



2026 COMPETITION GUIDE

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NORTHWEST CIDER CUP COMPETITION GUIDE



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# KEY DATES FOR 2026

**MARCH 2:** NW CIDER CUP OPEN FOR ENTRIES

**MARCH 17:** ENTRY DROP OFF OPEN AT NW CIDER SYMPOSIUM

**APRIL 27:** SHIPPING WINDOW AND IN-PERSON DROP-OFF OPENS

**MAY 15:** FINAL DAY FOR ENTRIES

**MAY 21:** STEWARD AND JUDGE GENERAL TRAINING (ONLINE)

**MAY 29:** FINAL DAY FOR ENTRY DELIVERY AND DROP-OFF  
(ALL ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY EOD)

**JUNE 7:** JUDGE SENSORY TRAINING (IN-PERSON)

**JUNE 8:** NW CIDER CUP COMPETITION

**JUNE 25:** AWARDS PARTY

# OVERVIEW & PHILOSOPHY

## OVERVIEW

In 2026, the region's premier, cidemaker-founded competition, the Northwest Cider Cup, returns for its 13th year, welcoming commercial cider and perry entries from Washington, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, and British Columbia. Founded by makers and now organized by the Northwest Cider Association, a nonprofit trade organization dedicated to nurturing the community, economy, and ecosystem of the Pacific Northwest, the Cup is both competitive and highly respected.

Recognizing and celebrating cider excellence is at the heart of the Northwest Cider Cup. The competition inspires quality through constructive peer-to-peer feedback while advancing cider education and industry recognition.

The Cup aims to holistically evaluate cider and perry for excellence. Judges are trained to thoughtfully assess key elements including appearance, aroma, flavor, and mouthfeel, and how each contributes to the overall finished beverage.

Ciders and perries are grouped and evaluated by competition category. Cidermakers select the most appropriate category for each entry based on characteristics such as sweetness, tannin, fruit used, and production process, as defined in the NW Cider Cup [Categories Accepted](#). Judges participate in both general and sensory training prior to a one-day blind judging.

## RECOGNIZING AND CELEBRATING CIDER EXCELLENCE IS AT THE HEART OF THE NW CIDER CUP.

The evaluation process follows a progressive review of individual elements, concluding with judges' overall impression and scoring. As individuals and as table cohorts, judges identify exemplary ciders and perries within each category. One gold, silver, and bronze medal are typically awarded per category, with additional medals possible in categories with a high number of entries or ties. Gold medal winners advance to the Best of Show final judging, and winners are announced at a public awards ceremony.

## PHILOSOPHY

The NW Cider Cup is grounded in the NWCA's strategic goal to increase demand for Northwest cider by elevating its reputation and visibility among consumers, industry, and trade. Guided by this goal and a commitment to the highest professional standards, competition organizers collaborate with the Northwest cider community to:

- Periodically review and update judging criteria and category standards.
- Evolve [Categories Accepted](#) guidelines in response to changes within the cider landscape.
- Host general and sensory judge training to build a shared language for cider quality, aroma, and flavor, focused on holistic evaluation.
- Expand the pool and diversity of qualified judges, including judges educated by the American Cider Association.
- Use language that honors apple origins while recognizing excellence across traditional and non-traditional sources and methods.
- Avoid assumptions that specific apple varieties yield fixed profiles, acknowledging regional, seasonal, and cultivar-driven variation.
- Recognize and celebrate exemplary ciders and perries made with diverse apples, pears, additions, and techniques.
- Support media, trade, and consumers in confidently navigating the cider category.
- Create opportunities for experiential learning, sensory development, community building, and recognition.



# NEW FOR 2026

## 2026 UPDATES FOR ENTRY SUBMISSIONS

See [Categories Accepted \(pg. 11\)](#) and [nwcidercup.com](http://nwcidercup.com) for full details

- “New Cidery” eligibility definition expanded to include non-member cideries.
- Fortified category submission quantity requirement reduced to 3 bottles
- Entry rules clarified to specify “All entries must be fermented and be made with 90% or more by volume juice not from concentrate. Concentrate may be used for backsweetening.”

## DROP-OFF ENTRIES AT NW CIDER SYMPOSIUM & SAVE ON SHIPPING COSTS

In addition to our standard shipping/delivery window, Cider Entries will be received at 2026 Northwest Cider Symposium:

- Enter your ciders/perries at [nwcidercup.com](http://nwcidercup.com) starting March 2
- Drop off entries at the Symposium in Tacoma, WA on March 17
  - Package ciders/perries in a sturdy box without the cider/perry name
  - Ciders must be entered online at [nwcidercup.com](http://nwcidercup.com) prior to being received at NW Cider Symposium. Entries will not be received in-person unless online submission is complete.
- Entries received at Symposium will be transported and securely stored by event organizers until the competition.

Thank you to Columbia Distributing for hosting the competition.

# FURTHER INFORMATION

This Competition Guide provides the information you need to learn about the competition and prepare to enter ciders into the NW Cider Cup. Resources are linked below:

Visit [nwcidercup.com](http://nwcidercup.com) to review rules, submit entries and access judge feedback after the event.

Visit [nwcider.com/nw-cider-cup](http://nwcider.com/nw-cider-cup) for a listing of past competition winners and more Cup history.

