

tending his trees, to focus on making cider.

About the same time, we were getting the best and biggest surprise in a tasting of Oregon ciders, discovering that the bottle with a goofy cartoon raccoon on the front is a serious cider, made the right way and with complex flavors that caught our tasters off guard. Apple Outlaw's Rabid Dry is a bright, acidic cider made mainly from dessert fruit that's crisp but not biting dry, with a vivid straw color and a little spiciness from the skin.

We were late to the party: Apple Outlaw had already won Best of Show at last June's Portland International Cider Cup.

The consistent quality is not borne of consistent ingredients. Most of Apple Outlaw's fruit comes from its own orchard, with some being purchased from neighbors. That means several types of apples are used in the ciders. Smith isn't sure what made it into the bottle we bought from Belmont Station.

"I can take a guess," he says. "Very likely it could have some McIntosh, Golden Delicious...maybe some Granny Smith."

While the blends of tart and sweet apples are done to taste and can vary, the rest of the process is carefully managed by Smith and Kelley and involves Champagne yeast and keeping a close watch on the thermometer.

"We're really careful with our yeast; we really try to keep it happy," Smith says. "A lot of those flavors come from the apple, and a lot of it comes from the fermenting and the esters you develop, and watching those."

Ignore the goofy raccoon: This is among the most sophisticated ciders made in Oregon. Now that he's got more time after quitting his day job, Smith hopes to expand the line. First up is a new hop cider. The first allotments shipped to Whole Foods in Oregon and Washington. MARTIN CIZMAR.

3. Cider Riot 1763

Abe Goldman-Armstrong spent a long time on 1763.

Not 250 years, but close.

"It was the first cider we pressed, but those tannins take a lot longer to age," says Goldman-Armstrong, who opened Cider Riot last February but didn't release the cider we were most excited about until August. "It's got to mature throughout the year, much more like a wine. The ciders made with dessert apples, we ferment with an ale yeast. But with those proper cider apples, you need to let it age seven, eight months, and we use a wine yeast for that."

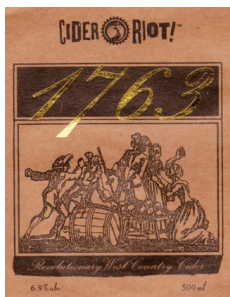
It was well worth the wait. While Cider Riot makes a fine hopped cider and a very nice Burncider draft cider with the local dessert crop mixed with the tart wilds and bitter cider apples, 1763's Somerset-style English cider is the hidden heart of the lineup.

This batch was made with Yamhill County-grown Yarlinton Mill, Harry Masters Jersey, Dabinett, and Kingston Black apples, traditional English cider varieties that are high in tannins. The apples' provenance is signaled by the cider's name, the year of the great cider tax revolts in the English West Country.

The apples came from White Oak orchards, one of Oregon's first cider orchards, where Goldman-Armstrong worked planting trees and sorting apples 20 years ago, when he was 16. The blend was seven years in the making, something Goldman-Armstrong experimented with while other local makers were focused on turning readily available dessert fruit into something that's not intolerably sweet.

"Once a year it'll come out," he says of 1763. "It's a vintage cider." And for now, the amount of cider he'll make will be limited by the number of apples produced by Alan Foster's White Oaks orchard.

There are only about 25 cases of last year's



No. 3

bottling left, but expect to see a larger release from the 2014 harvest next August—it was a bumper year for Yamhill County cider apples. MATTHEW KORFHAGE.



No. 4

4. Atlas Apricot

If you want to make a great apricot cider, you're going to need some peaches.

That's what Atlas Cider's Dan McCoy learned after blending a few batches of apricot cider that didn't have the punch he wanted. It was a little too tart, and not a lot of the apricots were shining through.

So, last summer, Atlas added a touch of fresh Yakima peach juice—Eureka!

The newer, improved Atlas Apricot is a relatively dry blend, with the added sweetness of the apricot/peach aroma hiding the tartness of the Hood River apples. It is a strong, semi-sweet perfume of a beverage, and at 6.2 percent ABV, it's equally suited for a snifter or

pint glass. It has the comforting aroma of a morning hug from grandma, and the bite of the cocktail grandpa would sneak you sips of as he drank it with breakfast.

