

Fall Cider Rally – October 2019

Wilson's Orchard, Iowa City, Iowa and the Cedar Rapids Brewing Society

Wilson's cider is fresh-pressed juice from apples picked at the Wilson's Orchard. The blend of apples changes as differing apples harvest at different times between the beginning of August through the end of October. The blend of apples for the cider rally includes roughly equal parts of Gala, Jonathon, and Jonagold apples. The specific gravity of the pressed juice was about 10 Brix (S.G. 1.040) giving a potential alcohol of roughly 5% ABV (if fermented to completely dry). The sugar level was much lower than expected, and the juice was somewhat bland in flavor and aroma.

Eight different products are fermented as part of the rally including 6 traditional semi-dry sparkling ciders as part of a yeast trial, a semi-sweet cherry cider, and a semi-sweet cyser (apple mead).

The apples are described below:

<https://www.orangeippintrees.com/trees/apple-trees/gala>



One of the most popular supermarket apple varieties, and a good mid-season variety for the garden in many areas. The sweet flavor of ripe Gala apples eaten straight from the tree is quite a surprise compared to supermarket examples. Gala is also a good variety for juicing, as you might expect the flavor is rich and sweet, useful for mixing with other sharper varieties.

<https://www.orangeippintrees.com/trees/apple-trees/jonathan>



Jonathan is a classic 19th century American apple variety, noted for its high-quality flavor. It rewards being eaten fresh between October and Christmas, but is a good keeper and a good variety for the kitchen.

<https://www.orangeippintrees.com/trees/apple-trees/jonagold>



Jonagold is a widely-grown American apple variety with an excellent rich aromatic flavor. It is widely grown in the USA and Europe.

Jonagold stores well, a quality it inherits from one of its parents, Golden Delicious. However, it gets its excellent flavor from its other parent, the well-respected old New York apple variety Jonathan. It has a combination of good sweetness and good sharpness that often denotes a high-quality apple.

Yeast Trial

The yeast trial with six different ale yeasts – three British-style yeasts and three Belgian-style yeasts.

STRAIN: 1318 LONDON ALE III™

Profile: Originating from a traditional London brewery, this yeast has a wonderful malt and hop profile. It is a true top cropping strain with a fruity, very light and softly balanced palate. This strain will finish slightly sweet. London Ale III has become synonymous with the production of New England IPAs, also known as juicy or hazy IPAs, and balances well with the tropical fruit qualities from late and dry hop additions.

- HIGH FLOCCULATION
- 71-75% ATTENUATION
- 64-74°F TEMPERATURE RANGE
- 10% ABV

STRAIN: 1335 BRITISH ALE II™

Profile: A classic British ale profile with good flocculation and malty flavor characteristics. It will finish crisp, clean and fairly dry.

- HIGH FLOCCULATION
- 73-76% ATTENUATION
- 63-75°F TEMPERATURE RANGE
- 10% ABV

STRAIN: 1728 SCOTTISH ALE™

Profile: Our Scottish ale strain is ideally suited for the strong, malty ales of Scotland. This strain is very versatile, and is often used as a “House” strain as it ferments neutral and clean. Higher fermentation temperatures will result in an increased ester profile.

- HIGH FLOCCULATION
- 69-73% ATTENUATION
- 55-75°F TEMPERATURE RANGE
- 12% ABV

STRAIN: 1214 BELGIAN ABBEY STYLE ALE™

Profile: A widely used and alcohol tolerant Abbey style yeast that is suitable for a variety of Belgian style ales. This strain produces a nice ester profile as well as slightly spicy alcohol notes. It can be slow to start; however, it attenuates well.

- LOW-MEDIUM FLOCCULATION
- 74-78% ATTENUATION
- 68-78°F TEMPERATURE RANGE
- 12% ABV

STRAIN: 1762 BELGIAN ABBEY STYLE ALE II™

Profile: An excellent yeast strain for use in Belgian dark strong ales. This strain has a relatively “clean profile” which allows a rich malt and distinctive ethanol character to shine. Delicate dried fruit esters can be produced when used at higher fermentation temperatures or in a high gravity wort.

- MEDIUM FLOCCULATION
- 73-77% ATTENUATION
- 65-75°F TEMPERATURE RANGE
- 12% ABV

STRAIN: 3787 TRAPPIST STYLE HIGH GRAVITY™

Profile: A classic strain for brewing Belgian dubbel or Belgian tripel. This Abbey strain produces a nice balance of complex fruity esters and phenolics, making it desirable for use in other Belgian style ales as well. A flocculent, true top cropping yeast (***additional headspace is recommended***), that will work over a broad temperature range. This strain makes a great Belgian style “house” strain.