If you have any questions or need support, please email

[nwcidercup@nwcider.com](mailto:nwcidercup@nwcider.com)



# COMPETITION RULES

1. The shipper must pay all customs, duty, and shipping fees.
2. All entries become the property of the Northwest Cider Association.
3. Any portion of the entries remaining after the competition may be used in any way as seen fit by the Northwest Cider Association.
4. Entry fees will not be reimbursed if cider shipment does not arrive on time or arrives broken.
5. Fee is \$75 per entry for NWCA members or \$105 per entry for non-members. If you are a current NWCA member and did not receive a discount code, please email Laura at [nwcidercup@nwcider.com](mailto:nwcidercup@nwcider.com).
6. You must pay the entry fee for your entry to be confirmed.
7. Special rules for new cideries: If you started producing cider after April 1, 2025, you may qualify as a "New Cidery." New cideries may apply for two free entries by emailing [nwcidercup@nwcider.com](mailto:nwcidercup@nwcider.com). All new cideries compete for the Best New Cidery of the Year Award, which comes with a \$500 cash prize.

## ENTRY ELIGIBILITY

- All entries must be currently available for sale or destined for sale in the near future. It is strongly recommended that ciders entered are available in sufficient quantities for future sales.
- All entries must be fermented and made with 90% or more by volume juice not from concentrate. Concentrate may be used for backsweetening.
- Entrants must be a licensed cidery producing cider in the territory of the Northwest Cider Association which is currently Washington, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, and British Columbia.
- All entries must be made by cideries licensed within the territory of the Northwest Cider Association, as noted above. Ciders made in the territory but not sold by a cidery licensed in the territory may not be entered. Cideries licensed in other states/provinces making cider via a contract with a producer in the region may not enter their ciders.
- Collaborations between a cidery licensed within the territory of the NWCA and another entity may be entered by the cidery located in the territory.

## RULES FOR USE OF COMPETITION AWARDS AND FEEDBACK IN MARKETING:

- Ciders that win a medal or award may reference that award via on-package marketing materials only with the prior written approval from NWCA.
- Vintage/dated ciders that win a medal or award may only reference that award for ciders of the same vintage/production date.
- Use of any award in a misleading way may result in that award being rescinded and the offending producer being barred from future competitions.
- Producers are responsible for ensuring that distributors, retailers and restaurants use awards in accordance with competition rules. Failure to maintain proper control of the use of these awards may also result in the award being rescinded and ineligibility to compete in future competitions.
- Feedback is supplied to aid producers in understanding how ciders were perceived by judges and what the relative strengths and weaknesses were perceived to be. Individual judges' comments are not to be quoted for marketing purposes.



# HOW TO ENTER

## OVERVIEW

1. Review the NW Cider Cup 2026 Competition Guide and [Categories Accepted](#)
2. Register as an Entrant at NW Cider Cup website: [www.nwcidercup.com](http://www.nwcidercup.com)
  - Click Register > Entrant at the top of page.
  - Use your company email when registering. After the competition, you'll log back in with this email and password to view your cider evaluation score and comments.
3. Submit cider entries from March 2 - May 15, 2026.
  - NWCA members: Make sure to add the discount code prior to paying.
  - New cideries (started making cider after April 1, 2025): Email [nwcidercup@nwcider.com](mailto:nwcidercup@nwcider.com) for 2 free entries as a new cidery.
4. Pay entry fees, print bottle labels and shipping labels. Each Entry will consist of:
  - THREE capped or corked bottles if 750 ml or larger
  - FOUR capped or corked bottles/cans if 500 ml, 22 oz, 16 oz, or other size larger than 12 oz
  - SIX cans/bottles if 12 oz or less
  - Fortified category: 3 bottles
  - See the Info page for shipping & delivery dates and locations.
5. After June 25, 2026, return to the NW Cider Cup website ([nwcidercup.com](http://nwcidercup.com)) and log in to view judges' evaluations of your entries.

## SELECTING WHICH CATEGORY TO ENTER

Cider and perry entries are grouped into categories based on similar characteristics. Additional subcategory adjustments may take place after the entry period closes. The goal is to assess overall quality and recognize standout examples within each category. These categories evolve in response to changes in orcharding, production, and market trends.

- **Tannin & Sweetness Levels:** Entrants should select categories based on perceived tannin and sweetness levels. Judges will not conduct tannin or gravity readings but will evaluate the cider based on the expected profile for each category.
  - **Tannin:** Judges will review both tannin bitterness and astringency levels per entry.
  - **Dry/Semi-Dry:** Beverages with a Final Gravity (FG) below 1.007 should be entered here.
  - **Semi-Sweet/Sweet:** Beverages with a FG above 1.007 should be entered in these categories. If the final gravity is exactly 1.007, entrants may choose either Semi-Dry or Semi-Sweet.
  - **Brix:** A Brix level (measurement of sugar content in a liquid) is provided in [Categories Accepted](#) as an additional data point to assist entrants in gauging sweetness.
- **Category Placement:** Entrants are responsible for selecting the most appropriate category. If unsure, competition organizers are available to offer guidance. Please email [nwcidercup@nwcider.com](mailto:nwcidercup@nwcider.com) with any questions.
- **Multiple Category Fits:** If an entry could fit into more than one category, consider which primary characteristic should be highlighted. For example, a high-tannin, barrel-aged fruit cider might fit in the High-Tannin, Wood/Oaked, or Fruit categories. The entrant should decide if the dominant characteristic is the fruit, the oak aging, or the tannin structure to ensure the cider is evaluated among similar entries.
- To get a better sense of how many entries each category receives refer to the [Number of Entries and Medals per Category table in this document \(on page 10\)](#).





# ENTRY FORM GUIDE

Judges do not receive all of the information you provide on the entry form.  
Please note that judges do not see the name of your cider, format, and fruit/juice sources.

