



Cider: Marketing Artisan Hard Cider

Selling your stock of hard cider

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If you love growing apples and brewing is your passion, think artisan hard cider.

In 1990, venturesome Americans consumed 112,000 cases of commercial hard cider. That they liked it is a given: In 1998 sales topped 4 million cases. The cider market climbs by roughly 55 percent each year. That's a heap of apple squeezings! Who drinks hard cider? Prince William of Great Britain does, and he fits the mold: 21 to 30 years old, college educated—urban drinkers are boosting cider sales to record heights.

And as the American palate adjusts to this intriguing new-old beverage, imbibers increasingly seek “the better stuff.” Is cider the craft beer of the new millennium? It seems so. It's a wide-open market for artisan brewers and orchardists seeking a lucrative new value-added product.

There are fewer than five dozen commercial cider makers in the United States today, ranging from big biz producers E. & J. Gallo and the Boston Beer Company to fine craft cider makers the likes of Farnum Hill Ciders of Lebanon, N.H.; Rhyne Cyder, Sonoma, Calif.; and AEppelTreow Winery in Burlington, Wis. If you'd like to join their ranks, here's what to do:

While large-scale commercial ciders are made using apple juice concentrates, artisan ciders are crafted of fresh-pressed juice. You'll need access to specialty cider apples and lots of them. Since few antique cider orchards are still producing, you'll probably have to plant your own.

Cider apples grafted on semi-dwarf rootstock begin bearing in three to four years—just enough time to research your business and learn the trade.

Discuss the craft and sample wares at the 10th annual Colrain (Massachusetts) Cider Day, the grandest gathering of cider crafters and sippers in North America. It's part of a countywide collection of apple festivals held the first weekend of every November. Visit cideries in person and via the Web. Consider apprenticing with or working for an artisan cider maker here or abroad.

Analyze potential markets and develop effective marketing strategies. Will you niche market all-natural, organic or specialty ciders? Apple or apple-fruit blend wines? Cyser? Perry? Will you sell on-farm or off? How? Where? When? Through a distributor—or not? Download Cornell University's “Processed Apple Product Marketing Analysis: Hard Cider and Apple Wine” to help you get started.

Investigate legalities. You'll need federal, state and possibly local licenses to ferment and sell hard cider. Where, when and how you can market your product varies widely from state to state and may depend upon its alcohol content. Know before you plant those trees.

Read more about apple cider [here](#).