

Fiona Beckett on drinks Wine

Welcome to the cider revolution

A new and inspiring generation is taking cider making as seriously as that of wine, with appealing results



📷 How do you like them apples? "The recent transformation of the cider scene has been compared to similar developments in winemaking." Photograph: Mike Powles/Getty Images



Fiona Beckett

🐦 @winematcher

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The shock result, not least to us judges, of the recent first [IWSC](#) 100% fermented fruit cider tasting was that it was a Swedish producer, Brännland, that swept the board, winning the ice cider trophy (for its [2013 Brännland Iscider Barrique](#)) and half of the eight gold medals on offer. I don't mean that in any jingoistic way, but simply to say that it was surprising, given that here in the UK we have some stunning ciders of our own.

It turns out that a lot of the smaller British producers I admire so much hadn't even entered, mainly because they simply don't have the funds to enter competitions, but also because they don't hold enough stock to deal with the rush in demand that winning a medal engenders. Their mainstay, and what makes their ciders so fascinating, is small batches made from old varieties that often fruit inconsistently. Many come from undiscovered orchards such as those produced by the Devon cidery [Find & Foster](#).

The recent transformation of the cider scene has been compared to similar developments in winemaking, and while I'm not altogether on board with that, it is true that cider is not taken anywhere near as seriously, not least because the vast majority you find in supermarkets is made from concentrate. That said, the big 70cl bottles in which cider is increasingly bottled, often with attention-grabbing names and striking labels, do help.

It's also true that cider resembles wine more than beer does. It takes years to grow a productive orchard and to make, and often age, the resulting cider. Ciders have a lot in common with natural wine, too, especially the low-alcohol pet nat (*pétillant naturel*) styles in which the liquid is bottled while it's still fermenting. Unlike most beers, they also have the benefit of being gluten-free.

So how did this cider revolution come about? It's been a bit of a virtuous circle: a new and innovative generation of cider producers, a new breed of drink shops that take cider and beer as seriously as wine ([Two Belly in Bristol](#) and [Pullo in Exeter](#) being just two good examples), and an energetic and engaging group of cider advocates, including Alistair Morrell of the [Cider is Wine](#) campaign, Felix Nash of [The Fine Cider Company](#) and "ciderologist" Gabe Cook, author of [the newly published and excellent Modern British Cider](#) (Camra, £15.99).

By the way, if you'd like to hear [beer writer Pete Brown](#), [cider maker Tom Oliver](#) and me discuss the current crossover between cider, beer and wine, come and join us [next Sunday, 19 September, at the Abergavenny Food Festival](#).

Five bottles to make you rethink cider



Loxley Cider Rosehip & Sloe, [£3.20 for 330ml Rose & May](#), or [£48 for 24 bottles Diverse Fine Food](#), 3.5%. Hurrah for a naturally flavoured fruit cider. A good substitute for rosé, and with a strikingly pretty label (from illustrator [Brian Grimwood](#)).

Wobblegate Rebel Root Behold the Outcider 2016 [£14.50 for 750ml](#), 6.5%. I couldn't resist a producer who calls their orchard this. A really unusual,



limited-edition cider made purely from bramley apples. Sharp and crisp - would be great with raw shellfish.



Tinston Anatomy English Sparkling Cider [£10.99 for 750ml](#), 7.5%. Fine, dry, elegant sparkling cider, again based on bramleys, that could easily pass for a wine. A great bottle for a wedding.



Find & Foster Allan Pet Nat 2020 [£15.50 for 750ml Two Belly Bristol](#), [£17.50 St Andrews Wine Company](#), 5.5%. If you're used to sour beers and natural wines, you'll feel at home with this gloriously deep, amber-coloured, semi-sparkling pet nat.



Wilding Cider Dabinett & Foxwhelp [£16.50 for 750ml](#)
[Two Belly Bristol](#), [£17.50 The Cat in the Glass](#), [£58 for three The Fine Cider Company](#), 7.2%. Stunningly rich sparkling cider from unsprayed traditional orchards with an amazingly intense apple flavour. Would be perfect with a farmhouse cheddar.

For more by Fiona Beckett, go to [matchingfoodandwine.com](https://www.matchingfoodandwine.com)

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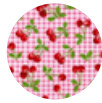
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domesticatedsteph 16 Sep 2021 13:46

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On the strength of Fiona's recommendation, I purchased Gabe Cook's Modern British Cider, hoping for an enjoyable read. Oh dear, what a disappointment! It lacks critical perspective and it's headed straight for the recycling. What CAMRA was doing publishing it is a mystery. Of course it may just be that I don't care for 'modern' cider at all, preferring traditional still cider.

Most memorable cider I've drunk in recent years was Solway Cider's Surfin Turnips, described on the board at Bristol's Orchard Inn as "full-on scrumpy fun!" Indeed.

Report



kasurimethi 16 Sep 2021 11:05

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Cider should be bone dry, like sherry. Such cider is increasingly unobtainable.

Report

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