

Cooking with cider

Cider is not simply a fashionable tippie - it goes down just as well as an ingredient in savoury dishes.

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Pork and apples ... Chorizo cooked in cider is a classic tapa found all over Spain.

Photo: Marcel Aucar



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Historically, the sideria - or cider houses - nestled in the hills around San Sebastian in Spain sold only one thing: Basque ciders. These are flatter and less alcoholic than their European counterparts.

These days sideria are one of the hidden dining gems of Basque country. They serve incredible plates of chorizo cooked in cider, salt cod tortillas, char-grilled T-bone steaks and walnuts in the shell with Idiazabal sheep's cheese. It does get messy, with everyone cracking shells and drinking cider straight from the barrels. It would be unusual to not be singing with the locals by the end of a meal.

In Australia, cider has had a boom over the past six years; there seem to be more boutique cider houses than beer breweries.



Baby barramundi with cider onions

Photo: Marcel Aucar



Chorizo cooked in cider is a classic tapa, found all over Spain. This apple and pork combination is delicious. Baby barramundi is fantastic with cider onions, but I also recommend trying roast pork or grilled salmon fillet as a match.

Baby barramundi with cider onions

50ml olive oil

2 brown onions, finely sliced

2 bay leaves

200ml cider

100g unsalted butter, softened

2 shallots, finely chopped

4 anchovy fillets, chopped

½ bunch basil, leaves picked and chopped

salt and pepper

1kg baby barramundi, gutted and scaled with fins removed

1 lemon, cut into wedges

Put oil, onions, bay leaves and cider in a roasting tin. Roast in a 180C oven for 20 minutes. Meanwhile, place the butter, shallots, anchovies and chopped basil in a bowl and mix well. Season with salt and pepper and chill until you are ready to cook the fish. Season the fish all over. Remove onion mix from the oven and place the fish on top before returning to the oven to cook for a further 20 minutes. To check if fish is cooked, make an incision in the thickest part and see if it pulls away from the bone. Put knobs of flavoured butter across the fish and cook for another two minutes. Serve from the tray with wedges of lemon.

Serves 2

Chorizo cooked in cider

4 chorizo sausages

1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil

2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

3 cups cider

2 tbsp chopped parsley

Cut chorizo into two-centimetre slices and set aside. Heat oil in a frying pan on medium. Add chorizo slices and fry until they colour a little on both sides. Add the garlic and cook for two minutes, taking care it does not burn. Add the cider and toss to coat the chorizo. Simmer for 10-15 minutes, until the sauce has reduced and a layer of red oil coats the surface. Divide into four small bowls, sprinkle with parsley and serve with crusty bread while still warm.

Serves 4

FRANK'S TIP

When choosing a cider try to find a semi sweet or dry cider as sweet cider does not complement savoury dishes.