

Cider pressing events bring a taste of fall

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For the Wallowa County
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ENTERPRISE — Cider pressing is as synonymous with October as falling leaves and Halloween. The apples are at their sweet perfection and the air is crisp and just right for a pressing, which is exactly what happened not once but twice last week in Wallowa County.

The first pressing happened Thursday, Oct. 7, when the students at the Alternative Education High School pressed cider at Building Healthy Families. A cider press, belonging to and borrowed from Dr. Severin Knudsen, of Enterprise Animal Hospital, was brought to the school and apples, both purchased and gleaned from the school's apple trees were pressed into service to create fresh, cold cider.

From all accounts, the cider and pressing were successes. Many students had seen cider pressings before.

Levi Pringle, a senior, had attended cider pressings when the children from Head Start had taken a field trip to participate in an intergenerational pressing a few years ago.

"It's good (the cider), but weird to have seeds and mashed apple in it. I don't like pulp in general, but apple it's not that bad."

Cider is generally unfiltered and unpasteurized.

Apple pressing reminded Rachel Lester, a junior, of learning about pioneers and the Oregon Trail, and brought a certain sense of nostalgia.

Cider is "much more flavorful than apple juice. It's not processed and not watered down," she said.

"It's a fun activity to do," said Benjamin Huwe, a senior. He said he thought it was a good team-build-



Students from the Building Healthy Families Alternative Education High School take part in cider pressing on Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021.

ing activity since there was a lot involved with cutting and pressing.

And "there is a sweet treat at the end. There is a freshness with apple cider. It's like picking an apple off the tree," he said.

The second county apple pressing took place Saturday, Oct. 9, at St. Patrick's Episcopal Church. The day was clear and sunny and those who attended enjoyed watching the apples tumble into the press, spin against the sharp blades of the crusher and turn into a combination of clear juice and pulp. The bucket containing the pulp was pressed using a metal crank that squeezed

against a wooden plate over the top of the bucket. The cider ran out through the slats in the bucket and into a catch basin. From the basin it was transferred to pitchers for tasting. The apples used were purchased, or participants brought their own apples and containers.

The type of apple used affects the taste and color of the cider. Some apples lend the cider a clear, pale yellow color and a crisp, tart flavor. Other apples can turn the cider a pale, pink, rose color with a sweeter flavor.

Nathan Riley Davis, of Enterprise, pronounced the cider, "pretty good." He

said it had a "nice citrus flavor. I was really thirsty and I liked how it felt in my throat."

Sandy Lund, of Enterprise, who was there with her grandchildren, Nolan, Pierce, and Selah Buck had only two words to describe her cider experience: "Super good."

The cider-pressing event saw some guests from out of town. Lynn Delmore and Pam Alexandria, from Eugene, visiting friends in the area, stopped by for a taste of the cider. Both said they had never been to a cider-pressing event and wanted to see what it was all about. Alexandria said



A cider pressing event took place Saturday, Oct. 9, 2021, at St. Patrick's Episcopal Church.

she thought the event was a good way to bring the community together.

"The cider was excellent," she said, "some of the best I've ever had."

"It was yummy," said Delmore.

A look back in time

Cider has a long history. According to the website www.cider.wsu.edu/history-of-cider, raw apple juice is not filtered to remove sediment or pulp and is referred to as "fresh cider" or "sweet cider." Apple juice is filtered. Hard cider is cider that has been fermented. The alcohol content varies from 3% alcohol by volume (ABV) in French cider to 8.5% ABV in English cider.

The first recorded reference to cider dates to Roman times. The Norman conquest of England in 1066 resulted in the introduction of many apple varieties from France. Cider is still popular in England, which has the highest per capita consumption of cider in the world.

In colonial America, colonists planted orchards and cider making was the easiest way to preserve the harvest. The water was also not safe to drink in some areas and cider was an option, even for children. Cider could also be used for other things such as vinegar and to preserve food.

In the late 1800s, cider consumption declined due to the Industrial Revolution when farmers came to the city to live and work, and many orchards were abandoned. Also, beer was replaced as the beverage of choice by large influxes of Irish and German immigrants. The biggest factor was Prohibition in 1919 when production of cider went from 55 million gallons in 1899 to 13 million gallons.

Consumption of unpasteurized apple cider comes with a cautionary caveat. It can contain bacteria that can be harmful to certain populations such as children, the elderly, pregnant women and those with compromised immune systems. Fresh cider should be refrigerated.

Katy Nesbitt, the coordinator of the event at St. Patrick's church and the church's deacon, said the church regularly hosts events such as concerts and dinners.

"This year we wanted to have an outdoor, fall event and provide an opportunity for our neighbors to press their apples into cider as we have a convenient, downtown location and ample space," she said.

She added that the cider pressing will become an annual event, building attendance in the coming years.

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