	SHARED w/judges	NOT SHARED w/judges
<b>ENTRY NAME:</b> The name of the cider is NOT shared with judges.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>NW CIDER CUP CATEGORY:</b> See <a href="#">Categories Accepted (at the end of this document)</a> to determine which category you will enter into.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>CARBONATION</b> (Select 1): Still, Petillant, or Sparkling	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>SWEETNESS</b> (Select 1): Dry, Semi-Dry, Semi-Sweet, Sweet In general, beverages below 1.007 should be entered as Dry or Semi-Dry and above 1.007 should be entered as Semi-Sweet or Sweet. If a beverage has a FG of 1.007 the entrant may decide to select either Semi-Dry or Semi-Sweet.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>ALCOHOL BY VOLUME:</b> Enter numbers only, decimals acceptable to the hundredth place.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>PACKAGING FORMAT</b> (Select 1): 750 ml Bottle, 500 ml Bottle, Bottle - Other Size, 19.2 ounce Can, 16 ounce Can, 12 ounce Can, Can - Other Size		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>FRUIT OR JUICE SOURCE</b> (Select all that apply for your base beverage): Indicate where the fruit/juice for the base beverage comes from (state/province).		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>FRUIT ADDITION SOURCE(S)</b> Please specify the state/country of origin for all fruit additions.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>FINAL GRAVITY:</b> Please provide finishing specific gravity to the thousandth place (e.g., 0.991, 1.000, etc.).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>POSSIBLE ALLERGENS</b> Does this entry have common food allergens?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS CATEGORY:</b> Read the information in the <a href="#">Categories Accepted</a> carefully to see what details are required or optional for the category (varies by category).		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>REQUIRED INFO:</b> If it says "Entrants MUST specify" this is required information. As required by category, entrants must specify Fruit, Additions and Process. Tasting notes are never allowed. Do not type any information other than what is specified.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>OPTIONAL INFO:</b> If it says "Entrants MAY specify" this is optional information. You may share information about Fruit and Additions only. You are not allowed to share details about how the cider was made or tasting notes. Do not type any information other than what is specified.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

# SCORES, MEDALS & AWARDS

## SCORES

During the competition individual Judges give each cider they evaluate a score (1 - 50) and come to a consensus score among all the judges who evaluate that cider. Entrants will see both of these numbers on each cider evaluation form. Scores do not determine medals, though the highest scoring ciders are more likely to be awarded medals. It is not possible to compare scores across categories as Judges' palates and decision making processes vary as do the quality and quantity of ciders entered into each category. For example, in the 2025 Cup eighteen ciders received a score of 40 and just ten of those entries were awarded a medal (4 gold, 2 silver, and 4 bronze).

This system is in contrast to other less competitive cider judging events which award medals based solely on points with multiple gold, silver and bronze awards per category.

## MEDALS

The 2026 competition will award gold, silver, and bronze medals in up to 19 distinct categories. In most categories, a maximum of one gold, one silver, and one bronze may be awarded per category. Additional silver and bronze medals may be available in categories with a large number of entries with up to 6 medals awarded in very large categories. This means that multiple ciders might get a silver or bronze but there will still only be one gold per category.

Judges may decide to award no medals or a combination of specific medals. For instance, there may be a bronze medal to the top scorer in a category and no silver and gold medals.

Winning a medal at the NW Cider Cup means that your cider is in the very top tier of ciders produced in the Northwest. Many excellent ciders do not win a medal at NW Cider Cup. Just 25% of entries won a medal at NW Cider Cup 2025.

## AWARDS

The competition awards Best of Show and Best of Show Runner-Up to the two gold medal winning ciders deemed to be the best by a team of head judges.

Awards for Best Small, Best Medium and Best Large Cidery are awarded each year. The cidery with the highest point value from medals (Gold = 3, Silver = 2, Bronze = 1) in their size range (Small = up to 10,000 gallons, Medium = 10,001 - 250,000 gallons, Large = 250,001+ gallons) wins the award. Additionally, a Best New Cidery award is given to the cidery with the highest point value from medals among those who have been commercially producing for one year or less.





# NUMBER OF ENTRIES AND MEDALS PER CATEGORY IN 2025

In planning their entries, many cidemakers like to review the number of entries in each category from previous competitions. Below is a table that lists the total number of entries in each category from the last NW Cider Cup.

CATEGORY	NAME	# OF ENTRIES	# MEDALS POSSIBLE	# MEDALS AWARDED
1A	Low-Tannin Ciders Dry	15	3	3
1B	Low-Tannin Ciders Sweet	12	3	3
2A	High-Tannin Ciders Dry	17	3	3
2B	High-Tannin Ciders Sweet	9	3	3
3A&B	Red-Fleshed Ciders (Dry & Sweet)	5	3	3
4A	Low-Tannin Perries	6	3	3
4B	High-Tannin Perries	11	3	3
5A	Wood/Oaked	10	3	3
6A	Single Varietal	14	3	3
7A	Fruit Co-Fermented	14	3	3
7B	Fruit Post-Fermentation Addition Sweet	43	6	6
7C	Fruit Post-Fermentation Addition Dry	14	3	3
8A	Botanical Hopped	7	3	3
8B	Botanical Herbed	16	3	3
8C	Botanical Spiced	12	3	3
9A	Specialty Fortified	12	3	3
9B	Specialty Low Alcohol/Alcohol Removed	8	3	3
9C	Specialty Other	6	3	3

# 2026 CATEGORIES ACCEPTED

## CIDERS

Ciders are fermented and made predominantly from apples. Ciders are grouped here by tannin and sweetness levels, as well as apple type, in the instance of red-fleshed apples. See category specific comments for entry details.

1A LOW-TANNIN CIDERS DRY: FG < 1.007 (< 1.8 Brix)

1B LOW-TANNIN CIDERS SWEET: FG > 1.007 (> 1.8 Brix)

2A HIGH-TANNIN CIDERS DRY: FG < 1.007 (< 1.8 Brix)

2B HIGH-TANNIN CIDERS SWEET: FG > 1.007 (> 1.8 Brix)

3A RED-FLESHED CIDERS DRY: FG < 1.007 (< 1.8 Brix)

3B RED-FLESHED CIDERS SWEET: FG > 1.007 (> 1.8 Brix)

## PERRIES

Perries are fermented and made predominantly from pears, as cider is from apples. Perries are grouped here by tannin levels. See category specific comments for entry details.

