

Foggy Ridge Hard Cider: Move Over Wine...Cider Rules

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Food & Spirits: When Diane Flynt talks about varieties of apples and the delicacies of hard cider it would be easy to mistake her for a winemaker from the heartland of Virginia. In a sophisticated Southern drawl, this former banking executive describes the beauty of making cider with the same lilt of pleasure in her voice you'd expect at a wine tasting or chef's table. The climate makes a difference, she'll tell you. So does the rainfall, the origin of the seeds, and the feel of the dirt. So does determination, and as one of only three female cider-makers in the U.S., she's found a tradition worth revisiting.



Foggy Ridge, Flynt's farm just outside Dugspur, Virginia, produced its first batch of hard cider in 2006. The base of her business is three ciders — Serious Cider, First Fruit and Sweet Stayman — none of which is overly sweet or acidic. At a recent cider tasting at Grape & Bean in Old Town, Virginia, each was carefully paired with an artisan cheese such as Everona Stony Man (aged sheep) and Nancy's Hudson Valley Camembert giving me several new ideas for holiday entertaining. I'm planning to serve the Serious Cider with my first course (a farro and mushroom tart) on Thanksgiving Day and have the First Fruit chilled and ready for the guests that invariably stop by throughout the day. I like their crisp, let-me-wake-you-up taste that reminds me of perfectly chilled champagne.

I also learned at the tasting that "hard" cider is a term used almost exclusively in America. It refers to apple juice that's been fermented to create an alcoholic beverage (6-7%); the artisanal form is made from blends. It's also steeped in history. Children in colonial days drank a watered down version (2%) of cider when the water tasted bad or was too dangerous to drink. Flynt likes to remind guests that founding father John Adams was said to have drunk a quart of cider every day with breakfast to generally "promote good health."

Foggy Farm cider can be purchased online, at the farm's tasting room and in various DC, VA and NC restaurants and specialty shops. It sells for around \$20 for a 750 ml bottle.

Foggy Ridge and Flynt's handiwork have recently been featured in Gourmet, Food and Wine, and Garden & Gun magazines, as well as a host of regional media outlets. It is the only farm in Virginia devoted solely to making hard cider and has teamed up with several niche inns and restaurants for events throughout the fall. Learn more at www.foggyridgecider.com.