

Make And Enjoy Award Winning Sparkling Ciders

Presented by Martin Nygard and Bill Thornton
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Making good quality apple cider is relatively easy and enjoying it is even easier. A number of AWO cider makers have had great success – and so can you!! AWO has only sent 2 ciders in each of the past two years to the Canadian championships. All four (by 4 different cider makers) were the only entries to be awarded medals (all silver or gold). Their techniques are quite similar and we will share these methods with you today.

Our topic will focus on making ciders that meet the AWO class descriptions for ‘SPARKLING CIDER’, which include the following points:

1. apple based sparkling beverage between 5% and 8% alcohol (evidence of alcohol in nose or taste is a fault).
2. colour ranges from neutral to golden but not brown.
3. sparkle controlled and last at least 20 minutes with preference for fine bubbles.
4. may be presented on priming yeast but preference is for sparged bottles. (artificial carbonation is quite acceptable and commonly used)
5. safety requires glass beer bottles with crown cap, or plastic bottles with screw cap, or tins. (also accepted are champagne style bottles with wired down plastic stopper)
6. balance of sugar, acid and taste as expected in champagne or sparkling wine with no oxidation or harshness that is often found in apples. Sweetness optional but must be in balance with the preferred taste having distinct apple character.

Some comments on these criteria:

- it is allowable (often with positive effect) to add other fruit to add flavour and colour to the cider as long as the product is “apple based” and retains some “distinct apple character”.
- starting SG of 1.038 to 1.060 fermented to completion will yield 5%-8% alcohol.
- judges tend to prefer lively apple flavours with off dry to semi-sweet balance and persistent carbonation.

APPLES

The crucial first step is getting good quality freshly pressed apple juice. Some can pick and press their own apples, however for most of us purchasing from a cider mill is most convenient. Many cider mills will put together a requested blend if the order is large enough.

1. Specify that the juice will be fermented and that no preservatives (or pasteurization) are desired. (we have to give those yeasties a chance for a quick unhindered start)
2. No windfalls or bruised apples should be in the batch. (these give harsh and oxidized flavours and brown tinges)
3. The most successful blends contain later harvested and harder apples (eg Ida Red and Empire), some of which have a tangy bite to them (eg Russett – hard to come by these though). Some desirable earlier apples (eg Courtland) may be used if they have been in cold storage immediately since picking. Soft apples (eg Macintosh) provide sugar but should be avoided or minimized in the blend as they tend to give thin simple flavours.
4. All the apples in the blend should come out of cold storage just prior to pressing so that the juice is cold. Gentle pressing and handling reduces pulp and oxidation. A “Squeeze Box” press with cloth partitions retains most of the pulp and produces fairly clear juice.
5. Customers should pick up their juice within 12 hours of press while it is still cold and take home to settle overnight before racking (no splashing) to primary fermentors.

Members of the St Thomas and London clubs have an exceptionally good supplier in Gredig's Orchard (519-633-8885) where Tammy Gredig follows all of the above positive practices making about 700L to our specifications at a cost of \$0.90 to \$1.00 per Litre.

Both of the medal winning AWC ciders were made from her 2005 juice (Courtland, Ida Red, Empire and Mutsu).

BASIC RECIPES

On the following pages we share with you our basic recipes along with specific hints for successful sparkling cider production that have resulted in our award winning ciders – but more importantly – in the making of ciders that we love to consume and that we are proud to share with our family and friends.

Basic Sparkling Cider Recipe

By Bill Thornton

The basic keys to making good cider are:

1. Good quality raw product
2. Sugar/acid balance
3. Keep it clean

Schedule of procedures to make 23 litres of sparkling cider:

1. Purchase freshly pressed sweet cider juice from reliable supplier having previously arranged the following – specify apple blend to include sweet, acidic, and complexly flavoured apples; no bruised or windfalls; no additives/preservatives.
2. Cider was probably chilled. Set containers on shelf that allows for racking. Cider will settle out solids prior to racking into primary within 24 hours. A 26L carboy with airlock is a good primary for up to 23L of raw cider. Reserve about 1L of raw cider and freeze it to use later as sweet reserve. Measure SG, and acid prior to adding yeast.
3. When racking to primary add the following:
 - 1 tsp Pectic enzyme
 - 7-10 drops Color Pro (aids clarification & settling)
 - 7-10 drops of Cinn-Free (enhanced aromatics)
4. If potential alcohol is too low (SG 1.045 gives about 6% alcohol – this is what I aim for) add sugar syrup (or cane sugar well stirred in to dissolve) to raise SG to desired level. If acid is below 7.5 g/L raise by adding Malic acid.

