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SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA • Food & Drink

## FERMENTER'S FRATERNITY

*Artisanal hard cider industry has its roots in Dugspur.*

Virginia's artisanal hard cider industry is booming, with eight cideries in operation and an annual statewide cider week inaugurated in 2012. The seeds were quite literally planted in the tiny town of Dugspur in 1997, when Diane Flynt set up the orchard for Foggy Ridge Cider. By 2005, Flynt's apples had been grown, selected and fermented, and she was ready to begin selling to the public.

"We made 550 cases our first year and I wasn't sure we could sell it all," says Flynt. "But that first weekend we sold 50 or 60 cases and I immediately wished we'd made more." Flynt attributes the growth of artisanal hard cider to "people getting more sophisticated about the difference between a mass market product and an artisanal product." She recalls a customer and cider enthusiast she met at a tasting in Asheville, North Carolina, who had stopped drinking Angry Orchard hard cider, made by The Boston Beer Company, because he discovered it contained high fructose corn syrup. "People are just more aware [now] of what's in the beverages they drink," says Flynt.

The roots of Flynt's hard cider revolution have spread throughout the state, and she has worked closely with those that followed her path, like Albemarle Ciderworks of North Garden, which opened in 2009, and Castle Hill Cider, which opened in 2011. "We are a very close community," Flynt says of Virginia's artisanal apple fermenters, who share the mission of raising public awareness of their product. "We all collaborate as business people and I hope it stays that way. There is still plenty of room in the market for cider makers. We [Foggy Ridge] sell out of what we make every year."

In 2013, the eight cideries will collaborate for the second annual Virginia Cider Week, which takes place statewide from November 15 through 23 and will feature activities like cider tastings and workshops. The mission is clear: "We're just getting cider in the mouths of more people," says Flynt.

**FOGGY RIDGE**  
CIDER