

2 TBSP white granulated sugar

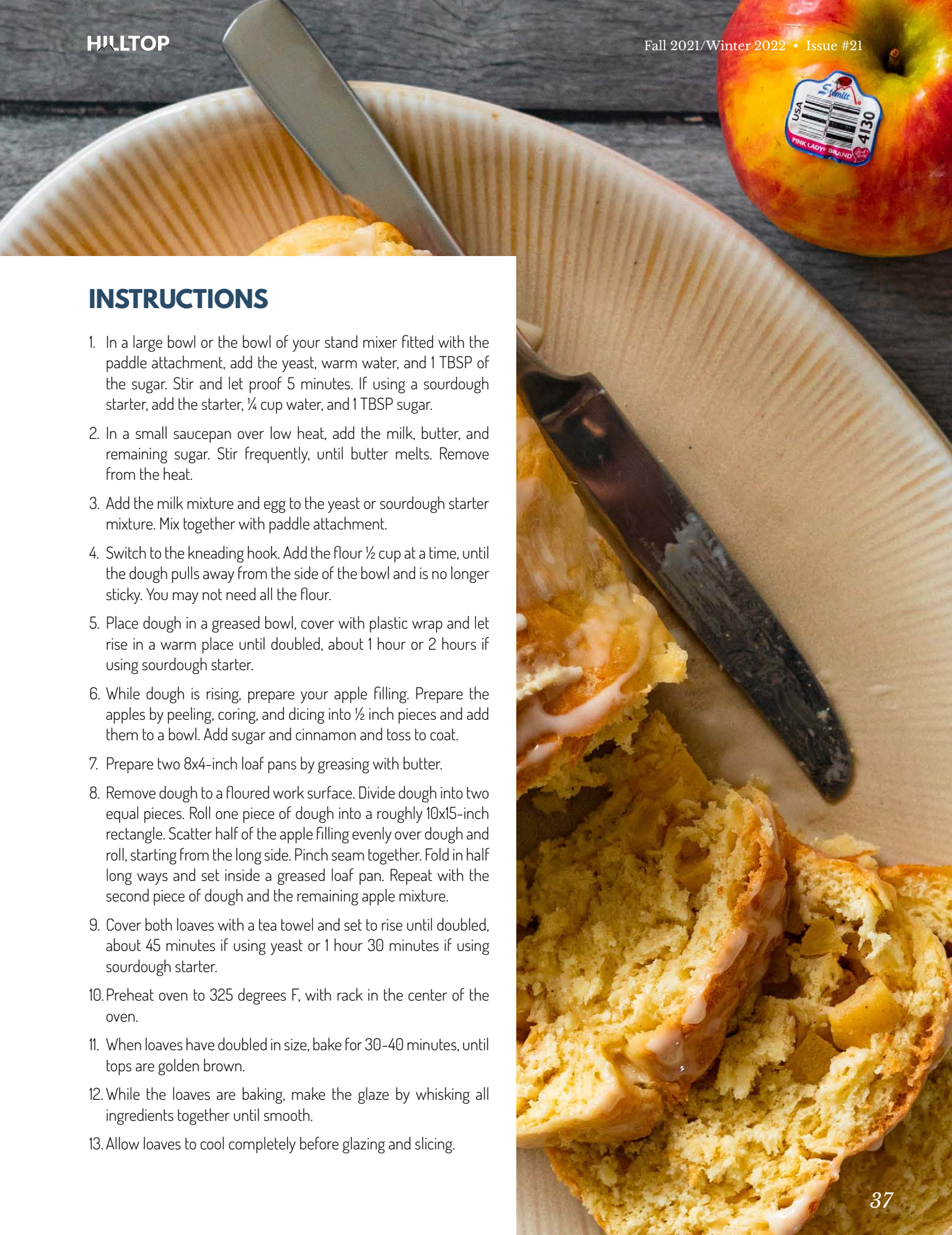
1 tsp cinnamon

Maple Glaze (Optional):

