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## Hard Cider Industry Profile

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### **History and Background:**

Hard cider is traced back to Europe. In eighteenth century England, land owners bought casks of cider to drink at their town houses in London. Eighteenth and nineteenth century Easterners had cider daily at their meals. President Adams talked about what a good breakfast drink it made. In fact, hard cider was one of the United States' most widely and commonly consumed beverages up to the Civil War. It was produced by the Pilgrims as soon as their apples bore fruit. Cider, as it was called (the distinction between hard and sweet came much later in the United States) was as commonly drunk as water. The alcohol content of only three to six percent made cider a family beverage.

With the influx of German immigrants after the Civil War, beer became an increasingly popular and cheaper beverage. The ingredients for beer had an advantage, because they could be produced in one growing season. Settlers had to wait for apple trees to reach fruit-bearing stage, which often took up to seven years.

After Prohibition, cider making became virtually a lost art. But the microbrew rage opened up a market for quality, hand-crafted alcoholic alternatives, and the popularity of Irish pubs in the late 1980s in Boston, New York and Chicago ushered in a thirst for cider, most of it from England where consumption far exceeds that of the United States.

Most hard ciders are a blend of apples. (Hard cider can also be made from pears, called perry, and peaches.) Some producers use fresh juice while others prefer concentrate or apples specifically designated for cider. Natural cider has nothing added and relies, for fermentation, upon the wild yeast present in the apples. Although much of today's cider is produced from apple concentrate, many traditional cider makers use only cider apples, cultivated specifically for the purpose.

In Europe, "cider" refers to fermented apple juice that contains varying levels of alcohol. In North America, fermented apple juice is known as "hard cider;" unfermented, freshly expressed juice is called "sweet cider."

In France the traditional cider is light and sparkling and is poured from a champagne bottle. The complex ciders of the Basques and Asturians in Northern Spain come in a corked wine bottle. In England the traditional ciders are kegged like a beer and served on tap at the local pub.

In this country the cider tradition is being renewed. Cider can be found on tap, in six packs, and in wine bottles. Cider is produced from large scale producers as well as the cellars on small farms. It is made from generic apple concentrate as well as carefully selected fruit from varieties grown especially for cider.

Cider is not wine and it is not beer. Like wine, it is fermented from fruit and can capture the complex flavors of fruit. Like beer, cider has under six or seven percent alcohol and tastes best with some sparkle. It is different from both: a unique beverage.

#### HOW CIDER IS MADE

The best ciders are the result of careful blending. Opinions differ as to which apples make the best cider. Some experts believe that only certain, special varieties, rich in tannins, make decent cider.

Apples used in cider making are more closely related to wild crab apples than ordinary eating apples and have a high tannin content. Pomologists divide cider apples into two broad categories—bittersweet and bittersharp. Bittersharps have a higher acid content than bittersweets. Both yield juice that is rich in natural sugar that ferments to produce alcohol.

After harvesting, the fruit is ready for crushing in the cider mill. First, the fruit is crushed and then the pulp known as the “pomace,” is wrapped in cloth ready for pressing. The pomace cloth is generally made from nylon, but some traditional cider-makers still press their apples through straw. The wrapped pomace, often referred to as the “cheese,” is then placed on the cider press and the unfermented juice (“must”) is extracted.

For hard cider, the must is transferred directly to fermentation vats or casks. To produce dry cider, fermentation continues until all, or almost all, the sugar is converted to alcohol. For sweet cider, the juice is filtered at an early stage, to retain the required percentage of unfermented sugar.

The initial fermentation process usually relies on the wild yeast present in the apples. Commercial cider producers add cultured yeast (often champagne yeast) to the must, in order to ensure a consistent end product.

After about three months maturation, the must is filtered to remove sediment and cloudy appearance. Some traditional cider makers insist on retaining this natural cloudiness as a token of authenticity. Most commercially produced hard ciders and some traditionally made ciders are then carbonated. American cider tends to be less carbonated than its European equivalent, mainly to avoid the country’s high sparkling wine tax.

## **Demand**

One or two nationally distributed hard ciders are commonly found in the beer and wine section of major food retailers. Hard cider is considered the first beverage in a wave of malternatives, a rapidly growing group of alcoholic beverages providing an alternative to beer. These products are attractive to women who do not care for beer, and along with the other malternatives, are currently being marketed to consumers age 22-29.

While hard cider had only 0.2 percent of the total U.S. beer market in 1999, the industry is experiencing rapid growth with estimated sales of 75 million cases in 2000. The market growth seems to be driven by:

- Desire to seek alternatives to beer.
- Refreshing nature of cider versus beer.
- Willingness by many drinkers to extend taste in the wine category to crafter cider.
- Preference by females to purchase the product.

## **Supply**

England's H.P. Bulmer Company, the largest cider maker in the world, is America's biggest importer with Strongbow and Woodchuck brands. Woodchuck is made from fermenting reconstituted apple juice concentrate with added yeast, malic acid and "natural flavorings."

A number of eastern and western states, particularly New York, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Washington and Oregon have some highly skilled, artisanal cider makers. There are cideries along the wine trails.

## **Prices**

Presently the production of sweet cider in the United States has faced steep competition from China. The price of sweet cider sold to consumers is usually about \$3.00 per half gallon. A 750 ml. bottle of hard cider sells for about \$21 per half gallon, which is roughly seven times the price of sweet cider.

## **Resources**

How Cider is Made , [http://www.history-of-cider.com/html/how\\_cider\\_is\\_made.html](http://www.history-of-cider.com/html/how_cider_is_made.html)

(Rowles, Kirsten. Processed Apple Product Marketing Analysis: Hard Cider and Apple Wine," Staff Paper 2000-06. Department of Agricultural, Resource and Managerial Economics, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. )

## **Links**

Cideries

<http://www.cyderworks.com/index.htm>

Farm Fords Cyder Works, a Portland, Oregon farm cider facility

Thomas Family Winery, Madison, Indiana, 3rd generation hard cider maker.

<http://www.thomasfamilywinery.us/cider.html>

West Country Cider, Colrain, MA

<http://www.westcountycider.com/>

Bellwether Hard Cider (607) 27-CIDER (272-4337)

(888) 862-4337

<http://www.cidery.com/>