



# Walnut Acres Foundation News

July/August 2020

## ***“Friends Tell Friends, and So It Goes”***

– Paul Keene

**P**aul & Betty Keene never set out to create and run a \$10 million, multi-faceted business based on organic farming. They simply wanted to build a simple agrarian life for their young family in the heart of Central Pennsylvania. And for a while, they did. They used their most plentiful resources on the farm, including apples, to feed their family and sell a few products by mail. However, the business surprisingly exploded after an article by food writer Clementine Paddleford highlighted its *Apple Essence* in her 1947 columns in *Gourmet* magazine and the *New York Herald Tribune* (reprint below).



Apple Essence, otherwise known as apple butter, was a small part of the work of the farm. Once Paddleford’s article circulated, however, it became the catalyst for exponential growth. The

family farm grew into a thriving organic food company known as one of America’s original organic farms associated with the birth and growth of organic agriculture in the United States. If someone hadn’t told Clementine Paddleford about *Apple Essence* and she hadn’t told the world, things might have turned out differently. ■

*Photo: The Keene’s plentiful apple crop was used to create apple butter in a large copper kettle set over an open fire. Seen here, Paul shares a ‘first taste’ with daughters Ruth and Ann.*

*Below is the full reprint of the Paddleford article*

# Gourmet

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CLEMENTINE PADDLEFORD

## FOOD FLASHES

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 1947

**B**lustering, warm-hearted November is a superior month in which to be thankful. Exultantly she gives of her wealth, of apple cider, pumpkin pies, the golden squash, the roasting fowls, the cranberry jelly.

Thanksgiving is the great day, the dinner its mainspring. Turkey from the Pilgrims down to now has been the Thanksgiving feast bird. Stuff it with an old-time sage and onion dressing or one herb-scented; stuff his highness with oysters. New as the month is a ready-to-serve oyster stuffing to turn from a can, nothing to add, nothing to mix. Give the dressing a few fluffs with a fork and the 14-ounce tin will fill a 6-pound roasting chicken, the contents of two tins will fill a 12-pound turkey. Add one additional tin for each additional six pounds of gobbler.

The dressing is savory of oysters; it is light, it is moist; made like any oyster dressing with bread crumbs and butter, there are good-sized slices of oysters used generously. The onions are golden-fried in bacon drippings and ham fat; sage the main seasoning, with curry and pepper to bite at the mouth. The dressing can be used to enrich the flavor of a stuffed pork chop, as a stuffing for fish, or for plain pan-baking. Add lemon juice, cover with bacon strips, and bake in a casserole in a moderate oven for 30 minutes. When mixed with beaten egg the dressing may be used for savory forcemeat balls for a clear broth or to fry in deep fat and serve with cocktails.

The dressing is made by the Espy family which since 1854 have been producing premium oysters from the cool salt waters of Oysterville, Washington, on the deep edge of the Pacific. Another one of their treats to which we have previously written words and music is the smoked oyster slices. If you should ever find any smoked oyster tasting better, will you let us know, please? The oyster stuffing is selling at Charles and Company, 340 Madison Avenue, Hicks, 660 Fifth Avenue, and Hammacher Schlemmer, 145 East 57th Street, the price around 75 cents for 14 ounces.

Thanksgiving turns thoughts to the foods stemming from old-fashioned kitchens. Such a one is apple essence, a dark-brown spread typical of the Pennsylvania Dutch apple butter known fifty years ago. The essence is made with freshly milled cider with the finest of apples. One cooking requires twenty-seven gallons of fresh cider pressed from ten bushels of apples. Four bushels of apples are sliced, these cooked with skin and seeds, then strained to make a purée which is added to the boiled cider; one bushel of apples is needed to make a gallon of spread.

Making a fourteen-gallon batch of the essence is a day-long job. By six in the morning a wood fire is roaring under the old-fashioned thirty-gallon kettle in which the cider is waiting. This is boiled down to half its original quantity, then the applesauce added and for six hours the mixture is stirred, and constantly, by means of an old-time wooden paddle with a ten-foot handle. After that the sugar is added, for this the dark- brown, a half pound per gallon. Then the sampling begins to determine the proper consistency. By late afternoon the essence is finished and packed into glass jars to keep indefinitely, if given the chance. The essence has a tart, spicy flavor, yet sweet enough too, made so by the natural sweetness of the cider. The price is \$1 a quart; 55 cents a pint. Buy four or more quarts and the price is 90 cents each, postage prepaid to the third zone. Make checks payable to Paul K. Keene, Walnut Acres, Penns Creek, Pennsylvania.

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