4A LOW-TANNIN PERRIES

4B HIGH-TANNIN PERRIES

## CIDERS & PERRIES

Ciders are made predominantly from apples, perries predominantly from pears. The following categories are open to both cider and perry entries, though category descriptions may default to the term "cider" appropriate to the vast majority of entries.

5 WOOD/OAKED

6 SINGLE VARIETAL

7A FRUIT CO-FERMENTED

7B FRUIT POST-FERMENTATION ADDITION SWEET: FG > 1.007 (> 1.8 Brix)

7C FRUIT POST-FERMENTATION ADDITION DRY: FG < 1.007 (< 1.8 Brix)

8A BOTANICAL HOPPED

8B BOTANICAL HERBED

8C BOTANICAL SPICED

9A SPECIALTY FORTIFIED

9B SPECIALTY LOW ALCOHOL/ALCOHOL-REMOVED

9C SPECIALTY OTHER



# CIDERS

Ciders are made predominantly from apples. Ciders are grouped here by tannin and sweetness levels, as well as apple type, in the instance of red-fleshed apples. See category specific comments for entry details.

## 1A LOW-TANNIN CIDERS DRY FG < 1.007 (< 1.8 BRIX)

**COMMENTS:** Exhibits characteristics of ciders primarily made from low tannin apples (commonly listed as “dessert” or “culinary”). Low tannin ciders may be higher in acidity. High tannin characters, such as heavy bitterness, astringency or associated mouthfeel should not be notably present.

**AROMA:** Dry ciders may be more wine-like with some esters. Aroma intensity may be low, but aroma should be high quality.

**APPEARANCE:** Variable. Clear to brilliant, typically pale to gold in color.

**PALATE (FLAVOR & MOUTHFEEL):** Medium to high acidity. Dry ciders may present with more acidity. Sugar and acidity should combine in balance to give a refreshing character, neither cloying nor too austere. Low to Medium body. Little to no perceivable tannin, slight to moderate astringency with little bitterness. Softer mouthfeel.

**OVERALL IMPRESSION:** Variable, but should be a refreshing drink. Dry ciders must not be too austere. Low tannin cider generally serves well as a “session” drink, and suitably accompanies a wide variety of food.

## 1B LOW-TANNIN CIDERS SWEET FG > 1.007 (> 1.8 BRIX)

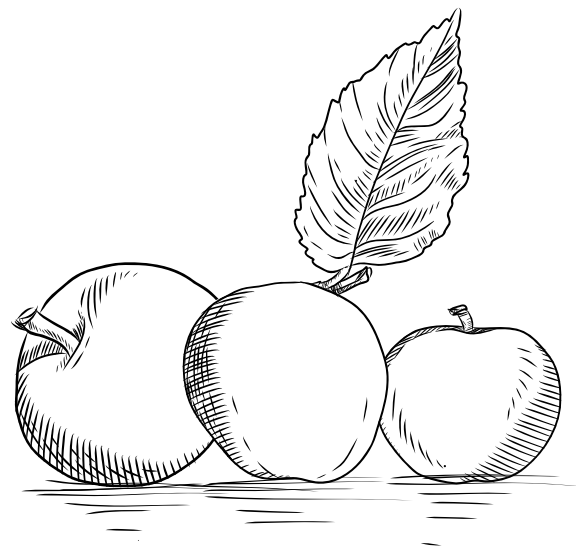
**COMMENTS:** Exhibits characteristics of ciders primarily made from low tannin apples (commonly listed as “dessert” or “culinary”). Low tannin ciders may be higher in acidity. High tannin characters, such as heavy bitterness, astringency or associated mouthfeel should not be notably present.

**AROMA:** Sweet or low-alcohol ciders may have apple dominant aroma. Aroma intensity may be low, but aromas should be high quality.

**APPEARANCE:** Variable. Clear to brilliant, typically pale to gold in color.

**PALATE (FLAVOR & MOUTHFEEL):** Medium to high acidity. Sweet ciders may present with less acidity. Sugar and acidity should combine in balance to give a refreshing character, neither cloying nor too austere. Low to Medium body. Little to no perceivable tannin, slight to moderate astringency with little bitterness. Softer mouthfeel.

**OVERALL IMPRESSION:** Variable, but should be a refreshing drink. Sweet ciders must not be cloying. Low tannin cider generally serves well as a “session” drink, and suitably accompanies a wide variety of food.



## 2A HIGH-TANNIN CIDERS DRY FG < 1.007 (< 1.8 BRIX)

**COMMENTS:** Exhibits characteristics of ciders primarily made from high tannin apples (i.e. Bittersweet, Bittersharp, commonly listed as "heirloom" or "cider" apples). May include wild or crab apples. Tannins and some astringency should be present. Sweetness, acidity, and tannins should be in harmony.

**APPEARANCE:** Clear to brilliant, pale to deep gold or amber in color.

**AROMA:** Low-alcohol ciders may have apple dominant aroma. Dry ciders may be more wine-like with some esters. Aroma intensity varies and may trend high. Aroma should be high quality, offering complexity.

**PALATE (FLAVOR & MOUTHFEEL):** Acidity varies (generally medium to high) and should balance tannins and sugar. Dry ciders may present with more acidity. Sugar and acidity should combine in balance to give a refreshing character, neither cloying nor too austere. Medium to full body and mouthfeel. Moderate to high tannins should be apparent, in balance with acidity, and sweetness.

**OVERALL IMPRESSION:** Should exhibit more distinctive apple character than a low tannin cider. Should not be bland or watery. Dry ciders must not be too austere. Cider may be complex with a long aftertaste.

