

Bull Run's Mulligan, who co-owns orchards in Forest Grove with partner Galen Williams, says they've sold thousands of traditional cider trees in recent years. "People want to get involved in the cider movement," he says. "We just got 4,000 trees for a farmer in Estacada."

But it will take up to a decade until they really start bearing fruit, and more than that until they can fill the ever-growing demand for cider.

Sure, this means that some sugary American ciders taste like Jolly Ranchers made of chalk. But Portland's reliance on our local crop of dessert apples isn't holding back our cider scene, says Jeff Parrish of Portland Cider Co. It's a chance to create a new and different tradition in American cider.

"American and Northwest palates are being introduced to cider," he says. "Marry that with the inventive culture that surrounds the craft brew scene, and anything goes."

Local crafters instead have to experiment with other ways to balance the natural sweetness of their fruit and layer more complex flavors. Portland Cider Co. makes most of its sales with Parrish's mainstream sweet and semisweet ciders, but at its Oregon City taproom, you can drink a passionfruit cider, and a Cascade Juniper cider with berries crushed by forklift.

"You don't get the natural tannins you get from traditional cider apples," says Cider Riot's Abram Goldman-Armstrong, who makes cider out of his home garage in Tabor, "so we're experimenting, bringing that in from different places." In his Plastic Paddy—sold in a 2-liter soda bottle for St. Patrick's Day—he gets tannins from tea, while in his blackberry cider he uses black currants.

This spirit of innovation impressed even the Brits. When English cider maker Tom Oliver tasted Anthem's hopped



REVEREND NAT'S HARD CIDER TAPHOUSE | JENNIFER PLITZKO

## OREGON'S BEST CIDERS

### Cider of the Year

#### 7 DEADLY SINS: ENVY Reverend Nat's/Barley Brown's

Unlike some cider makers, Nat West loves beer. Really loves beer. When he's not downing ales after a cider festival—after a cider festival, he really needs a beer—he'll drive down to Foster-Powell for a triple IPA fest. It was on that drive home from N.W.I.P.A. that he had the inspiration for our 2015 Cider of the Year.

"I'm driving home," West says, "and mind you, I have a breathalyzer in my car. I'm going over in my head what draws me to triple IPAs. I could come up with three characteristics: high ABV, high hop levels, and some level of sweetness."

So he got to thinking: Could he make a cider that was like an Imperial IPA, except with apple juice instead of wort?

He started by seeking some advice from brewmaster Tyler Brown at Barley Brown's. The Baker City brewery's Pallet Jack IPA won gold at the 2013 Great American Beer Festival, and the fresh-hop version of Pallet Jack won gold last year.

"I advised them on ways that we use the hops in big IPAs, such as wort-hopping, late kettle additions, whirlpool additions and dry-hopping," says Tyler Brown, Barley Brown's brewer. "They had to come up with a way to get the IBUs into the cider. It's somewhat easy to get some aroma by dry-hopping a cider, but Nat wanted it to have the full IIPA hop bitterness, flavor and aroma."

West ended up making the cider at Hopworks Urban Brewery, on a Sunday. "We treated it just like we were making beer," West says. "We skipped the mash tun, put it into the kettle and threw the hops in, and added literally a ton of dark muscovado sugar."

That molasses-colored sugar was meant to mimic the notes in caramel malt. But after that, the process went a little berserk. They boiled the hops in apple juice, then transferred it to the whirlpool, where they began hop-bursting—adding hops late in the boil, then running the mixture through a hop back full of whole-leaf Amarillo.

"When we were done," West says, "we had this liquid, and it was extremely sweet and extremely bitter and very full of hop flavor. We brought this juice back to our place

and fermented it."

But they weren't done. They did multiple rounds of dry-hopping, both during fermentation and in the bright tank. Then they aged it a few weeks. The resulting cider is unlike anything else we've tasted, a true hop bomb that's remarkably balanced in earthy bitterness and apple-y sweetness, almost reminiscent of a cider barleywine.

Hopped ciders aren't new to Portland, of course. The ubiquitous Anthem and Cider Riot's Everybody Pogo are our go-to drops—an apple-based analog to IPA, the beer style that accounts for 50 percent of all Oregon craft beer. But, until Envy was released in August, we hadn't tasted a cider that successfully channeled giant double IPAs like Pliny the Younger or Laurelwood's Megafauna.

"We set the standard for whatever the hell that thing is that we made," West says. MATTHEW KORFHAGE.



No. 1

### 2. Apple Outlaw Rabid Dry

Blair Smith didn't plan to be a cider maker. Twelve years ago, Smith and his wife, Marcey Kelley, decided they wanted get away from the hustle of the Bay Area and buy a piece of rural land in Southern Oregon. The parcel they found in the Applegate Valley happened to have an apple orchard.

"We just wanted to live someplace really nice and pretty," Smith says.

The trees were just an add-on.

"We thought, 'How hard could it actually be to run it?'" he says. "Like a lot of things, maybe it's best when you don't actually know how hard it's going to be when you start. It was just a massive learning curve, but we figured it out."

Just last week, Smith finally quit his job as a software engineer, which he'd been doing remotely while



No. 2



COURTESY OF BAIRD & DEWAR

cider at cider bar Bushwhacker, says Goldman-Armstrong, "I could see the wheels turning in his head. And now he's making a hopped cider. But it's kind of an exchange program. I'm using Goldings hops [in Cider Riot's Everybody Pogo], which are English, and he's using Cascade."

At Alter Ego, the inaugural ciders include a semisweet Brute—which, like its name, approaches Champagne—and a tart cider using local raspberries. "To say that there's one New World cider is very difficult," says Alter Ego co-owner Nate Wall. "It's more like categories. But we don't even know what we'd call the categories."

It's this experimental quality engendered by our local craft beer scene, West says, that puts our local ciders in a position to take over nationwide. In New York, cider is still mostly made by traditional-minded orchards, while Reverend Nat's own off-Broadway taproom brims with ginger tonics, barrel-aged ciders, and ciders made with sour-cherry and carrot and "hopricot," plus ciders so hopped they taste like barleywine.

And the apples themselves offer one of nature's broadest palettes. "Apples are one of the most diverse plants on the planet," Wall says. "If you actually pollinate an apple tree, the offspring is nothing like either parent. There's so much diversity out there. There's so much to choose from."

To West, who quit his job as a computer programmer to make cider, there's something special about this time and place. The future of American cider is growing here.

"The thing that really sustained me was sort of the magic of it—Garden of Eden shit," he says. "It's a child's fruit, but then you can make alcohol. It goes from this innocent thing to the greatest vice ever created." 🍏