

# WHAT'S IN SEASON

BY GEORGEANNE BRENNAN

**E**very season produces a few things which are unique, unavailable at any other time of the year, and during summer in our area, one of those is the Gravenstein apple. The Gravenstein is an apple so notable for its flavor that it has been declared to be a heritage food by Slow Food USA, but unfortunately, one in danger of disappearing. The largest planting in the United States of the Gravenstein is around the town of Sebastopol, but the quantity is much diminished from previous years when the variety dominated the substantial apple production in Sonoma County.

Like so many other flavorful fruits and vegetables, the Gravenstein doesn't hold well in storage, nor does it ship well, and consequently it has been dropped by many large buyers and shippers in favor of sturdier apples. Only in recent years are we discovering the loss to both our agricultural heritage and to our tables of many old-fashioned or heirloom fruits

and vegetables. Fortunately, dedicated farmers are bringing them back into production with the hope that educated consumers, looking for true taste and flavor, will seek out and buy these special varieties.

The Gravenstein, thought to have been brought to the area by Russian settlers and fur traders around the first part of the 19th century, certainly fits this description. It has true apple flavor, balanced between slightly sweet and acidic, with a juicy crunch that, to my thinking, is the essence of a good apple. It's a lovely waxy green, with red striations, or sometimes pure red, and one of its many virtues is that it is equally good eaten out of hand, cooked, or turned into cider.

The Gravenstein season is short, essentially July and August, so plan ahead, and make sure you get your fill of one of California's finest fruits.



## Fried Apples, Onions and Sausages

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 4 Gravenstein apples, cored and cut lengthwise into 1/2-inch slices
- 1 large onion, peeled and cut crosswise into 1/4-inch thick slices
- 1/4 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 4 to 6 fennel or other favorite link sausages

Heat the butter over medium heat in a large frying pan. When it foams, add the apples and sauté until the underside is golden, about 7 minutes. Turn, add the onions to the pan and continue to sauté until the second side of the apples is golden and the onions are limp and golden, another 5 minutes or so. While the apples and onions are cooking, cook the sausages in your favorite fashion.

Serve the sausages while they are hot, accompanied by the apple and onion mixture.



### FRUITS

- Apricots
- Apples
- Asian Pears
- Blackberries
- Blueberries
- Cherries
- Figs
- Grapes
- Melons
- Nectarines
- Peaches
- Pears
- Plums
- Pluots
- Raspberries
- Strawberries

### VEGETABLES

- Arugula
- Asian Greens
- Basil and other herbs
- Beans
- Beets
- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Cactus Pads/Nopales
- Carrots
- Celery
- Chard
- Corn
- Cress
- Cucumbers
- Eggplant
- Endive
- Fava Beans
- Fennel
- Garlic (new crop)
- Kale
- Kohlrabi
- Leeks
- Lettuces
- Mushrooms
- Okra
- Onions
- Sweet & Chili Peppers
- Potatoes
- Purslane
- Radicchio
- Radish
- Rhubarb
- Shallots
- Spinach
- Summer Squash
- Tomatillos
- Tomatoes

*Georganne Brennan is an award-winning cookbook author, journalist and teacher. Her most recent book is a food memoir, A Pig in Provence (Harcourt, 2008). Her forthcoming book is Gather, a compilation of memorable menus for entertaining throughout the seasons (Sasquatch Books, August 2009). Georganne's food writing appears regularly in the San Francisco Chronicle and she teaches weekend culinary adventures at her small farm in Northern California. For more information about Georganne and her work, visit [www.georgannebrennan.com](http://www.georgannebrennan.com).*