



MEET OUR GROWERS

*Windy Ridge
Orchards*

CONKLIN, MICHIGAN

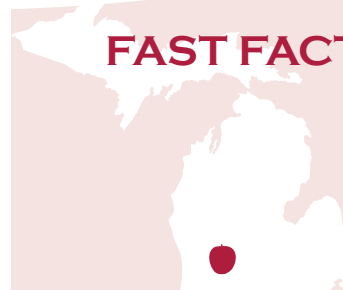
HISTORY

Chuck Rasch grew up around orchards, and his family has had a strong farming presence in West Michigan for more than a century. When it came time for him to put down roots, he started Windy Ridge Orchards in Conklin, Michigan.

Surrounded by family members and other orchards in the area, it's Chuck's mission to create high-quality fruit while having a minimal impact on the environment.

For decades, Windy Ridge has partnered with Riveridge Produce Marketing, offering Chuck and his operations a simple solution for shipping, as well as packaging under a well-known label. Chuck appreciates the relationships, saying, "If we have a tough year, or lose market space, Riveridge is there to help keep us on track."

FAST FACTS



- Location: *Conklin, Michigan*
- Total Acreage: *200 acres*
- Year Founded: *1924*
- Commodities: *apples and peaches*
- Varieties: *Braeburn, Cortland, Empire, Fuji, Gala, Gingergold, Golden Delicious, Honeycrisp, Ida Red, Jonagold, Jonamac, Jonathan, McIntosh, Paula Red, Red Delicious, and Rome*
- Production Time: *August - May*
- Packing Facility: *Rasch Brothers Apple Storage*
- Distance from Packing Facility: *1-5 miles*



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GROWTH

Chuck hasn't needed much help lately. In the last five years, Windy Ridge has added 80 acres to their growing capacity. One goal Chuck keeps in mind is variety, keeping an eye on new, popular types as they enter the market. “For example,” Chuck explains, “Gala’s are almost even with Red Delicious in the market now. You have to pay attention to what’s out there and plan ahead.”

He also emphasizes the importance of staying involved in the packing side of the business. “You can’t just grow an apple and expect great things off the packing line,” Chuck claims. “Everyone has to be focused on top quality at every point in the process.”

SUSTAINABILITY

One of the ways in which Chuck ensures top quality is by using cutting-edge, eco-friendly growing techniques. He sprays with more natural ingredients, and guided sprayers to use chemicals more efficiently. “It makes sense money-wise, and it will keep the land healthy,” says Chuck. “It costs a little bit more to start up initially, but it will pay off in the long run.”

FUTURE

As a third-generation grower, Chuck already knows his family will keep the farm going. He has one son and three daughters who enjoy helping out around the farm, and he believes the experience and responsibility help them grow stronger. “We say we grow kids as high-quality as our fruit,” Chuck laughs. “It’s great to be part of a family that can keep something going for so long.”



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