



How to Make Apple Cider - Heritage English Style

English ciders are made with crab apples with medium to high tannin content. They are usually dry to medium-sweet and full-bodied. They tend to have a long mouth finish because of the high astringency due to high tannin levels. The acidity will be lower than New World style due to malolactic fermentation which reduces the dominant malic acid into less acidic lactic acid. English ciders often have no appreciable apple character to them due to the dryness of the cider and the use of malolactic fermentation. Carbonation levels range from still (not carbonated at all) to champagne-like. Common apple varieties include Kingston Black, Stoke Red, Porter's Perfection, and Nehou. Alcohol content tends to be between 6 and 9%, with starting sugars between 12-18 Brix.

English ciders commonly go through malo-lactic fermentation (MLF). MLF is the process by which bacteria convert malic acid, which is sharp and tart, into lactic acid, which is relatively soft and mild. MLF tends to soften the perceived acidity of ciders and wines by removing much of the sharp acid bite of malic acid. It also tends to reduce the perceived fruitiness. In the presence of tannic apples, MLF commonly produces ethylphenols which are evident as other flavors: spicy/smoky including smoked meat, phenolic, and farmyard/old-horse. These flavors are common and desirable in English styles, but are not required to be English-style. The tannin MLF character should not dominate the cider's flavor and aroma. If the farmhouse character is too strong in English-style ciders, it is considered a fault and may indicate contamination by *Brettanomyces*. Sometimes the farmhouse character of English ciders is mistakenly attributed to the addition of *Brettanomyces*. However that character should come purely from MLF in the presence of high tannins.

To make English-style ciders it is best to start with high tannin crab apples. Kingston Blacks can occasionally be found here in Sonoma County. If you do not have access to high tannin crab apples, use whatever varieties you have available and add tannins to the juice in the form of Stellartan G Grape Tannin. For more information on adding tannins refer to our [Key Components in Cider discussion](#). If you want that smoked ham accent that is characteristic of English-style ciders, MLF must occur in the presence of tannins, so tannins should be added to the juice before MLF. [The Beverage People carries malo-lactic bacteria cultures from three different companies from 5 gallon packets to 66 gallon.](#)

English ciders are also traditionally fermented in wooden barrels. However, English ciders should not have strong wood character because the barrels were traditionally old, neutral wine barrels. **WineStix** makes small toasted oak staves that come in either American or French oak and in a variety of darknesses of toast. Since oak shouldn't be a strong character in the cider, I recommend using the light toast WineStix. WineStix recommends starting with 1 stave of oak per 5 gallons. I would recommend cutting a stave in half and starting with that. It is easy to add more oak. When the desired amount of wood character is achieved in the cider, rack the cider off of the oak to prevent continued extraction.

Instructions

1. Crush the apples. Use tannic crab apples if you can. Sort out spoiled fruit.
2. The crushed pulp should be sulfited right away. If your fruit is in good condition, add no more than 1/2 **Campden Tablet** per gallon of crushed fruit (32 parts per million SO₂). Higher sulfite levels will inhibit a successful malolactic fermentation later in the process.
3. Stir in **Pectinase** powder. Use 1/2 ounce for every 5 gallons. Wait 2-4 hours before pressing for the pectinase to break down the pulp which increases the amount of juice that can be extracted. It will also aid in clarifying the cider to achieve a clear, bright cider.
4. Press the pulp to separate the juice from the skins and other solids. Funnel the collected juice into narrow-neck containers that can accept an airlock. Only fill them three-quarters full.
5. Remove a sample of the juice to test for total acidity (TA). Follow the instructions in your acid testing kit. If the acidity is less than .55%, add enough **tartaric acid** to bring it to this level. If you cannot do the test right away, refrigerate the juice and run the test later.
6. Now test the sugar content of the juice with your hydrometer. Correct any deficiencies by adding enough sugar to bring the reading up to 12-18% sugar (12-18° brix).
7. *If your apples are culinary apples rather than English varieties, add tannin such as StellarTan G Grape tannin to increase the tannin content of the juice. For instructions, refer to our **Key Components in Cider discussion**.
8. Wait a total of 8-12 hours after crushing and adding the Campden Tablets for the sulfite to dissipate. Then add your Yeast by sprinkling on the surface. A good choice of yeast would be a English Ale Yeast. It will result in a softer mouthfeel than a wine yeast. **Our staff has enjoyed the #1968 London Special Yeast from Wyeast**, but feel free to experiment with other English ale yeasts. Attach an airlock or breather bung, and allow fermentation to proceed. After a day or two of fermentation, sprinkle in 1 tsp. of **Yeast Food** per 5 gallons. Agitate to disperse. If you can, maintain fermentation temperatures that are on the lower end of the temperature range for the yeast you are using. For example, if the fermentation temperature range of the yeast is 60° - 75°F, using fermentation temperatures around 60° - 62°F will ensure that less aromatics are driven off with the CO₂ production.
9. When visible signs of fermentation end - the foam flattens and the hazy appearance begins to clarify - the cider must be removed from the sediment. Use a siphon to transfer the cider to a sanitized glass, PET plastic or stainless steel storage containers that accept an airlock. Fill your container all the way into the narrow part of the neck without touching the stopper. Close the top with a stopper and airlock.
10. Add a malolactic bacteria culture and maintain temperatures at 65-80 degrees F for 3-6 weeks for a successful conversion of malic to lactic acid. We sell **different cultures for different size batches and conditions**. Review our discussion of the **"Mysteries of Malolactic"** for help in determining whether you have successfully completed the conversion.
11. When you have determined that MLF (malolactic fermentation) has completed, rack your cider to a new vessel. This is a good time to add some neutral or lightly toasted oak if you desire. English ciders are also traditionally fermented in wooden barrels. However, English ciders should not have strong wood character

because the barrels were traditionally old, neutral wine barrels. WineStix makes small toasted oak staves that comes in either American or French oak and in a variety of darknesses of toast. Since oak shouldn't be a strong character in the cider, we recommend using the light toast WineStix at a rate of about 1/2 stick per 5 gallons. Ensure it is topped up and again add 1/2 Campden Tablet per gallon (32 parts per million SO₂).

12. Store for two or three months.

13. Carefully rack away from the sediment. If your cider is going into extended bottle storage, add another half Campden Tablet per gallon (32 parts per million SO₂). 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.

14. Siphon into bottles, cork or cap them, and set them aside for whatever bottle aging is needed. You may make a sparkling cider by adding 5-8 oz. of sugar to 5 gallons of cider and bottling in crown-cappable beer or up to 10 oz in strong champagne bottles. Store at room temperature for at least 2 weeks before refrigerating and opening a bottle. This will allow time for the yeast to consume the added sugar and carbonate the cider. If not fully carbonated after 2 weeks, wait a week and test again. Note: Do not use Potassium Sorbate if making sparkling cider or it won't sparkle! If you wish to sweeten, add to taste, a syrup made by boiling two parts sugar with one part water, and add 1/2 tsp. Potassium Sorbate per gallon to prevent re-fermentation in the bottles. To carbonate sweetened cider, you will need to force carbonate in a keg system.