- MEDIUM FLOCCULATION
- 74-78% ATTENUATION
- 64-78°F TEMPERATURE RANGE
- 11% ABV

The general process for making the ciders was as follows (the Wyeast smack-pack were smacked a day in advance to get the yeast going):

11 October 2019: 5 gallons of the juice was poured into a 6½-gallon carboy to provide plenty of headspace for fermentation. Each carboy was inoculated with one of the yeasts under trial (for a total of 30 gallons of cider in 6 carboys).

19 October 2019: The cider was racked into a 5-gallon carboy, leaving some headspace to support continued fermentation. Medium toast French oak cubes (1 ½ ounces) was added to each carboy. A dose of malolactic bacteria was also added. The malolactic bacteria came in a package intended for use in a 60-gallon barrel. The package was split into eight doses and each dose should work in batches up to 7 ½ gallons or so.

14 December 2019: The cider was racked into a new 5-gallon carboy. Potassium sulfite (1/4 teaspoon) was added to the carboy to kill the malolactic bacteria in the cider and protect against infection. The carboy was topped off with Target-brand organic Honeycrisp apple juice (about 1 quart of juice).

5 January 2020: One package of SuperKleer fining agent was added to each carboy to clear the cider. This fining agent has cleared everything I have used it in before. However, this time it has failed spectacularly, and the cider remains cloudy. Oh well.

29 February 2020: The cider is racked into a bottling bucket (yielding 4 ½ gallons of product). Turbinado raw cane sugar is added as priming sugar – 4 ½ ounces, so one ounce per gallon. The product is bottled and cap. Carbonation will occur in the bottle.

Cherry Cider

The cherry cider was made with the following ingredients:

- 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ gallons of Wilson's Cider
- 4 quarts of Knudsen Just Tart Cherry juice
- 2 quarts of Knudsen Just Black Cherry juice
- 1 package of Wyeast 1318 London III ale yeast.

The sugar level was S.G. 1.043 (about 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ Brix) with a potential alcohol of about 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ % ABV.

11 October 2019: The cider and cherry juice was poured into a 7.9-gallon wine pail to provide plenty of headspace for fermentation. The carboy was inoculated with Wyeast 1318 ale yeast.

19 October 2019: The cherry cider was racked into a 6-gallon carboy, leaving some headspace to support continued fermentation. Medium toast French oak cubes (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounces) was added to each carboy. A dose of malolactic bacteria was also added.

29 December 2019: The cider was racked into a new 6-gallon carboy. Potassium sulfite (1/4 teaspoon) was added to the carboy to kill the malolactic bacteria in the cider and protect against infection. A 44-ounce jar of Nature Nate's Raw Unfiltered honey was added to back sweeten the cider. Potassium sorbate (1 teaspoon) was added to prevent fermentation from starting back up. One package of SuperKleer fining agent was added to each carboy to clear the cider.

Mid-February 2019: The cherry cider was racked into a 5-gallon keg and a 2.5-gallon keg then force carbonated.

The finished product is semi-sweet. The cherry juice dominates the apple cider flavors. The honey sweetness provides some additional character.

Cyser (Apple Mead)

The cherry cider was made with the following ingredients:

- 5 ¼ gallons of Wilson's Cider
- 2 quarts of Basswood honey
- 1 package of Wyeast 1318 London III ale yeast.

The sugar level was S.G. 1.068 (about 16 ½ Brix) with a potential alcohol of about 9 ¼ % ABV.

11 October 2019: The cider and honey was poured into a 7.9-gallon wine pail to provide plenty of headspace for fermentation. The carboy was inoculated with Wyeast 1318 ale yeast.

19 October 2019: The cherry cider was racked into a 6-gallon carboy, leaving some headspace to support continued fermentation. Medium toast French oak cubes (1 ½ ounces) was added to each carboy. A dose of malolactic bacteria was also added.

29 December 2019: The cider was racked into a 5-gallon carboy. Potassium sulfite (1/4 teaspoon) was added to the carboy to kill the malolactic bacteria in the cider and protect against infection. A 44-ounce jar of Nature Nate's Raw Unfiltered honey was added to back sweeten the cider. Potassium sorbate (1 teaspoon) was added to prevent fermentation from starting back up. One package of SuperKleer fining agent was added to each carboy to clear the cider.

Mid-February 2019: The cyser was racked into a 5-gallon keg and a 2.5-gallon keg then force carbonated.

The finished product is semi-sweet. The apple cider and honey flavors are in good balance.