



November 9th, 2012

05:00 PM ET

[5@5 - Hard ciders to try now](#)

5@5 is a daily, food-related list from chefs, writers, political pundits, musicians, actors, and all manner of opinionated people from around the globe.

Editor's Note: Gregory Hall is the founder of [Virtue Cider](#), a Chicago-based craft cider company. Hall served as the Brewmaster of [Goose Island Beer Company](#) from 1991 to 2011.

I became a big fan of hard cider on a trip to England in 2000 with a group of brewers from Goose Island. We visited several breweries on the trip, but the highlight was visiting a pub called [The Maltings in York](#).

They were hosting a cider festival with casks from small producers all around the English countryside. We were all blown away by the variety, complexity and just plain wonderfulness of those ciders.

Here are five of my favorites, in no particular order.

Five Hard Ciders to Try Right Now: Gregory Hall



1. Herefordshire Sparkling Dry Cider - [Oliver's Cider and Perry](#)

This reminds me of that trip in 2000, a cider full of overripe apple flavor and a whiff of the farm. It's why I left brewing to make cider. Tom Oliver has been my English cider mentor. It's fantastic with a wedge of mature cheddar.

2. Organic Cidre Bouché Brut de Normandie – [Etienne Dupont](#)

Wow, this is probably my favorite as it's such a great blend of the farm, the fruit and the barrel. Dupont grows his own fruit, as his ancestors did before him, on a gorgeous farm in the Pays d'Auge region of Normandy. I like it with roast pork or chicken and a wheel of Camembert from just over the hill in Normandy.

3. Sarasola Sagardoa

A [proper Basque cider \(sidra\)](#) from the north coast of Spain. At its best, it's as tart as fresh squeezed lemonade. It's a little lower in carbonation, so the traditional way to pour it is to raise the bottle above your head and hit the glass at knee level. It takes a little practice, but by the end of the night you'll nail it. All that acidity calls for some rich, smoky sausage or wild salmon.

4. Dooryard Cider - [Farnum Hill Ciders](#)

Steve Wood is the dean of American cider makers, with his orchard and cidery in Lebanon, New Hampshire. Dooryard is a window into the orchard itself, variable from batch to batch, based on what comes off the trees. Traditional cider is such an agricultural product and Dooryard shows that well. There is usually enough tannin and acidity to pair with a bowl of New England clam chowder.

5. Smackintosh - [Tandem Ciders](#)

Like me, Dan Young was a [craft brewer](#) before making cider. His wife, Nikki, is a bit of an apple expert at Michigan State University, and they discovered proper cider on a bike trip through England. Smackintosh is made from McIntosh, Rhode Island Greening and Northern Spy apples and has a wonderful, fresh apple skin aroma. It's great on its own or with [some fresh goat cheese](#).

Is there someone you'd like to see in the hot seat? Let us know in the comments below and if we agree, we'll do our best to chase 'em down.

Posted by: [Gregory Hall](#) -- [Special to CNN](#)

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Me gusta

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soundoff (29 Responses)

Tawna Dethielsen

we cannot prevent ourselves from growing old, it is just the way of life."

Our new web site

<http://www.healthmedicinecentral.com/where-is-your-gallbladder/>

January 31, 2013 at 10:05 am | [Reply](#)

AJ

Wow I just happened to jump on CNN after getting home from my local watering hole...and it's on this list~ (Tandem Ciders)! Thank you to the author, Greg, for being a cider advocate, and to the all the craftsmen/women on this list that are creating these craft beverages...I wish I could try all of them! If you are ever in Leelanau county, by all means, stop by Tandem!

November 16, 2012 at 3:58 pm | [Reply](#)

Jorge

Forget the cider, when the sky turns gloomy and the air grows cold, there's no point in wasting time and growing old, I throw back a shot of the white-hot rum, hits you like a kick in the bum, warms you like your sittin' in the tropical sun...

November 13, 2012 at 2:39 pm | [Reply](#)

ohioan

Black Magic by Bellweather Cidery in NY state is pretty awesome. Cider brewed with black currants. They have a dozen or so other varieties as well, I've tried Cherry Street and their regular as well. I want to try the Liberty Spy one of these days. Thankfully they ship to my state because it's an 8 hour drive to the Cidery which is near Ithaca, NY.

November 12, 2012 at 2:02 pm | [Reply](#)

Lisa

Tandem is the best. Truly made with love. Worst words to ever hear, and I have heard them more than once, "We're out of the Smackintosh." :- (

November 12, 2012 at 12:24 pm | [Reply](#)

Leprechaun Cider Company

Wonderful article! The boom of craft and sophisticated drinkers is what has made or company, Leprechaun Cider Company, Texas's first hard cider company, so popular.

With the traditional hand picked apples fermented in champagne yeast our goal is to mimic the complexity and richness of traditional European style ciders.

<http://www.leprechauncider.com>

Or on Facebook and twitter @leprechauncider

November 10, 2012 at 3:02 pm | [Reply](#)

Sam

The link for Dooryard Cider is broken! Here's the correct link, for anyone who's interested:

<http://www.povertylaneorchards.com/farnum-hill-ciders/dooryard/>

November 10, 2012 at 1:27 pm | [Reply](#)

Campstove Jack

I became a fan of hard cider when I was backpacking off a mountain. The lady in her small roadside market had run out of cider but told me she had some applejack in the back if I wanted to taste it. woowie. That applejack was cider that fermented in the jug which froze. The unfrozen liquid left was poured into a small paper cup – and dang, to this day nothing has been that good. Since then I taste how apples are like grapes and cider sometimes beats grape wine.

