***Editorial Views***

*By Rob Crassweller*

***“The Apple You Can Eat In One Sitting”***

When I travel across the state, the country or out of country, I always like to go to the produce section of the local markets. Of course in the last few years we have seen a plethora of new fruit types and varieties of those types. One of my new favorite types of fruit are Gold Kiwi’s. These almost disappeared a few years ago as a serious bacterial pathogen killed the great majority of

the vines across New Zealand and Italy, the other major supplier. For those of you that have not seen or tasted this fruit, it is quite different from the traditional green kiwi. As the name implies the flesh is a golden color. They are also more mature when sold. Unlike the green fruit when you purchase the Golds, they are ready for fresh eating immediately with a soft texture and a sweet flavor. They do not need to sit on the counter for several days to soften up. To eat the Gold Kiwi, slice it equatorially in half and scoop out the gold flesh with a spoon. Unfortunately, here in central PA, their marketing season is very short and usually only available in early August.

Other observations of the produce section of the market is the new obsession with shrink wrapping potatoes providing the “convenience” of being able to take them home and pop them in the microwave to cook. I find this amusing as you don’t need to wrap them in plastic and they certainly do not lose that much moisture. However, produce like eggplant and peppers which can lose moisture sitting on the produce shelves are not protected. I see sad looking eggplant and peppers that have sat out too long and eventually end up being discarded because of their shriveled appearance. Of course these produce items could be used in soups or other store made products, but I wonder how much ends up in the dumpster.

This brings me to the apple display. Again, we see many new cultivars of apples showing up in the grocery aisles. This summer I saw Opal, the Broetje Orchard exclusive apple. Ambrosia is also on display, which by the way will go off restrictive marketing limits at the end of 2017. Last week I saw an apple I had not heard of before – Sonya. I suppose it could be a trademarked name of a cultivar that I have heard of but I am not sure. The other interesting site is the size of the apples. Most of the loose displays are 3.5 inch fruit. They certainly look pretty, all nice and shiny and **large.** With apologies to the likes of Rice Fruit Company and the other packers in Pennsylvania, I have a little bit of a problem that the vast bulk of apples for sale are large 80 count and up sized fruit. There is too much flesh to comfortably consume that large of an apple. Our experience with sales of apples grown at Rock Springs bears this out. We sell

apples to the Nittany Lion Inn that they have out for guests at the registration desk. When we first started selling them they wanted our large 3.25 to 3.5 inch apples. However, after cleaning up the grounds outside the Inn where many guest ‘recycled’ the half eaten apple, they are now asking for our 2.5 to 2.75 inch diameter fruit. We also sell fruit to the Blue Band for football Saturdays – again they want the smaller apples because more of the fruit is eaten. I know

larger fruit harvest quicker with fewer picks to fill the bin, but are we growing too many large fruit at the expense of consumers not purchasing as much fruit.

We recently started growing a cultivar called Pixie Crunch which is a naturally small apple of 2.5 to 2.75 inches. It is an apple that is easily finished at one sitting. Remember when Gala came out, one of the knocks on the cultivar was that it was on the small side. Somehow that has not

hurt their sales as it is now in the top 5 apple cultivars produced. There will always be a market for the 80’s and 72’s, but maybe volume of sales might improve with a mixture of smaller sizes. I would be curious to know in the roadside market which size sells more, large or small? Oh, by the way, Gold Kiwis are on the small side and

easily consumed at one sitting.