



2 TOWNS CIDERHOUSE  
FOUNDERS LEE LARSEN,  
AARON SARNOFF-WOOD  
AND DAVE TAKUSH

TODD COOPER

# THE JOHNNY APPLESEED TRADITION

*2 Towns Ciderhouse delivers a tart, puckery alternative to the Willamette Valley*

BY AMY SCHNEIDER

When Johnny Appleseed roamed the countryside planting apple seeds in the late 1700s, he wasn't growing apples for food. His apples had higher standards, destined to become delicious hard apple cider. Back then, hard cider was the drink of choice, as it was easier to make and more accessible than beer.

Then Prohibition knocked cider-making off its feet, but Aaron Sarnoff-Wood, co-founder of 2 Towns Ciderhouse in Corvallis, wants to change all that. "I think that the craft movement in cider is similar to what happened in beer 20 years ago," Sarnoff-Wood says. "I just encourage people to approach it with an open mind, and it sells itself."

Sarnoff-Wood, along with co-founders Lee Larsen and Dave Takush, started 2 Towns Ciderhouse in 2010 in a small facility off Highway 34. The two towns in the ciderhouse's name are Corvallis and Eugene, since both towns are meaningful to the founders. Sarnoff-Wood was working as a graphic designer in Eugene, and after a hard hit from the recession, he decided to partner up with Larsen in Corvallis to start making cider commercially. With Takush's fermentation expertise, they began producing their signature line, 2 Towns.

"Incider," their first brew, was soon joined by "Bad Apple," which won People's Choice at KLCC's 2013 Brewfest. A collection of seasonals rounds out their list, including "Made Marion," a fruity blend of marionberries and hard cider.

Last September, 2 Towns expanded to a facility with five times the capacity and ample space to include a tasting room. In addition to their 2 Towns flagship line, which uses apples from Oregon and Washington, they offer a specialty line called Traditions, made of hand-picked and pressed apples from nearby farms. The tasting room allows the cider-makers to try creative combinations, like cyser, a blend of apple juice and honey wine, provided by 2 Towns' neighbor Nectar Creek Honeywine.

"Lee and I both come from a brewing background," says Takush, who uses his fermentation science degree to create innovative ciders. "A lot of cider-makers out there come from a wine background, so they're really stuck in tradition. Lee and I are not afraid to push the boundaries of what cider can be."

2 Towns distributes to retailers around Oregon, but a House bill that was passed in the Oregon Legislature might change the way wine and cider can be sold. The bill's sponsors include Reps. Paul Holvey and Phil Barnhart, and from the Senate side, Lee Beyer and Floyd Prozanski. HB 2443 would allow customers to bring reusable jugs called growlers into retailers like Whole Foods or Sundance Natural Foods and fill them up with cider or wine to take home with them. Now the bill just needs to pass the Senate.

Currently, the practice is illegal. Sarnoff-Wood says if passed, the bill could mean a boost in business for him. "And it's ultimately a more affordable way for people, and greener, because they can use reusable containers," he says.

Although 2 Towns sells their cider in places like Sundance and Capella Market, they hope to expand in Eugene. Sarnoff-Wood says that if all goes well, Eugene can expect its very own cider tasting room within the next year. Johnny Appleseed would be so proud. ■



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