## 2B HIGH-TANNIN CIDERS SWEET FG > 1.007 (> 1.8 BRIX)

**COMMENTS:** Exhibits characteristics of ciders primarily made from high tannin apples (i.e. Bittersweet, Bittersharp, commonly listed as "heirloom" or "cider" apples). May include wild or crab apples. Tannins and some astringency should be present. Sweetness, acidity, and tannins should be in harmony.

**APPEARANCE:** Clear to brilliant, pale to deep gold or amber in color.

**AROMA:** Sweet or low-alcohol ciders may have apple dominant aroma. Aroma intensity varies and may trend high. Aroma should be high quality, offering complexity.

**PALATE (FLAVOR & MOUTHFEEL):** Acidity varies (generally medium to high) and should balance tannins and sugar. Sweet ciders may present with less acidity. Sugar and acidity should combine in balance to give a refreshing character, neither cloying nor too austere. Medium to full body and mouthfeel. Moderate to high tannins should be apparent, in balance with acidity, and sweetness.

**OVERALL IMPRESSION:** Should exhibit more distinctive apple character than a low tannin cider. Should not be bland or watery. Sweet ciders must not be cloying. Cider may be complex with a long aftertaste.



### 3A RED-FLESHED CIDERS DRY FG < 1.007 (< 1.8 BRIX)

Entrants **MUST** specify apples used. Entrants **MAY** specify additions (i.e. sugar, honey, fruit, wood, and botanicals). Ciders whose color is derived entirely from red-fleshed and/or red-skinned apples belong here. Ciders whose color is derived in whole or in part from added ingredients (i.e. blueberries, grape skins, rose petals, etc.) should be entered in Fruit or Botanical, as appropriate.

**COMMENTS:** This category includes ciders made from red-fleshed apples (i.e. Mountain Rose, Airlie Red-Flesh, Redfield, Cranberry, Dolgo, Geneva Crab, Niedzwetzkyana, Pink Pearl, etc.). May have a blend of non red-fleshed apples and red-fleshed apples.

**APPEARANCE:** Clarity varies from medium to brilliant. Color typically ranges from pale yellow or pink to deep garnet.

**AROMA:** Aroma intensity varies. Quality should be high. May have notes of other fruits, especially red-fleshed fruits (i.e. strawberries, raspberries, cranberries, watermelon, etc.). Also can exhibit unique volatile profiles exhibiting other non-fruit characteristics, such as grassiness.

**PALATE (FLAVOR & MOUTHFEEL):** Low to high flavor intensity with a variable body. May have high levels of bitter and astringent compounds. The cider should be well balanced and integrated.

**OVERALL IMPRESSION:** Flavor and aromas can range from subtle to complex. The body of the cider can range from light to heavy. Should be an enjoyable expression of cider made with a specific segment of apples. Balance and quality of flavor profiles should be apparent.

### 3B RED-FLESHED CIDERS SWEET FG > 1.007 (> 1.8 BRIX)

Entrants **MUST** specify apples used. Entrants **MAY** specify additions (i.e. sugar, honey, fruit, wood, and botanicals). Ciders whose color is derived entirely from red-fleshed and/or red-skinned apples belong here. Ciders whose color is derived in whole or in part from added ingredients (i.e. blueberries, grape skins, rose petals, etc.) should be entered in Fruit or Botanical, as appropriate.

**COMMENTS:** This category includes ciders made from red-fleshed apples (i.e. Mountain Rose, Airlie Red-Flesh, Redfield, Cranberry, Dolgo, Geneva Crab, Niedzwetzkyana, Pink Pearl, etc.). May have a blend of red-fleshed and non-red-fleshed apples.

**APPEARANCE:** Clarity varies from medium to brilliant. Color typically ranges from pale yellow or pink to deep garnet.

**AROMA:** Aroma intensity varies. Quality should be high. May have notes of other fruits, especially red-fleshed fruits (i.e. strawberries, raspberries, cranberries, watermelon, etc.). Also can exhibit unique volatile profiles exhibiting other non-fruit characteristics, such as grassiness.

**PALATE (FLAVOR & MOUTHFEEL):** Low to high flavor intensity with a variable body. May have high levels of bitter and astringent compounds. The cider should be well balanced and integrated.

**OVERALL IMPRESSION:** Flavor and aromas can range from subtle to complex. The body of the cider can range from light to heavy. Should be an enjoyable expression of cider made with a specific segment of apples. Balance and quality of flavor profiles should be apparent.

# PERRIES

Perries are made predominantly from pears, as cider is from apples. Perries are grouped here by tannin levels. See category specific comments for entry details.

## 4A LOW-TANNIN PERRIES

**COMMENTS:** Some culinary pears may contain significant amounts of sorbitol, in which case a “dry” perry may give an impression of sweetness due to sorbitol in the pears. Perception of sorbitol as “sweet” is highly variable from one person to the next. Hence, entrants should specify sweetness according to actual residual sugar amount, and judges must be aware that they might perceive more sweetness than how the perry was entered.

**APPEARANCE:** Cloudy to brilliant. Generally quite pale.

**AROMA:** Varies.

**PALATE (FLAVOR & MOUTHFEEL):** There is a pear character, but not obviously fruity. It tends toward that of a young white wine. No bitterness. Relatively full mouthfeel, low to moderate tannin apparent as astringency.

**OVERALL IMPRESSION:** Mild. Only very slight acetification is acceptable. Mousiness, ropy/oily characters are serious faults.

