East Valley Falls Short in Quest for 2a Title /1D

Apples to Apples
And how they’re sold in China

G

CREASE, China — There’s a chance on the narrow road flanked by the road, filling the air with gray exhaust and blaring horns. Buyers beckon from the stalls set up along the way. It started before sunrise and will continue until dark. For two months it turns home to resume harvesting. A and color, farmers usually arrive with trees may take weeks to complete pick.

GuanShui, China — There’s a seemingly endless array of motorcycles, trucks and small three-wheeled tractors jam the narrow road bisecting thousands of villages across China, a chaos on the narrow road bisecting thousands of jobs are tied to the region, Central Washington grows more than half of all American apples. Total production equals less than an eighth of China’s. Since 1997-98, the size of China’s total apple crop has more than halved. With China’s apple industry growing in sophistication, Central Washington could be vulnerable. As this nation’s largest apple-producing region, Central Washington grows more than half of all American apples. Total apple production rose from 5.3 billion pounds in 1987 to 8.1 billion pounds in 1997, making the state a single largest agricultural product. More than a third of the state’s apple crop is exported, including to Southeast Asia, where markets are already

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Stories by CRAIO TROIANELLO, Yakima Herald-Republic • Photos by DON SEABROOK, Wenatchee World

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Total China and U.S. apple production in millions of tons

20 days until Christmas

Name: Eduardo Garcia Jr.
Age: 5
Nickname: Stanger
Parents: Eduardo Garcia and Lucinda Sanchez

How does Santa decide if you’re naughty or nice? He asks his teacher Mrs. Glover.

\[\text{The China Challenge}\]

\[\text{Unleashed}\]

\[\text{SEE PAGE 8A}\]
Many Chinese can afford to spend more on luxury items, such as imported Washington apples.

WASHINGTON — Thrift doesn’t attract business. It attracts business and anxiety.

The streets are dirty and the canals run over with sewage. But along the Pearl River the city’s wealth unrolls in staggering scale. For miles, the city is lined with skyscrapers and high-rises. Casio, Kodak, Bridgestone Tire, China Mobile and dozens of other companies promote their presence with huge neon signs atop the buildings. Bridges and river walkways are all luminized in white lights and neon.

The scene, as Canton, this city of 10 million, is no stranger to international companies. Two centuries ago, merchant ships from Canton, China, traded with the Pacific Northwest. Today, they are buying and selling part in the trade.

Westernization, wealth

Stories by CRAIG TROIANELLO, Yakima Herald-Republic  •  Photos by DON SEABROOK, Wenatchee World

Among offices and apartment buildings, a tiny glimpse of light emerges from a shop on Shang Xia Jiu Road, right center, that’s part of two blocks of modern shopping opened within the past two years.

APPLIES/

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How apples get to markets in China and how they’re presented for sale

The U.S. is held in such high esteem that it rubs off on consumer products.

Cheng Wei De, owner of Hua Sheng Fresh Produce Co. of Yakima and Columbia Pack of Washington, said sales of Washington apples, said, increased by an average of more than 1.8 million boxes of Washington apples that last year flowed into Hong Kong. Apple varieties not covered by the trade agreement regularly travel to Central Washington to buy apples and tour packing facilities.

Apple importer Wong Wai Pui, who also has an office at the Lishui Fruit Commission, said the Washington state apples are cheap and plentiful. But for consumers, they sell for less than half the price, crisp and sweet as Washington’s, but they will feel local apples here the first year. Cheng estimates it will take at least five years to reach a quality comparable to Washington’s product.

Cheng isn’t a casual observer. He’s been importing apples from Washington since 1993, the first year it was allowed. Last year he purchased 381,000 boxes, including apples from Washington Fruit & Produce Co. and the Wenatchee Apple Growers Association.

In the last decade, China has made significant strides in trans- portation, storage and quality control. Like Cheng, he’s been importing Washington apples for years. He also brings in Washington cherries, as well as grapes and oranges from elsewhere in the United States.

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Workers transport a load of Chinese Fuji apples below a Washington Apple Commission sign promoting Washington state apples at the Jiangnan Wholesale Fruit Market. The sign reads “Washington Apples” at left, and “Tasty and Crunchy” on the right.

Shopping changes; Washington sells

In a market in Guangzhou, the boxes are from Chile, but the apples bear labels that say they are Washington state Red Delicious, making Victor Wang, local marketing manager for the Washington Apple Commission, think it’s a fake.

The supermarket trade in Asia is bursting at the seams.

Former export director, Oneonta Trading Co.

As Chinese families are beginning to spend more, the traditional street markets are losing customers to supermarkets. Not just ordinary supermarkets, but hypermarkets—immense emporiums anxious to cater to a growing audience.

At a Japanese-owned hypermarket, the third floor is indoors. Slices of sausages are sold from cornflakes to Pepsi to fresh fish and noodles. More places with names that raise the profile of Washington apples are a sure thing.

Employment and Security

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Average annual wage for an urban Chinese worker: $1,756. (The yuan is the basic monetary unit of exchange in China. The exchange rate is 8 yuan to $1.)

Average annual wage for a Washington worker: $38,794.

Retail apple costs observed in a Chinese market:

For an ounce of Washington Red Delicious: $0.75, or .84 cents.

For an ounce of Chinese Fuji: $1.50, or 1.80 cents.

For a pound of Washington Red Delicious: 99 cents.

For a pound of Chinese Fuji: 3 yuan, or 36 cents.

For an ounce of Washington Red Delicious: 84 cents.

For an ounce of Chinese Fuji: 1 yuan, or 12 cents.

For a pound of Washington Red Delicious: $3.84.

For a pound of Chinese Fuji: 7 yuan, or 84 cents.

Some comparisons

The supermarkets under a variety of names.

For that reason, the Washington State Apple Commission targets hypermarkets for promotions, offering free samples and advertising programs that raise the profile of Washington apples.

Thanks to higher salaries and improved availability, the Chinese are eating more fruit. In the cities, fruit consumption has risen more than 37 percent since 1990. Even the poorest urban households now eat 70 pounds of fresh fruit a year, only slightly less than the level of the average American.
**CHINESE**

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UANGZHOU, China — In his small, second-floor office overlooking the sprawling Lishui Fresh Fruit Terminal Market in Guangzhou, Cheng Wei De offers two bowls of instant noodles. No one is green in Guangzhou, the other is Chinese.

The Chinese apples aren’t as crisp and sweet as Washington’s, but they sell for less than half the price. Cheng says, if Washington apple prices can be lowered, they’d be better able to compete, he said.

The observation cuts to the heart of many of the issues surrounding China’s emergence as the largest apple importer. While Chinese apple quality improved last year, they worry any push might not be as great.

**The China Challenge**

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