

Real Cider: The Basics

Cider has a bad reputation here in the United States. Somewhere along the line, beverages of character bearing the cider name were driven into obscurity by soulless, heavily-marketed, one-dimensional imitations of the real deal.

Thankfully, real cider is experiencing a resurgence and it's now more accessible than it has been in years. Lime Ventures sells exclusively real cider made by real people with real skill.

What is “real” cider, anyway?

When we talk about real cider, we’re referring to an alcoholic beverage (a hard cider, if you will) made by fermenting the pressed juice of the apple. This stands in contrast to mass-produced, market-dominating ciders made from apple pulp or concentrates with added sweeteners or unnatural flavoring agents.

How is real cider made?

Real cider is usually made from a blend of apple varieties—some well-known “eating” varieties and others grown specifically for cider making that may be a bit less familiar. These cider varieties can taste bitter, tannic, or excessively sour on their own, but in a finished cider, they provide balance or depth to an otherwise cloying or uninteresting beverage.

Once the apples for a given cider are chosen, they are collected from trees, scrapped (ground in a mill), pressed in a cider press, filtered, and transferred to barrels or other fermentation vessels. Strictly traditional cider is fermented with the wild yeast that naturally resides on the apples, but less traditional cider makers may use cultured yeast from a laboratory as well. Using lab-cultured yeast allows for a more consistent product and minimizes the risk of odd flavor development, but is passed over by those who perceive wild fermentation as more natural, traditional, or interesting. Fermentation generally takes about 3 months, but cider is commonly aged in casks for up to and occasionally exceeding three years. Small amounts of water or sugar may be added to adjust a cider’s potency or sweetness and different fruits, spices, herbs, or other natural additives can be included for flavoring purposes.

Variations on Cider:

Perry is a cider made with pears instead of apples.

Apple wine is a cider strengthened by the addition of sugar or fruit added during secondary fermentation.

Cyser is a cider made with the addition of honey...a hybrid between cider and mead.