5. Select appropriate yeast (VL1, K1V-1116, Steinberg are my favourites but many others are available). Rehydrate yeast in about 50-100 mL warm (about body temp) water with 3-5 g Go Ferm (nutrient to give yeast a fast start) for 10-15 minutes – then add to cider. Place airlock in carboy. Ferment in cool environment (50-60 F is good, cooler is better but extends fermentation time significantly).
6. Active fermentation should begin in 1-2 days. When it does add ½ tsp Fermaid K or other “super nutrient” and stir in gently. Repeat nutrient addition in 2 or 3 days and also when SG is down to about 1.020 to ensure complete ferment.
7. Rack off of sediment when SG is about 1.010 to 1.000. Allow ferment to complete (SG 0.995 – 0.998) and rack promptly to appropriate sized carboy adding enough Potassium Metabisulphite to bring SO₂ to about 50-60 ppm (1/2 tsp brings 19L up 50 ppm). Top up carboy (always from this point on) with similar sound, unfaulted cider.
8. Rack 1 or 2 times during the next three weeks whenever any visible sediment forms.
9. Adjust acid: add Malic acid to raise acid level to at least 8.0 g/L and up to 9.0 g/L for cider to be sweetened.

*** AVOID MALOLACTIC FERMENTATION

If M/L starts, raise SO₂ levels to 75 ppm and cool cider to low temp (close to freezing if possible) add M/L inhibiting enzyme as per instructions. An additional racking and month of aging at normal cellar temperature without renewed M/L activity will need to be added to the procedure.

10. Prior to adjusting sweetness (if desired) confirm that SO₂ is about 50ppm. Add metabisulphite as needed. Then add Potassium Sorbate as per instructions (about 2 tsp) to prevent renewed fermentation (only needed if adding sugar syrup or sweet reserve to freeze fractionate apple juice or sugar syrup can be used if no sweet reserve available. Stir to mix and leave at least 1 week before fining.
11. Clarify cider and deactivate enzymes using Bentonite fining as per instructions.
12. When cider is clear (after 7-14 days), rack it off of the sediment of Bentonite.
13. Adjust sugar/acid balance if needed – acid should be very crisp. When desired balance has been achieved, filter using #2 pads (or #3 of sterile filtering desired). Wait for at least 3 weeks to keg, carbonate & bottle.
14. Rack to keg, carbonate to about 30-32 psi then refrigerate at close to 0 degrees centigrade overnight. Then recarbonate to about 30 psi (it will take more CO₂ now that it is at lower temp) and return to refrigerator for at least a few hours (better for a day).
15. Sterilize and rinse clean beer or sparkling wine bottles (glass much better than plastic for retaining CO₂ over time) and place in freezer for at least an hour prior to bottling with pressurized bottling unit that has a safety shield. Do not use any chipped or cracked bottles (they will explode when pressurized). Use proper closures for bottle type used.
16. Enjoy your sparkling cider immediately, however it will age for over a year and mellow over time.

Cider House Rules

By Martin Nygard

Rule #1 Remember you are now part of an age-old tradition.

Rule #2 Always give your supplier a bottle of a previous batch.

Sparkling Cider --- Ontario Style

By Martin Nygard

This recipe should produce a crisp, clean, easy-drinking cider that can be enjoyed on its own or with most foods, especially pork, chicken and appetizers. Since apple is a neutral flavoured fruit, it won't overpower the palate and therefore blends well.

Ingredients:

- 20-22 litres of fresh-pressed, cold-settled or frozen, non-pasteurized, non-sulphited apple juice from at least 3 different types of apples. (i.e. choose a mix of sweet, acidic, aromatic & tannic varieties).
- Sugar to 1060 SG (7% alcohol)
- Acid blend to 9.5 g/L T/A
- ½ - 1 packet yeast (71B-1122, Cotes de Blanc)
- 2 tsp pectic enzyme
- 2 tsp GoFerm or Fermaid
- Put 4 cans of pure apple juice (Allens) in freezer)

Procedure:

- Ferment cool to 1.000 SG (or 1 week in primary).
- Rack to glass and ferment to dry.
- Rack & sulphite to 50-70 ppm.
- Allow cider to clear partially before adding 2 tsp Sparkelloid (should clear in a few weeks).
- Remove lids from frozen cans of juice. Draw off freeze fractionated juice into sterile pail – 50% (takes a few hours). Rack cider off lees into primary, re-check acidity, add freeze fractionated juice to taste (a little sweeter than you might think).
- Filter AF-3 (fine).
- Age in carboy 1 month minimum.
- Keg & cool to around freezing.
- Bottle at 35-38 psi.

ENJOY !