

THE BEVERAGE PEOPLE

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Making Cider (or Perry)

1. Crush the apples. Use only sound, fully ripe fruit.
2. Optionally, stir in pectic enzyme powder to break down pectins and allow for a juicier pressing. Use 1/2 ounce for every 5 gallons. Let the crushed apples stand in a covered container for 2 to 18 hours. If left to stand for longer than 2 hours at this stage, the crushed apples should be refrigerated.
3. Press to separate the juice from the skins and other solids. Funnel the collected juice into closed containers, filled no more than 75% full.
4. Immediately test the juice for total acidity. Follow the instructions in your acid testing kit. If the acidity is less than .65%, add enough tartaric acid crystals to bring it to this level.
5. Test the sugar content of the juice with your hydrometer. Correct any deficiencies by adding enough sugar to bring the reading up to 15% sugar (15 degrees brix).
6. When these tests and corrections have been completed, the must should be sulfited right away. If your fruit is in good condition, add one tablespoon of 3% stock sulfite solution per gallon of must. If the condition is poor, add twice as much, and wait at least five hours before adding yeast.
7. Add your yeast . Attach a fermentation lock, and allow fermentation to procede.
8. When visible signs of fermentation end, the cider must be racked off the lees, fined, and placed in topped up glass, or stainless steel storage containers. Let it stand for a month.

During the racking at the end of fermentation, add one teaspoon of Stock Sulfite Solution per gallon (20 parts per million SO₂) . Follow the directions supplied with your fining agent.

9. After a month, rack and sulfite again (as in Step 8), placing it back in topped up containers. Store for two or three more months.

10. Carefully rack away from the lees. If your cider is going into extended bottle storage, add one and a half teaspoons of Stock Sulfite Solution per gallon (30-35 parts per million).

Beverages such as this may often be enjoyed within two months of bottling. If you plan to drink some that soon, don't add additional sulfite to that portion at bottling time.

11. Siphon into bottles, cork or cap them, and set them aside for whatever bottle aging is needed. If you wish to sweeten, do so at bottling time with simple syrup (two parts sugar to one part water, boiled), and add 1/2 tsp. Stabilizer per gallon to kill any remaining yeast cells and prevent refermentation in the bottles.

Options

1. If you are making your cider from purchased juice, or are using your own apples, you are limited to the apple varieties you have. However, if you have options, you may eventually wish to experiment with varieties to create your own flavor profile.

Some apples are relatively "neutral" in character. Red Delicious comes immediately to mind, but this class of apples would include such varieties as Baldwin, Cortland, Rome Beauty, and York Imperial. Use 30-50% neutral apples in your blend.

"Tart" apples should comprise 20-40% of your blend. These are apples like Granny Smith, Jonathan, Northern Spy, Rhode Island Greening, Wealthy, and Winesap.

"Aromatic" varieties, such as Gravenstein, MacIntosh, Pippin, and Roxbury Russet, should comprise 10-20% of the total.

An option, should you have them available, would be to include 5 or 10% Crabapples in the mix.

After you've tasted your first blended cider, you can make adjustments. If your first effort is harsh, sweeten and stabilize at bottling time, and reduce the percentage of tart apples in the next batch, so the total acid reading will be lower.

If your first cider tastes flat, add a teaspoon of Tannin per five gallons. Raise the total acidity, as needed, with a small amount of Tartaric Acid. In this case, you may wish to reduce the percentage of neutral apples in subsequent batches.

2. You may add other fruit or juices to enhance these beverages. For example, a percentage of cherry, blackberry, or raspberry juice can make for interesting variations on the theme.
3. Spices can be employed as well. Ginger, cinnamon, and cloves, are obvious possibilities (either separately or in combination). Boil a small amount of your chosen spice in a cup or so of water for 10 or 15 minutes. Before spicing up the entire batch, test out your idea by adding drops of the spice tea to a few ounces of cider. Add to taste.
4. Prior to fermentation, you could add enough sugar to raise the sugar content to 17-18%, a customary level for traditional New England Ciders. Small amounts of brown sugar or molasses may be used for part of the sugar
5. You may make a sparkling cider by following "Country Champagne" procedures .
6. Using honey to increase the strength of your cider can transform it into a "Cyser.."
7. Some ciders may benefit from a modest period of aging in oak. This is more likely to be true of dry ciders than sweet ones. Oak chips, or liquid oak essences, may also be used.