In fact, Joe Leineweber, who wears production, sales and promotion hats at Atlas says, "We jokingly refer to Apricot here as our mimosa—it goes very well with brunch."

Blending is the name of the game when it comes to adjusting non-apple fruits to make cider that rolls on the tongue, McCoy says, and he sees new blends as an extension of the rabid craft beer exploration in the United States. "You are seeing everyone getting more creative; I think of cider as another extension of that," he says. "One thing that excited me most about cider when we started two years ago was playing around with some of the other fruit varieties that grow in the Northwest." PARKER HALL.



No. 5

5. Rack & Cloth Stony Pig

Stony Pig isn't a showstopper. It won't wow you with hops or odd fruits. There are no esters of exotic yeasts, and there's just a touch of vanilla borne of barrel-aging in oak.

No, the flagship cider from Mosier's Rack & Cloth is an admirably dry and quaffable drop. It's a straightforward but remarkably clean-lined cider that's well-suited to the bare-bones menu at this little pizza and salad spot outside Hood River.

Stony Pig is made with organic Jonagold, Winesap and wild crabapples from the fruit loop, some of which are aged on oak while others ferment in stainless steel.

At 6.9 percent ABV, it's relatively strong—and dangerous given the smoothness. Stony Pig won the People's Choice award at last year's Hood River Hard-Pressed Cider Fest, and it's easy to see why. This is a crisp, acidic cider that draws from Old World ideas without mimicking them in any obvious way. We just wish we could get it everyday—sadly, there's a very limited production that's mostly sold directly from a tiny house overlooking the Columbia Gorge. MARTIN CIZMAR. ♡

CIDER, CIDRE, SIDRA

A PRIMER ON THE CIDER STYLES OF THE OLD WORLD.

BY TYLER HURST 243-2122

While America's founding fathers drank the stuff for breakfast, American cider makers and the domestic market, thanks to Prohibition, lag far behind the Europeans. Originally used to create clean, low-alcohol beverages similar to kombucha, fermented apples produced for social imbibing can be traced back to before the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. Apple trees grown in U.K., French and Spanish orchards have passed on specific traits to their apples, giving ciders from each region unique flavors. The world's three great cider traditions have also developed fermenting techniques to accentuate those qualities.

ENGLISH

Often thought to be the most traditional method of cider making, the English technique produces a still, dry cider that's rich with tannins that heavily coat the tongue. It's the most apple-y of the three, thanks to its reliance on tannin-heavy apple varieties. Produced in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, English cider is required by U.K. law to be at least 35 percent apple juice or concentrate (in the U.S., it's 50 percent), but craft cider makers are heavily influenced by the Campaign for Real Ale's recommendation of 90 percent. It's not always served warm or at room temperature, but is most enjoyable when not ice cold.

GREAT BECAUSE: Balanced sweetness; feels like something you could drink in an old, stone blacksmith's shop.

HATERS SAY: Too dry; tastes like licking apple skin.

TRY THESE:

Henney's Dry Cider, \$6 This is the stuff English football fans must drink before a riot. The bone-dry Henney's coats your tongue with a chalky tannic grip from the first taste, which seems to allow the rest of the bottle to more easily slip-slide into your belly. My God, it's good. Imagine if Strongbow were less watery, tasted like better apples, and had a more pronounced yeast character. Henney's takes everything we like about clean English cider and sharpens the resolution. A slightly sour bitterness, stemming from the outright dryness of the stuff, jolts your mind to attention at first, but smooths out over time. And after a few pints, the pale yellow liquid practically sings the drinking songs for you. PARKER HALL.

Burrow Hill Kingston Black, \$25 Kingston black apples are known for their distinctive bitter-sharp juice, which leads to a full-bodied cider that doesn't need to be blended. This Champagne-like cider has English characteristics, but takes the beverage from the pub and into the white-tableclothed dining room. It has more body than most, due to the variety of the fruit and the 8 percent ABV that it's fermented to, but Burrow Hill's Kingston Black still focuses its attention on clean tannic flavor, one that sings effervescent in the glass. It's better suited to special

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