1 cup powdered sugar

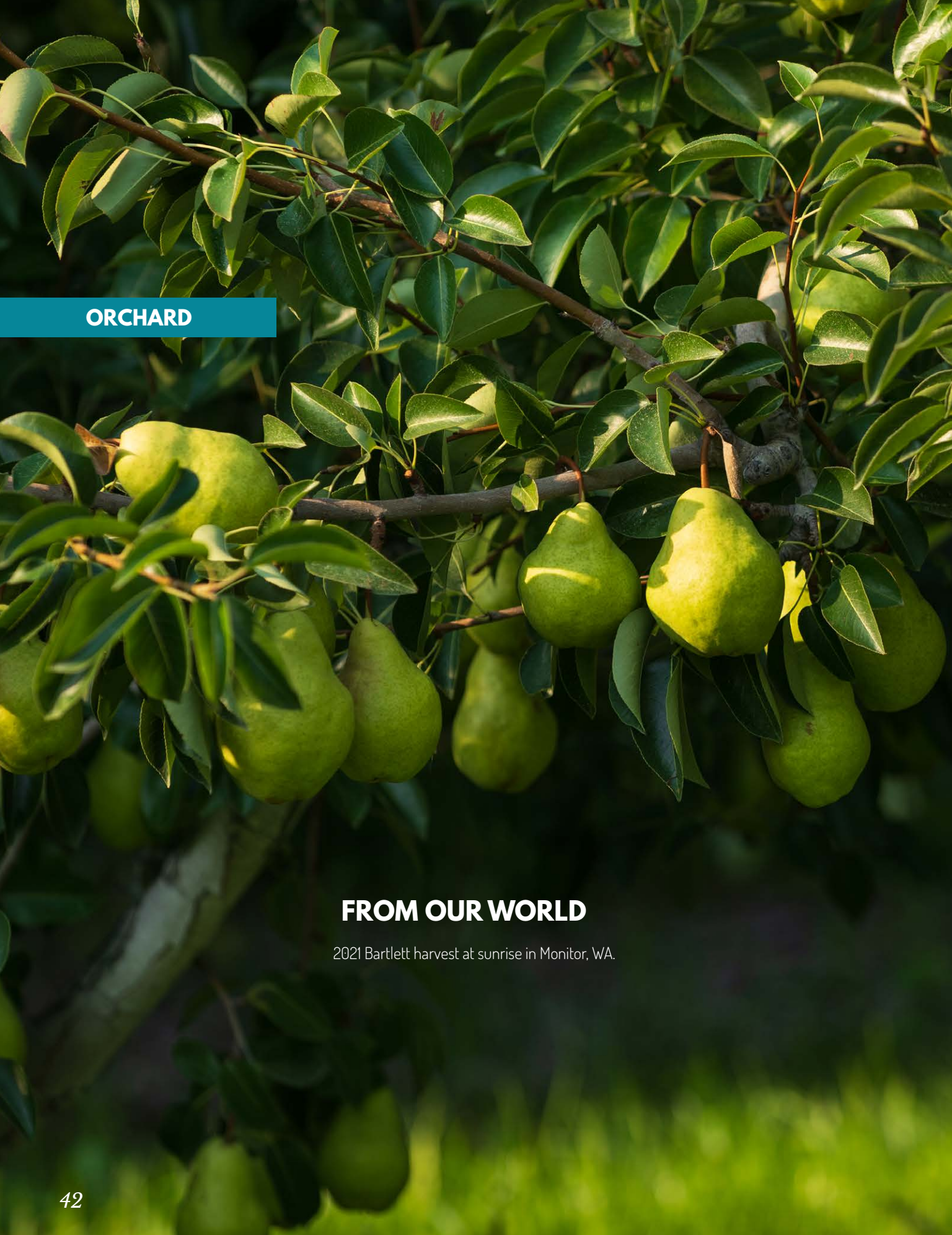
2 TBSP maple syrup

1-2 TBSP milk



INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large bowl or the bowl of your stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, add the yeast, warm water, and 1 TBSP of the sugar. Stir and let proof 5 minutes. If using a sourdough starter, add the starter, ¼ cup water, and 1 TBSP sugar.
2. In a small saucepan over low heat, add the milk, butter, and remaining sugar. Stir frequently, until butter melts. Remove from the heat.
3. Add the milk mixture and egg to the yeast or sourdough starter mixture. Mix together with paddle attachment.
4. Switch to the kneading hook. Add the flour ½ cup at a time, until the dough pulls away from the side of the bowl and is no longer sticky. You may not need all the flour.
5. Place dough in a greased bowl, cover with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 1 hour or 2 hours if using sourdough starter.
6. While dough is rising, prepare your apple filling. Prepare the apples by peeling, coring, and dicing into ½ inch pieces and add them to a bowl. Add sugar and cinnamon and toss to coat.
7. Prepare two 8x4-inch loaf pans by greasing with butter.
8. Remove dough to a floured work surface. Divide dough into two equal pieces. Roll one piece of dough into a roughly 10x15-inch rectangle. Scatter half of the apple filling evenly over dough and roll, starting from the long side. Pinch seam together. Fold in half long ways and set inside a greased loaf pan. Repeat with the second piece of dough and the remaining apple mixture.
9. Cover both loaves with a tea towel and set to rise until doubled, about 45 minutes if using yeast or 1 hour 30 minutes if using sourdough starter.
10. Preheat oven to 325 degrees F, with rack in the center of the oven.
11. When loaves have doubled in size, bake for 30-40 minutes, until tops are golden brown.
12. While the loaves are baking, make the glaze by whisking all ingredients together until smooth.
13. Allow loaves to cool completely before glazing and slicing.



FROM OUR WORLD

2021 Bartlett harvest at sunrise in Monitor, WA.

Stemilt
RUSHING RIVERS
THE BEST PEAR LOCALES IN THE WORLD
USA
4417
RED D'ANJOU
USA
4416
D'ANJOU
Delight with Locales

Stemilt
World Famous Fruit

THE
STEM
BLOG

REDUCE
REUSE
RECYCLE
Recycle Me