



HOW TO DO A CIDER TASTING

A cider tasting can be a delightful experience, allowing you to explore the variety and nuances of different ciders. Here's a step-by-step guide to help you organize and conduct a cider tasting:

PREPARATION

Select Your Ciders: Choose a variety of ciders to taste. This can include different styles such as dry, sweet, sparkling, still, fruit-flavoured, and traditional. Aim for a range that showcases different regions, apple varieties, and production methods.

Glassware: Use wine glasses or tulip-shaped glasses, which help concentrate the aromas.

Environment: Conduct the tasting in a well-lit, quiet space with minimal distractions. A neutral background, such as a white tablecloth, can help you better assess the colour of the cider.

Serve at the Right Temperature: Chill your ciders to the appropriate serving temperatures. Heritage ciders 50-55°F (10-13°C), Modern ciders 40-50°F (4-10°C).

Palate Cleansers: Provide plain water and neutral-tasting snacks like bread or crackers to cleanse the palate between tastings.

TASTING PROCESS

Observe the Cider: Pour the cider into a glass and examine its colour and clarity. Ciders can range from pale yellow to deep amber. Note any bubbles if it's sparkling.

Smell the Cider: Swirl the cider gently in the glass to release its aromas. Take a few short sniffs to identify the different scents.

Taste the Cider: Take a small sip and let it coat your mouth. Consider the sweetness, acidity, tannins, and overall balance. Note the flavours you detect, such as fresh fruit, spices, or woodiness. Pay attention to the mouthfeel - is it crisp, smooth, or effervescent?

Finish: Notice the aftertaste. How long do the flavours linger? Is it pleasant and balanced?

RECORD, DISCUSS AND COMPARE YOUR IMPRESSIONS

Enjoy the process of discovery and the unique qualities each cider brings to the table!

CRAFT CIDER MAKING

Craft hard cider is made using a combination of traditional techniques and modern innovations. Here's a step-by-step overview of the process:



SELECTING AND HARVESTING APPLES

Varieties: The first step is selecting the right apple varieties. Craft cidemakers often use a mix of sweet, tart, and bitter apples to create a balanced flavour profile. Both dessert/eating apples and cider specific apples are used in Ontario.

Harvesting: Apples are hand-harvested in the fall for optimal ripeness.

WASHING AND MILLING

Washing: The apples are washed to remove any dirt, pesticides, or debris.

Milling: The cleaned apples are then milled (crushed) into a pulp or pomace.

PRESSING

Juicing: The apple pulp is pressed to extract the juice by either a mechanical or hydraulic press.

Collecting Juice: The extracted juice is collected in large containers. The juice may be left to sit for a short period to allow sediment to settle.

FERMENTATION

Yeast Addition: The juice is transferred to fermentation vessels, where yeast is usually added to control the fermentation process and achieve desired flavours.

Primary Fermentation: The yeast converts the sugars in the apple juice into alcohol and carbon dioxide. This primary fermentation typically takes 1-3 weeks.

Monitoring: The cidemaker monitors for sugar levels, temperature, and other parameters to ensure a successful fermentation.

RACKING AND AGING

Racking: The cider is "racked" (transferred) to a new container to separate it from the sediment that has settled at the bottom.

Aging: The cider can be stored in stainless steel tanks, wooden barrels, or glass carboys for several months to develop its flavours.

BLENDING AND BACK-SWEETENING

Blending: To achieve a balanced flavour profile, different batches of cider may be blended together.

Back-Sweetening: For a sweeter cider additional sugar or fresh apple juice can be added before bottling.

Adjustments: If necessary, adjustments are made to balance the cider's sweetness, acidity, and tannins.

CARBONATION

Sparkling Cider: Carbonation is achieved naturally by adding a small amount of sugar before bottling or through forced carbonation in pressurized tanks.

Still Cider: Still cider is bottled without additional carbonation.

QUALITY CONTROL

Tasting and Testing: Before release, the cider undergoes tasting and testing to ensure it meets the desired flavour profile and quality standards.