

## *Cider Making, September 2002*

*Enjoy this reprint from the October – December 2002 Wizards Newsletter!*

### **September Meeting - The WIZARDS First Ever Cider Night**

Tony and Brett combined forces to make September's Cider Night a club meeting to remember. They both dug deep into the cellar to bring out plenty of choices for the club to sample. And what a treat it turned out to be! We started with apple ale and then moved straight into the ciders. We sampled natural yeast ciders, fruit ciders, a cranberry cider, cider with honey, cider spiced with coriander, mead, dandelion mead, cyser and who knows what else. Along with each ample sample, Tony or Brett gave a brief commentary about the sample or the style. Below are some of the highlights of what they told us:

- The good thing about cider is it's cheap and easy to make. If it's no good, just dump it and forget it.
- The basic recipe for cider is to add 1/2 to 1/3 cup sugar per gallon of apple cider. The sugars can be honey, white sugar or brown sugar. The goal is to get to an OG of 1070 to 1090 but it's better to use the 1/2 to 1/3 cup guideline than to use a hydrometer. This is because it is hard and unreliable to measure OG as the sugars don't blend well with the cider right away.
- Any kind of white sugar can be used. There didn't seem to be much support for corn sugar over cane sugar. Cane sugar was even suggested as the preferred alternative because it's cheaper to buy.
- You can use the natural yeasts in the cider to do the fermenting or you can use packaged yeasts.
- Sulfites can be used to kill the natural yeasts before adding your favorite yeast but not too many people do this.
- Yeast starters can be made in the same way as for making beer, using either sugar or malt extract as the basis of the starter.
- Fruits can also be added to cider. Just freeze the fruits long enough to pop the skins first.
- Try making a New England Barrel Cider. For each gallon of cider, add 1# raisins, 1# brown sugar, 1# white sugar, 1# honey and ferment with the cider's natural yeast for 6 months. Age for at least a few years. The one we sampled was aged for four!
- Ciders can be made in any batch size. That's one of the nice things, it easy to split batches and do different things with them. Try making it a gallon at a time!
- Cider Jack may be illegal but it's easy to make. Or so we heard. Take a cider and put it outdoors to freeze. The water will freeze but not the alcohol. Then it's just a matter of removing the ice and bottling the cider jack left over.
- Try making a coriander cider. The coriander nicely sets off the tartness of the apples. Tony used 1/2 ounce freshly crushed coriander to 5 gallons.
- Cyser is actually a cider where greater than 50% honey is used.

# *Cider Making, September 2002*

## September Meeting - The WIZARDS First Ever Cider Night

### Part II: Cider Making Tips and Examples

by Brett Schneider

Overall, the whole deal with cider is to be less anal about the 'stuff' than with beer and brewing and sanitizing etc. Have fun with it and since there are no rules to follow, make up your own.

There are really no hard and fast rules for any recipes or additions to be made to your ciders. The BJCP treats them just like beer, with ranges of characteristics for every part of the drink.

The best basic method to work through is normally something like this for the ciders I make:

- MEASURE the OG of the cider juice as purchased, normally 1.040->50.
- DECIDE how strong you want the cider to be and start adding sugars to boost the OG to the range of interest. I do this only by math and never really go back and take a second OG reading. Values I use in the math profile are:
  - white or brown sugar = 1.045 /lb/gal
  - honey = 1.035 /lb/gal
  - fruit = I ignore the sugar additions, but as you know they will also boost the OG by some small measurable amount. I simply add 1 lb/gal to the primary and then again at 1/2 lb/gal in a secondary to obtain aroma.

#### **Example:**

Here is an example to demonstrate the calculations discussed above:

1. 4 gals cider @ 1.045 = 180 pts sugar
2. If you add 4 lbs of white or brown sugar the calculations would be:  $180 + 4(45) = 360$  sugar pts ->  $360/4 = 1.090$  OG.
3. If you add 4 lbs honey you would get  $180 + 4(35) = 320$  pts -> 1.080 OG.
4. So, if you were instead trying to make a CYSER you would try to obtain an OG >1.090 (more than 360 sugar pt total in the 4 gals of cider) and would need to add 1.14 lbs more honey to get 50%+ sugar points from the honey ( $360-320 =$  you need 40 more points from honey). I would simply add another 2 lbs and boost it bigger as in bigger is better.

Finally, using the basics above and trying to re-create my barrel cider from the meeting I would have the following mix:

1. 4 gal cider ( $4*45$ ) + four lbs white & four lbs brown ( $8*45$ ) plus 4 lbs honey ( $4*35$ ) for an OG of 1.170.
2. Now that I have done the math I would actually think that 2 lbs each white brown honey would be sufficient. Of course you would need to add 4 lbs raisins and then find the patience to let it sit for 5 years, but it can be done.

## *Cider Making, September 2002*

### **Adding Fruits and Raisins to the Base Cider**

Again, there are no rights and wrongs, just listings of the way other people have done it before you. Most of the time, just dump the fruit in however it comes to you. The same goes for raisins, just dump away.

For things like grapes and cranberries, freeze them first. This will expand the guts and pop the skins to open up the sugars to the cider and yeast to ferment. The skins impart the tannins so leave them on the fruit. Soft fruit is a pure no brainer in the dump and wait world.

You could also heat the fruit if it is fresh just to the point of the skins popping. This will kill some of the yeast in these skins so they don't get into a battle with the yeast from the apple skins, should you decide to not add a controlled yeast starter.

### **Carbonating and Getting Ready for the Judges**

Read the BJCP guide since there are all sorts of data a brewer **MUST** provide to the judges if you were to enter. I can't emphasize this enough for anything you enter, but especially for meads and ciders. The more you tell the judge the better they will treat your entry. So, let's also look at them as more insight to you, the brewer, trying to create something they can define to others.

FG range is given as 0.990 - 1.012, and you are asked to specify dry, semi-dry, or sweet. So dry is the lowest FG and sweet the highest. I'd say 1.008 and higher is sweet, depending on OG, and unless it really dries out call it semi-dry. But measure it to be sure.

I carbonate my bottled ciders with corn sugar, just like beer, since it is pretty easy to use and simply gives it CO<sub>2</sub> - does nothing to taste or sweetness or body or anything like that in small doses. BJCP gives this range:

- still - no carbonation
- petillant - very lightly sparkling, visibly and in the mouth
- sparkling - clearly, but not heavily carbonated.
- spuming or spumante - heavily and vigorously carbonated, bordering on gushing, with tight, fine bubbles, champagne-like

I would classify sparkling to be like 'normal' beer carbonation (not English style or others where they say low CO<sub>2</sub> in the descriptions), whatever that may be. Charge it like beer with 1/2 cup per 5 gal, or whatever scale you normally use. I got away from measuring by the cup and started weighing it out. More consistent results. Whatever your method for priming beer, just do the same for cider too.

Unless you used no honey in your blend, and/or you waited a very long time, still cider is something you will need patience for. I highly recommend sampling a bottle before you might enter it, to judge the character and answer the questions from CAT 26 in the BJCP style guide.