

Apple Cider

Making Apple Cider is easy and fun!

How to select the apples:

The quality of the cider you produce will depend on several things—some are variable and unpredictable, some you can control. One of the controllable elements, and an important one, is cleanliness. All equipment and materials must be clean and sanitary and free of insects. You should wash and scrub your press after each use. The easiest and surest way to ruin cider is to allow it to become contaminated with dirt, bacteria or insects.

There are numerous theories about which kinds of apples make the best cider. Lots of folks have their own particular favorites, but that is dictated by how they like their cider to taste—and often by the particular varieties of apple trees that grow in their locality. Cider can have many subtle and delicious differences in flavor from quite sweet to rather tart.

Cider makers agree that a combination of at least two, but preferably three or more kinds of apples gives the best result. When you use several varieties together, you have more opportunity to balance the sweet and tart, smooth and astringent, and you can change the blend to suit your own taste requirements. Each variety contributes some necessary ingredient of taste or aroma to the finished product. You can certainly make cider using only one kind of apple, but it will probably be less interestingly flavored.

Varieties differ from one area to another, but the following groupings, in part, listed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture will give you a general idea of the characteristics of some of the varieties you may want to blend:

Sweet: Baldwin, Hubbardston, Rome Beauty, Red Delicious, Russet Grimes, Cortland, Ambrosia, Jazz, Gala

Mildly Acid to Tart: Winesap, Jonathon, Stayman, Northern Spy, York Imperial, Wealthy, Newtown Pippin, Greening, Granny Smith

Aromatic: Winter Banana, Ribston, Ben Davis, McIntosh, Golden Delicious.

Astringent: Florence Hibernial, Red Siberian, Transcendent, Martha.

A small quantity of crabapples added to the mix will provide tannin—and give your cider a desirable tang. But you should not use crabapples exclusively because they are too astringent.

Do not use drops that have been lying in the orchard for any length of time because they will give the cider a disagreeable earthy taste. Do avoid unripe apples, as they will impart a starchy flavor.