November 10, 2012 at 2:35 am | [Reply](#)

amour4vintage

Reblogged this on amour4vintage.

November 9, 2012 at 11:29 pm | [Reply](#)

Drue

Tandem Ciders is the best!

November 9, 2012 at 11:22 pm | [Reply](#)

Brando

Spire Dark and Dry is the best. Its an Olympia, WA brewery. Its great out of the bottle and absolutely incredible if you can find it on draft.

November 9, 2012 at 11:20 pm | [Reply](#)

Lila

Cider is one of the things I look forward to in the fall. I live in LA and its not popular here so I have to buy Woodchuck or Hornsbys. Both are good but I would love to try other brands. Hopefully I can find some of these in a specialty store.

CA is doing so well with craft beers hopefully someone will try a cider.

November 9, 2012 at 8:15 pm | [Reply](#)

John

Make a request at your local BevMo! in California for these ciders , Lila. I am pretty sure they can help you out.

November 9, 2012 at 8:24 pm | [Reply](#)

IndianaGreg

I drink Angry Orchard....good stuff

November 9, 2012 at 8:03 pm | [Reply](#)

Curtis

Blue Mountain Cider, huge fan of their work. <http://www.drinkcider.com/>

November 9, 2012 at 7:48 pm | [Reply](#)

so... how do I get these in china?

living over seas, this just sucks

they sound wonderful

November 9, 2012 at 7:46 pm | [Reply](#)

THE ANTEATER

how could you not include woodchuck?

November 9, 2012 at 7:44 pm | [Reply](#)

Mickey1313

Woodchuck is the pabst or budwiser if the cider world, cheap and flat tasting. And no longer a vermont product.

November 11, 2012 at 11:00 am | [Reply](#)

Woodchucker

Learned about hard cider during a visit to EPCOT with some English friends – and have never looked back. Love the stuff. Would love to find these & others to sample. Granny Smith is the best.

Mickey, if all you have to choose from is PBR, Bud or weevil whiz, you drink the lesser of many weevils.

November 11, 2012 at 11:15 am | [Reply](#)

Rbnlegend101

Woodchuck is available nearly everywhere. Beyond that, it doesn't have much going for it. That said, their fall cider is good.

My local beverage store had 48 ciders on the shelf last time I was there, and 10 out of stock. You don't have to drink the simplest, most widely distributed example of hard cider, unless you just can't find better, and if you can't find better, you aren't looking. Of the examples listed in this article, I've only encountered one, and I wasn't as impressed as the author of the article. On the other hand, the beer drinkers I know disagree. If your palate tends towards beer, maybe its a better drink.

Crispin is always trying new things with cider, and makes some very good ciders, each with some unique quality. That would be where I steer someone wanting to try cider. The angry orchard ginger cider is good too, I've been enjoying that. I forget the name of the cider maker, but the one that makes Jupiter's Legacy has some distinctive flavors that I like. And there are two or three good cherry bomb ciders on the market right now.

Cider isn't "going to be" the next craft brew, it is already there, but you can't tell the beer drinkers that, or the wine drinkers. That's ok, we all have different tastes.

November 12, 2012 at 12:28 pm | [Reply](#)

Dr Arthur Lyford

You are obviously a neophyte in your cider experience. Farnhum Hill orchards Dooryard is the lowest offering of this genius operation. Lulu and Steve Woods, two Harvard grads of the seventies, grow at least 14 varieties of cider apples only available in North America on their farm. They have several single varietal offerings that fetch 30-40 dollars a bottle at some of the finest restaurants in Boston, NYC, Philly and DC. Their semi-dry mainstay is probably the best value in North America for true ciders. Poverty Lane orchards also propagate more than a dozen rare varieties of fine antique apple varieties (Uncommon Apples, Inc). I encourage you to visit the operation in Lebanon, NH and learn so much more....you should ask Steve just how he got the varieties over here from Europe...it is a story that will put a smile on your face...Farnhum Hill...an American Jewell....

November 9, 2012 at 7:27 pm | [Reply](#)

Andrew

The link for dooryard cider is not for dooryard cider.

November 9, 2012 at 7:21 pm | [Reply](#)

Sandra LeVin

You're going to have to do a LOT of drinking!!!

November 9, 2012 at 7:16 pm | [Reply](#)

Aaron

Cider is going to be the next craft beer. Just watch!

November 9, 2012 at 7:09 pm | [Reply](#)

Drink to forget that Obo is president

.....Can you drink enough Cider to forget that Obo is our president?

November 9, 2012 at 6:58 pm | [Reply](#)

make sure Obama gets mentioned in every blog

listen dork, Obama does not have to be mentioned every where, give it a rest

besides, Bush was responsible for my keg going flat

November 9, 2012 at 7:49 pm | [Reply](#)

Brett

Dear lord thank you. The election is over and we can't even read an article about cider without somebody complaining.

Thank you everyone who commented on ciders as that is what the article is about. I have some new things to try now

November 9, 2012 at 9:07 pm | [Reply](#)

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