

NATIONAL APPLE DAY

WE are being encouraged to buy British as National Apple Day looms.

Thursday, October 21 is the day for apples, Apple Day is the pinnacle of the British apple season which is now in full swing.

Clippy (aka Michelle McKenna), founder of Clippy's Apples, advocate of the British apple and pioneer in the world of preserves is asking you to celebrate the British Apple Harvest.

Founded in 2008 by Clippy using apples from her back garden, Clippy's Apples is the award-winning home of British-apple based jams, jellies, chutneys and relishes which are lovingly handmade in small batches.

Clippy's passion for British apples began when she found out that two-thirds of British apple orchards have been lost since 1970 and Clippy, together with fiancé Paul Gorman, wants to

reverse this disturbing trend.

Clippy has embarked on a nationwide tour which sees Clippy 'Preserving the Nation' in some of the UK's most prestigious cookery schools.

Clippy teaches her students how to turn apples into chutney or quince into jelly in a matter of hours, making the most of local produce and using a range of exciting ingredients from chilli to chocolate. For UK tour dates please visit: www.preservingthenation.org.

And here's the reason why we need to buy British. We are losing apple orchards at an alarming rate. Data from Natural England shows that the orchard area throughout England has declined by 63 per cent since 1950. Wales lost 94 per cent between 1958 and 1992.

For some counties the impact is devastating. Devon lost 89 per cent of its orchards between

1946-2003 and Kent 92 per cent during the same period.

In 2007 we imported nearly 70 per cent of our apples. Apples from the southern hemisphere and other far away places fill our supermarket shelves — even in autumn, the height of our apple season.

In 1987, there were 1,500 apple growers; in 2003, there were only 500.

But the good news is that hundreds of community orchards are being created up and down the country.

More people are planting fruit trees in their gardens, micro cider-makers are flourishing, old traditional orchards are being valued and conserved by Natural England and others for the richness of wild life they support.

If you plan to bake a pie to celebrate National Apple Day, check where the apple is from first.