

Apples, Apples and Haiku

by Jane Reichhold

In a country far away, the people developed, over a long period of time, two very different kinds of fruit. One they called (translated) apple-H and the other was named apple-S. Almost anyone in that land could easily tell the difference between the two fruits because they were grown in a different ways and thus tasted very differently.

The apples-H were tart and refreshing. They were first discovered growing in the orchards of the professional poets - people who made their living writing poetry. Therefore the growers, and eventually even their products took on a slightly religious atmosphere. Some of the growers were even called priests and nuns out of respect for the quality of their apples-H. Still the apples-H, which tasted superb to a large majority of the people who then delighted in growing their own apples-H in their front yards with a degree of pride that was very charming.

The apples-S were (are you surprised?) very sweet-and-sour. The apple-S trees first sprang up wild by the bars in the red-light district of old Tokyo. Even the nickname for apples-S - (River Willows) was an indirect reference to the geisha who, when politely referring to their trade, called it the one of "flowers and willows". Thus, the taste of these apples was not enjoyed by everyone, but mostly by people who liked to seem a bit naughty. For this reason, for many people, the name - apples-S - had an unfortunate connotation of shame belonging to 'lower classes', 'unprofessional' or 'lower people' that could never be lost. The apples-S were only grown in back yards so passers-by could not know the house-owner had a taste for such fruit.

However, when a foreigner looked at these two fruits they seemed very similar. Both were roundish, both had a warm, creamy ivory flesh, brown seeds and both were reddish on the outside. Only the very observant might discern faint, flat, brown circular spots on some of the fruit called apple-S. Some claimed these marks were the result of the excess sweetness which was why apples-H did not have them..

After contact with the outside world, and when people in other countries found out about these two kinds of apples, they too, wanted to not only eat and enjoy them, but to grow the apples themselves. So a few importers attempted to transplant some of the trees from the far country. In their eagerness to collect starts they cut off branches from both kinds of fruit. However, in packing up the assorted limbs they smashed them together so hard in the boxes that the bark of the twigs of apples-H was damaged, spontaneous grafts occurred and the apple-S genes were accidentally spliced in. By the time the transplanted trees had grown up, so they were producing apples in their adopted land, the mixed genes were manifesting apples that were truly neither apple-H nor apple-S. Out of the mixture came a new variety which could only be properly called apple-E because

it was not the same as either of the previous apples but was very much itself containing the best of all the flavors.

However, as people learned more and more about apple agriculture, they began to wonder if some of their apples-E, if they had faint brown spots on them, should be righteously called apples-S - just to be 100% accurate. They were very unsure which apples should receive the hated 'S' added to their name, yet they insisted on knowing thinking maybe they were missing something.

Some people said, "Pooh, those apples with brown spots are rotten and should be thrown out! We don't like apples-S and we don't want any of our apples like that!" Others asked why an apple-E with some spots should be called a rotten apple, when they all tasted so similar that one could not judge on taste alone. Still some people wanted to call the apples-E by the name apples-S but the people from the far country knew better - that these apples-E were a new variety that were either apple-H or apple-S but was a happy combination of the two.

In the far country their trees continued to produce apples-H and apples-S but the people growing apples-E knew that their apples had the best of both species. All they had to do was to handle their apples-E more carefully so they didn't get bruised. This meant that they could no longer damage them by slinging them at each other over the fence with name-calling. In this way the apple growers began to treat their crops as gifts from nature with thanks giving to the other culture without worrying about spots or appellations! And their apples-E tasted even better - er, happily ever after.