

New Zealand orchardists Bill and Erica Lynch of Nelson-based Fashion Foods Ltd have sought to bring back the strong flavors lost through Royal Gala apple breeding, and will be launching two new cultivars at an open day in late February.

Bill Lynch told *www.freshfruitportal.com* there were currently 3,000 trees planted of the Berica and Mondaju varieties and he believed they would have international appeal due to their flavor, coloring and storage life.

The varieties were bred from blocks of heritage Gala, chosen from five cultivars chosen seven years ago as finalists for potential commercialization.

"Heritage Gala lost a notable margin of its outstanding strong flavour and aroma when the mutation to Royal Gala was widely propagated, because of Royal Gala's more attractive visuals than heritage Gala," he said.

  
Mondaju apples on the tree.

"Although Royal Gala is a very good performing variety, with widespread international consumer appeal, inarguably heritage gala, its parent, rates as the stronger flavoured variety.

"Controlled atmosphere trials have yet to be conducted, but regular air storage trials [with smartfresh Tm] have demonstrated above average storage life. An exciting revelation discovered in the trials was the fruit has exhibited excellent keeping and eating at 200 days."

He said long-term storage actually enhanced the brightness of the pink color as well as the flavor.

"This reverses the colour experience exhibited by many 'red' sports. It seems the longer stored, the prettier they get," he said.

He said both Berica and Mondaju presented a "distinctive eye-catching point of difference", and both had harvests start a little bit earlier than Royal Galas in mid-February.

"Berica is a distinctive bright pink/orange colour with pale lemon background. It Exhibits random 'flecking' and we have 75% plus bright colour on our orchard in Redwood Valley Tasman district," Lynch said.

"Mondaju is subtly different in appearance and taste - it exhibits white lenticel spots and is

a vivid pink blush over a pale lemon background.

"Trials are running above 75% colour on our property. We generally obtain above average foreground colour as a result of the micro-climate, altitude and soil type, so it will be interesting to observe what occurs in the trials in other districts."

He said there had been no evidence of abnormal russeting, stem end splits or harvesting difficulty.

"The fruit handles normally and packouts are high - 90% plus is achievable."

"Our plans presently are to prepare for commercialisation, commencing within the next year, and we will hold an open day at harvest time for interested parties," he said, adding registrations were necessary.

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