## 4B HIGH-TANNIN PERRIES

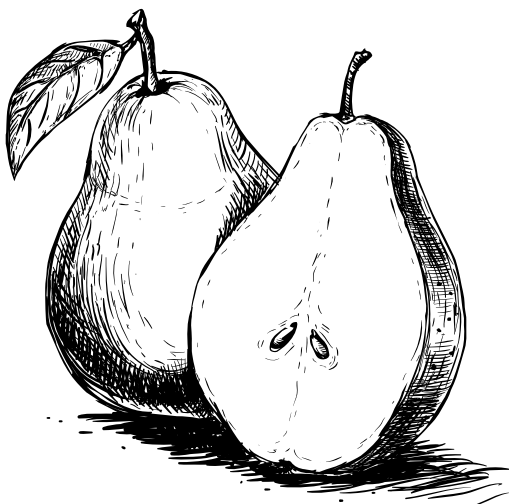
**COMMENTS:** Some culinary pears may contain significant amounts of sorbitol, in which case a “dry” perry may give an impression of sweetness due to sorbitol in the pears. Perception of sorbitol as “sweet” is highly variable from one person to the next. Hence, entrants should specify sweetness according to actual residual sugar amount, and judges must be aware that they might perceive more sweetness than how the perry was entered.

**APPEARANCE:** Cloudy to brilliant.

**AROMA:** Variable. Intensity may trend higher and quality should be high with some complexity. Pear character may be expected.

**PALATE (FLAVOR & MOUTHFEEL):** There is a pear character. Some slight bitterness may be present. Relatively full body and mouthfeel. Moderate to high tannin apparent as astringency.

**OVERALL IMPRESSION:** Should be a moderately complex drink. Only very slight acetification is acceptable. Mousiness, ropy/oily characters are serious faults.



# CIDERS & PERRIES

Ciders are made predominantly from apples, perries predominantly from pears. The following categories are open to both cider and perry entries, though category descriptions may default to the term “cider” appropriate to the vast majority of entries.

## 5 WOOD/OAKED

Entrants **MUST** specify process and wood used. Entrants **MAY** specify apples, pears and other additions used (i.e. sugar, honey, fruit, wood, and botanicals). Entrants **MAY** specify length of time, aging, origin of barrel and alcohol type (i.e. Kentucky Bourbon) as well as freshness of barrel. Entrants notes critically inform judges. For example, if an entry reads, “aged in bourbon barrels,” judges will anticipate a notable presence of bourbon barrel imparted profile. Ciders and perries that are primarily wood/oaked in style should be entered here.

**COMMENTS:** Barrels, wood chips, spirals, staves, cubes, etc. may be used. Non-oak wood should also be noted on the entry form. Must exhibit some flavors or aromas of wood aging.

**APPEARANCE:** Varies from cloudy to brilliant, pale to chestnut in color.

**AROMA:** Wood/oaked aromas are anticipated, but should not overwhelm. Aroma intensity may be high. Aroma should be high quality, offering complexity and balance.

**PALATE (FLAVOR & MOUTHFEEL):** The base cider should be in balance with the wood/oaked flavors present. Wood flavors that overwhelm the base cider would be considered a fault. Wine or spirit character from previous use may be present, and if present, should complement cider. Wine or spirit characters should not be dominant. Body should linger and the underlying cider should contribute. Thin, watery ciders with oak additions may not provide enough body. Non-saccharomyces flavors may be present but should be subtle.

**OVERALL IMPRESSION:** Wood and oak flavors should complement the base cider. Flavors should be balanced.

## 6 SINGLE VARIETAL

Entrants **MUST** specify apple or pear varietal used (i.e. Dabinett apple). Entrants **MAY** specify additions (i.e. sugar, honey, fruit, wood, and botanicals, etc.). Varietal character will be considered in judge evaluation. Fruit selected for single varietal ciders must create high quality cider or perry without the addition of other cultivars or other fruit additions.

**COMMENTS:** Cider made from a single apple or pear variety.

**APPEARANCE:** Varies from cloudy to brilliant, pale to chestnut in color.

**AROMA:** Varies. Low to high intensity, should be high quality.

**PALATE (FLAVOR & MOUTHFEEL):** Varies. Sweet or low-alcohol ciders may have apple dominant aroma and flavor. Dry ciders may be more wine-like with some esters. Specific apple or pear varietal and growing conditions will determine.

**OVERALL IMPRESSIONS:** Flavor and aromas can range from subtle to complex. The body of the cider or perry can range from light to heavy. Should be an enjoyable expression of cider made with a specific apple or perry made with a specific pear. Balance and the quality of flavor profiles should be apparent.

## 7A FRUIT CO-FERMENTED

Co-Ferment Ciders are made from apples that are fermented with other fruit(s). Entrants **MUST** specify all fruits used and indicate primary fruit(s). Entrants **MAY** indicate the type of fruit addition if it is likely to impact the flavor (i.e. tart cherry). Entrants **MAY** specify apples used. Entrants **MAY** specify additions (i.e. sugar, honey, fruit, wood, and botanicals).

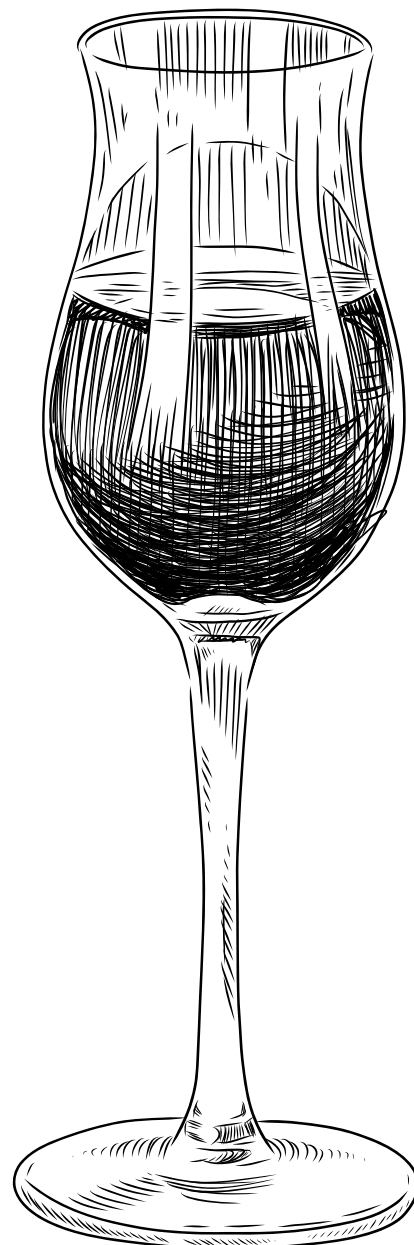
**COMMENTS:** Cider with the addition of other fruit.

