

Craft Brewers Expand with Cider

BY MICHAEL KUDERKA

You have no doubt noticed that hard cider has rapidly expanding in popularity. Even more intriguing is that this beverage has probably not experienced this level of popularity since the 1620s when the colonists of Plymouth's Massachusetts Bay Colony, both adults and children, were consuming hard cider as an alternative to the questionable water supply.

In fact, according to Nielsen, nationally cider grew 64 percent in 2012 vs. 2011 (no 2013 numbers yet), outpacing the growth of both wine and craft beer.

As a result, some of most successful American craft brewers are investing both their capital and their creativity into expanding the popularity and flavor of this very American beverage.

Hard cider apple varieties

The quality of the cider links closely with the variety and blend of the ingredients used. Traditionally, hard cider production employs the character of sweet, bittersweet, bitter sharp and sharp apple varieties.

Each apple category contributes various levels of phenolic compounds (tannins) and malic acidity.

Bittersweet apples - more than 0.2% (w/v) tannins and less than 0.45% (w/v) acidity

Sharp apples - less than 0.2% (w/v) tannins and greater than 0.45% (w/v) acidity

Bitter sharp apples - less than 0.2% (w/v) tannins and greater than 0.2% (w/v) acidity

Sweet apples - less than 0.2% (w/v) tannins and less than 0.45% (w/v) acidity

There are roughly ten or so varieties of apples widely grown for cider making. Many cider makers are adding additional fruit juices and spices to create signature

flavors and blends.

Popularity of Angry Orchard®

In a short period of time, Angry Orchard®, a subsidiary of The Boston Beer Company, has become the number one selling hard cider brand family in the U.S.*

The cider makers had been tinkering with making cider for about 15 years under The Boston Beer Company. Then in 2011, in response to growing drinker interest in the cider category, Angry Orchard Cider Company was created and the hard ciders they had been working on for years were finally released in the U.S. market.

"We have spent years crafting the perfect blend of carefully selected ingredients to create three signature, highest-quality ciders. We're proud that the entire country can now taste the 'fruits of our labor,'" says David Sipes, Cider Maker for Angry Orchard.

While Angry Orchard maintains its own identity, it's team of cider makers take the same craft approach to making cider as the brewers at the Boston Beer Company take for brewing beer. The Angry Orchard lineup includes the core collection of Crisp Apple and Traditional Dry, Apple Ginger, introduced seasonal ciders Elderflower and Cinnful, as well as specialty ciders from The Cider House Collection, Iceman™ and Strawman®.

Angry Orchard® blend of apples

Blending Italian culinary apples from the Alpine foothills with French bit-



tersweet apples from Normandy, Angry Orchard cider makers utilize a lengthy fermentation process, including wood-aging adding complexity and balance. Bittersweet apples are described as "angry" because of the tart and tannic characteristics they impart. Culinary apples produce a fruit with a juicy, ripe apple character that, when combined with the bittersweet apples, results in a blend that contributes to the complex flavor profile of each Angry Orchard cider style.

For their Elderflower cider, the addition of elderflower adds fruity flavors reminiscent of tropical fruits like lychee, pear and citrus, which matches well with the rich, fruity flavors found in the culinary and bittersweet apples used at Angry Orchard.

More recently, The Cider House Collection has brought to the market a new batch of specialty ciders that are inspired by traditional Quebec ice ciders, farmhouse ciders, and the seasonal Cinnful Apple, the first cider from Angry Orchard made with American apples from Washington State.

"Angry Orchard Strawman was influenced by centuries-old European farmhouse cider making techniques. Our

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team sought the perfect blend of apples and a unique fermentation and aging process to create our own version of a farmhouse cider with an earthy, yet subtly sweet flavor profile,” said Sipes. “For Angry Orchard Iceman, we took cues from the traditional ice ciders of Quebec, creating a cider that is both delicate and sweet.”

And Jim Koch's take on cider?

Well although Jim enjoys the cider from Angry Orchard, as we all know, his first love is beer.

* Source: IRI, Total U.S. Food, latest 52, 26, 13 & 4 weeks ending 8/4/2013

** Source: IRI, Total U.S. Food, latest 52 ending 12/30/2012

Thinking Out-of-the-Box?

How innovative is your store at selling beer? We would like to know. If you have promotions that go beyond refilling the cold box, we would like to hear from you and share your “out-of-the-box” thinking with our fellow Beer Trends readers.

E-mail me at mkuderka@mcbasset.com with your successful ideas for selling beer,

along with your contact information. If we write about your program in our column we will send you a free copy of The 3rd Edition of The Essential Reference of Domestic Brewers and Their Bottled Brands.

Michael Kuderka is the Managing Partner at MC Basset, LLC. The company designs beer selling solutions and training for On and Off Premise retailers.

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