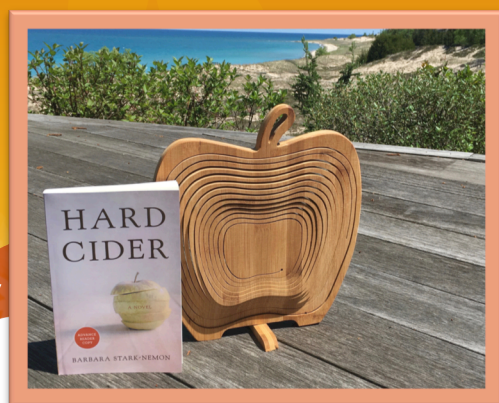


Barbara's Hard Cider Primer

September 18, 2018



Johnny Appleseed -not fake news

John Chapman (1774-1845) aka “Johnny Appleseed” took seeds from cider mills in Pennsylvania and scattered them across the frontier as far west as Illinois and from West Virginia north to Ontario. He laid out cider apple orchards in advance of the waves of settlers who would need them, and taught orchard management and cider production.

Prohibition put an end to the large-scale production of hard cider, which didn't make an appearance on the American brewing scene again until the 1970s and 80s. In the last 10 years cider making and drinking has taken off in this country. It is now the fastest-growing alcoholic beverage in North American history. (*Tasting Cider*, 2017) Adding to this trend is the production of Perry- the fermented drink made from pears.

There are more than 10,000 apple orchards in North America, about 7,500 of which are in the U.S. Quebec, Canada is the most densely populated cider area in North America. Nearly every state and four Canadian provinces have cider makers- even if apples and juices are sourced elsewhere. The varieties of apples used to make hard cider often include apples not suitable for fresh eating due to bitterness, hardness or acidity.

A Little History

I fell in love with hard apple cider many years ago while living in England. I'd never heard of hard cider in the U.S., but it's as old as the country.

Thomas Jefferson planted 50 Albemarle Newtown Pippin cider apple trees at Monticello in the late 18th century. John Adams took his “apple a day” in the form of hard cider, and George Washington served cider to prospective voters in his 1758 election bid.

In many rural locations during colonial times, settlers didn't have safe drinking water sources, and relied on fermented drinks like hard cider, which sometimes replaced hard-to-get wine, coffee, tea and beer. Fermentation was also a way of preserving excess fruit.

The apple probably first grew in Kazakhstan and was carried to the Middle East, Greece, Spain and then to the rest of Europe. Evidence of cider-making in Europe dates back more than two thousand years. Pilgrims brought apple cuttings to America in the 16th century, but they didn't fare well, until seeds from fresh apples brought on later ships were planted, producing different varieties of apples



Cider Classifications

Those whose concept of cider is the fresh juice served with donuts at mills in the fall may not realize that hard cider isn't always sweet- fermentation turns sugars into alcohol— many ciders have alcohol by volume of around 6.5 percent and higher- like a potent India Pale Ale. Producers can restore sweetness by adding juice, sugar or other natural substances. The mix of apples used to make hard cider varies in sweetness or sharpness, acidity, and amount of tannins.

Four levels of sweetness categorize finished ciders.

1. Dry: Both still and sparkling versions have higher tannin and greater acids for a stronger more mineral taste. Sugar content- less than .5% gram per liter
2. Off-dry: Between 1 and 2% residual sugars, there is still plenty of acid and tannin, but more fruit flavor.
3. Semi-sweet or semi-dry: These ciders have between 2 and 4% sugars and are more full bodied with less tannin and acid. Most large-scale commercial ciders fall into this category.
4. Sweet: 4% sugars up to 10 or 20% for the ice ciders. These ciders are comparable to dessert wines.



Interesting Fact

I was surprised to learn that seeds from a given variety of apple will produce many different varieties of apple trees, not necessarily including the variety of origin

Some favorites...

In my corner of northwest Michigan

Tandem Ciders, Suttons Bay, MI – *Smackintosh*
Chaos Ciders -Verterra, Lake Leelanau, MI, *Just Apple*
Taproot Cider House, Traverse City, MI too many to list!

And while I developed my cider chops in England, I got an on-site cider education at one of the premier cider makers in this country, Farnum Hill Ciders at Poverty Lane Orchards, in Lebanon, New Hampshire. Still love their *Farmhouse* cider!



Read about the apple

For a fascinating tour of the apple's history, check out Michael Pollans' book *The Botany of Desire*, or the PBS program based it. *The Botany of Desire- a Plant's-Eye View of the World*, Michael Pollan, Random House, 2001.



Learn more about the drink

For a tour of American ciders and some great recipes for cocktails and food, check out *Tasting Cider- The Cidercraft Guide to the Distinctive Flavors of North American Hard Cider* by Erin James and Cidercraft Magazine 2017, Sip Publishing



Want to Make Your Own?

The bible for cider making remains... *Cider, Hard and Sweet: History, Traditions, and Making Your Own- Third Edition*, Ben Watson, Countryman Press, 2013.