**APPEARANCE:** Varies. May have colors imparted from fruit. Varies from cloudy to brilliant. Adjuncts typically influence color and clarity.

**AROMA:** Fruity aroma is anticipated. Aroma intensity varies.

**PALATE (FLAVOR & MOUTHFEEL):** Anticipated to be fruity in flavor, but must remain cider-like in nature as opposed to fruit-flavored alcohol. Depending on the fruit added, flavor and mouthfeel may be simple and quick or complex and linger. Puckering and astringency from fruit may be present but should be pleasing and in line with expectations from the fruit (i.e., mango cider should not be astringent, but cranberry should).

**OVERALL IMPRESSION:** The cider should generally be easily drinkable with fruit profile evident and cider notes also present.



## 7B FRUIT POST-FERMENTATION ADDITION SWEET FG > 1.007 (> 1.8 BRIX)

Post Fermentation Ciders have other fruit(s) added after fermentation. Entrants **MUST** specify all fruits used and indicate primary fruit(s). Entrants **MAY** indicate the type of fruit addition if it is likely to impact the flavor (i.e. tart cherry). Entrants **MAY** specify apples used. Entrants **MAY** specify additions (i.e. sugar, honey, fruit, wood, and botanicals).

**COMMENTS:** Cider with the addition of other fruit.

**APPEARANCE:** Varies. May have colors imparted from fruit. Varies from cloudy to brilliant. Adjuncts typically influence color and clarity.

**AROMA:** Fruity aroma is anticipated. Aroma intensity varies.

**PALATE (FLAVOR & MOUTHFEEL):** Anticipated to be fruity in flavor, but must remain cider-like in nature as opposed to fruit-flavored alcohol. Depending on the fruit added, flavor and mouthfeel may be simple and quick or complex and linger. Puckering and astringency from fruit may be present but should be pleasing and in line with expectations from the fruit (i.e., mango cider should not be astringent, but cranberry should).

**OVERALL IMPRESSION:** The cider should generally be easily drinkable with fruit profile evident and cider notes also present.

## 7C FRUIT POST-FERMENTATION ADDITION DRY FG < 1.007 (< 1.8 BRIX)

Post Fermentation Ciders have other fruit(s) added after fermentation. Entrants **MUST** specify all fruits used and indicate primary fruit(s). Entrants **MAY** indicate the type of fruit addition if it is likely to impact the flavor (i.e. tart cherry). Entrants **MAY** specify apples used. Entrants **MAY** specify additions (i.e. sugar, honey, fruit, wood, and botanicals).

**COMMENTS:** Cider with the addition of other fruit.

**APPEARANCE:** Varies. May have colors imparted from fruit. Varies from cloudy to brilliant. Adjuncts typically influence color and clarity.

**AROMA:** Fruity aroma is anticipated. Aroma intensity varies.

**PALATE (FLAVOR & MOUTHFEEL):** Anticipated to be fruity in flavor, but must remain cider-like in nature as opposed to fruit-flavored alcohol. Depending on the fruit added, flavor and mouthfeel may be simple and quick or complex and linger. Puckering and astringency from fruit may be present but should be pleasing and in line with expectations from the fruit (i.e., mango cider should not be astringent, but cranberry should).

**OVERALL IMPRESSION:** The cider should generally be easily drinkable with fruit profile evident and cider notes also present.



## 8A BOTANICAL HOPPED

Entrants **MUST** specify hop variety or varieties (i.e. Cascade, Amarillo, Citra, Chinook, Simcoe, etc.). Entrants **MAY** specify apples, pears and other additions used (i.e. sugar, honey, fruit, wood, and botanicals).

**COMMENTS:** Cider or perry with the addition of hops.

**APPEARANCE:** Slight haze to brilliant; pale to deep gold or amber in color.

**AROMA:** Variable. Hop and/or apple aroma anticipated. Hop varieties may provide aromas of: tropical, fruity, citrusy, woody, piney, grassy, herbal, floral, etc. Aroma intensity varies. Should balance hops and apples.

**PALATE (FLAVOR & MOUTHFEEL):** Hop flavor may be present. Varies from dry to sweet. The sweetness of sweet hopped ciders should accentuate hop profile and should not be too cloying. Hop bitterness should be light and may be nonexistent. Light to medium body. Hops may provide bittering. Some tannin may be present for slight astringency.

**OVERALL IMPRESSION:** Should be a moderately complex drink. A distinct hop aroma may be present. Note that freshly-hopped ciders (using wet/fresh hops) may exhibit distinctly different aromas and flavors (i.e. more grassy) than using dried hops.



## 8B BOTANICAL HERBED

Entrants **MUST** specify herbs and/or spices used. Ciders which include both herbs and spices should be entered in the category that reflects the profile(s) most dominant in the cider. Entrants **MAY** specify apples, pears, or other additions used (i.e. sugar, honey, fruit, wood, and botanicals). For competition purposes, "herbs" typically refer to the leafy, fresh part of a plant, "spices" to the root, stem, seed, fruit, flower or bark of the tree or plant (often dried, not fresh).

