



3 Basque Ciders to Drive Your Tastebuds Wild

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There's nothing quite like a traditional Basque cider – a hard apple cider that's naturally fermented, unfiltered, with little to no carbonation and an acidic twang. Named after the region in Northern Spain where it's produced, Basque Cider is rich with history and has finally reached its way to our Pacific shores. The flavour profile of Basque cider is typically dry with a ranging level of sourness and a rustic funk that can be described as leathery, hay-like or earthy. With our collective palates becoming more and more used to sour beers, kombucha and other wild or naturally fermented drinks, the time is ripe for Basque cider to join beer and wine in our glasses at the table.

There are hundreds of years of tradition behind cider production in Spain. Many varieties of apples native to Spain – some even specific to certain regions – are used in Basque cider just like different grape varietals are used to make wine. Natural yeast present on the apple skins ferments the juice into an alcoholic product, then it's aged in barrels made out of oak or chestnut. The result is different than the ciders we may be familiar with (you know the canned, sweet and bubbly type); Basque cider is still (i.e. un-carbonated) with relatively low sweetness and high acidity and packaged like wine, in an elegant bottle. If you want to delve deep into the culture around Basque cider it comes with traditional ways of pouring it too – to pour a glass, you would start pouring around waist-level and raise the bottle about 30cm to just above your head – all the while maintaining the flow of cider into the glass. Showy?

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Yes, but also key for the aeration and release of aroma in this low-carbonation drink. If you're ever lucky enough to find yourself in a cidery in Spain, or rather a 'sagardotegi', you might get to pour a stream of cider straight from a chestnut barrel into your glass.

The fresh acidity and tart apple character of Basque cider is a natural palate refresher when it's paired with rich foods like charcuterie and cheese. A growing number of restaurants are catching on to the versatility of cider; there are even bars dedicated to cider opening up across North America. We can get a little taste of the Basque tradition here in Vancouver from Thursday to Saturday at the pop-up craft cider-house and restaurant Orchard and the Sea, at 55 Powell Street in Gastown. Specializing in both Basque and Pacific Northwest craft ciders and cuisine of the Basque region, it's the perfect place to become acquainted with the rustic beauty of natural Basque ciders.

Here are three Basque ciders to look for in BC restaurants and liquor stores:

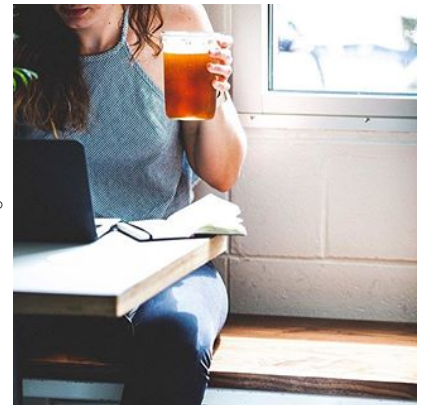


Isastegi (Spain)

An approachable dry, tart cider with sour apple character and an earthy whiff of wild fermentation that's great with meat and rich foods.

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INSTAGRAM





Shacksbury The Basque (Vermont/Spain)

Vermont's Shacksbury cidery collaborates with the centuries-old Spanish Petritegi Sagardotegia using 14 different types of Basque apple varieties to produce this bright and citrusy wild cider.



Larraldea (Spain)

Made with blend of Spanish heirloom apple varieties the balance between fruitiness, acidity and funk in the Larraldea should please beer drinkers and fans of wild fermentation.

Image credits: [Txotx Basque Imports](#), [Shacksbury](#)

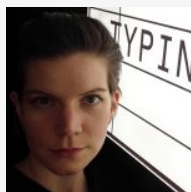
<http://www.orchardandthesea.ca/>

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Jessica Sharpe

Jessica Sharpe is a Certified Cicerone living in Vancouver. As a sommelier of beer, it tends to be her main focus but she is also an avid imbiber of other products of fermentation. She is interested in beverage and food pairings, and finding the histories behind modern culture's favourite drinks. Favourite pastimes include travel, reading and anything that can be done with a drink in hand. Instagram [@sharpeja](#)

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