**COMMENTS:** Examples of herbs include: basil, lemongrass, lavender, mint, rosemary.

**APPEARANCE:** Varies from cloudy to brilliant, pale to amber in color.

**AROMA:** Aroma should balance **spices** used with the flavors of the cider. Aroma intensity varies. Quality should be high. **Herb** notes may be apparent or understated, but should not overwhelm.

**PALATE (FLAVOR & MOUTHFEEL):** Herbs used must be in balance and the flavor of cider or perry must be present. Body varies and may linger due to flavors added.

**OVERALL IMPRESSION:** Should be a moderately complex drink.

## 8C BOTANICAL SPICED

Entrants **MUST** specify spices and/or herbs used. Ciders which include both herbs and spices should be entered in the category that reflects the profile(s) most dominant in the cider. Entrants **MAY** specify apples, pears, or other additions used (i.e. sugar, honey, fruit, wood, and botanicals). For competition purposes, "herbs" typically refer to the leafy, fresh part of a plant, "spices" to the root, stem, seed, fruit, flower or bark of the tree or plant (often dried, not fresh).

**COMMENTS:** Examples of spices include: cardamom, cinnamon, allspice, cloves, nutmeg, pepper, turmeric, ginger, mace, saffron, vanilla, black pepper, chiles.

**APPEARANCE:** Varies from cloudy to brilliant, pale to amber or chestnut in color.

**AROMA:** Aroma should balance **spice** used with the flavors of the cider. Aroma intensity varies. Quality should be high. **Spice** notes may be apparent or understated, but should not overwhelm.

**PALATE (FLAVOR & MOUTHFEEL):** Spices used must be in balance and the flavor of apple cider must be present. Body varies and may linger due to flavors added.

**OVERALL IMPRESSION:** Should be a moderately complex drink.



## 9A SPECIALTY FORTIFIED

Entrants **MUST** specify the process used (i.e. cryo-concentration, fortification, etc.). Entrants **MAY** specify apples, pears, or additions used (i.e. sugar, honey, fruit, wood, and botanicals). Specialty Fortified entries are typically characterized by a high level of sweetness and a higher level of ABV. Entries in this category should be 10% ABV or higher. Imperial ciders and perries do not belong here.

**COMMENTS:** Fortified Cider has been strengthened in alcohol either before or after fermentation, including by the addition of spirits. Fortified Cider encompasses ice cider and pommeau, products made in a style similar to ice cider and pommeau, and other products that emulate fortified wine styles such as apple wine and vermouth made with a base of apples and/or pears.

**APPEARANCE:** Variable. Medium to dark amber.

**AROMA:** Intensity - medium to high. Quality should be high, with anticipated complexity.

**PALATE (FLAVOR & MOUTHFEEL):** A range of sweetness is acceptable but should be balanced. Tannins may run the spectrum—but shouldn't be distracting. Wood aging of spirits and/or final product is allowable. As such, some oxidation character is allowable, if balanced with the oak and barrel profile.

**OVERALL IMPRESSION:** Noticeably higher alcohol should not distract from the overall profile. Should be balanced.



## 9B SPECIALTY LOW ALCOHOL/ALCOHOL REMOVED

Entrants must be fermented and **MUST** specify the process used (i.e. alcohol removed after ferment, ciderkin production, etc.). Entrants **MAY** specify apples, pears, or additions used (i.e. sugar, honey, fruit, wood, and botanicals, etc.). Low alcohol, "ciderkin" style ciders and ciders that have gone through a dealcoholization process belong in this category. The ABV range for this category is 0.5% - 4.5%.

**COMMENTS:** Low ABV ciders may be made with different processes, including rehydration of apple pomace for pressing and fermenting. Ciders that have been fermented and have alcohol removed will be expected to have some complexity beyond that of fresh juice.

**APPEARANCE:** Variable.

**AROMA:** Variable. Apple, yeast and any herb/spice/wood, etc. addition notes may be present.

**PALATE (FLAVOR & MOUTHFEEL):** Easy to drink with some complexity. Mouthfeel varies.

**OVERALL IMPRESSION:** There is no classic profile for this type of cider and the end product will vary widely depending upon the apple varieties used and the methods through which this range of alcohol has been achieved. There are no sweetness parameters. Credit will be given to ciders which demonstrate good body, complexity and balance.

## 9C SPECIALTY OTHER

Entrants **MUST** specify apples, pears, and any additions used (i.e. sugar, honey, fruit, wood, and botanicals, etc.). Entrants **MUST** specify commercial yeast cultures or wild yeast and the processes used (i.e. wild ferment, brettanomyces, Lactobacillus, etc.). Specialty Other is for entries where no other category suits. Entrant notes are of utmost importance for ciders in this category. Processes and ingredients that make the cider not suitable for any other category should be clearly noted.

**COMMENTS:** May include a variety of process techniques and international cider making techniques. Variety of style in presentation expected for this category, but overriding all should be the complexity of the fermentation.

**APPEARANCE:** Varies from cloudy to brilliant, pale to amber in color.

**AROMA:** Variable. Aromas may include funky and/or yeast notes.

**PALATE (FLAVOR & MOUTHFEEL):** Body varies. Flavors such as band-aid, rotting leaves and farmyard may not be considered a fault in this category provided the overall drink is enjoyable, in balance, and those tastes are subtle. May include funky or yeast notes, souring/puckering, overly ripe apples, barnyard notes, funky cheese. Sulfur/H<sub>2</sub>S is not acceptable except in minor amounts and not out of balance. Tannins may contribute to astringency.

**OVERALL IMPRESSION:** The greatest capacity for expression exists in the judge's **overall impression**. For instance, if the entrant notes describe a brettanomyces ferment the judges will look for corresponding flavors should be high. Herb/spice notes may be apparent or understated, but should not overwhelm.

