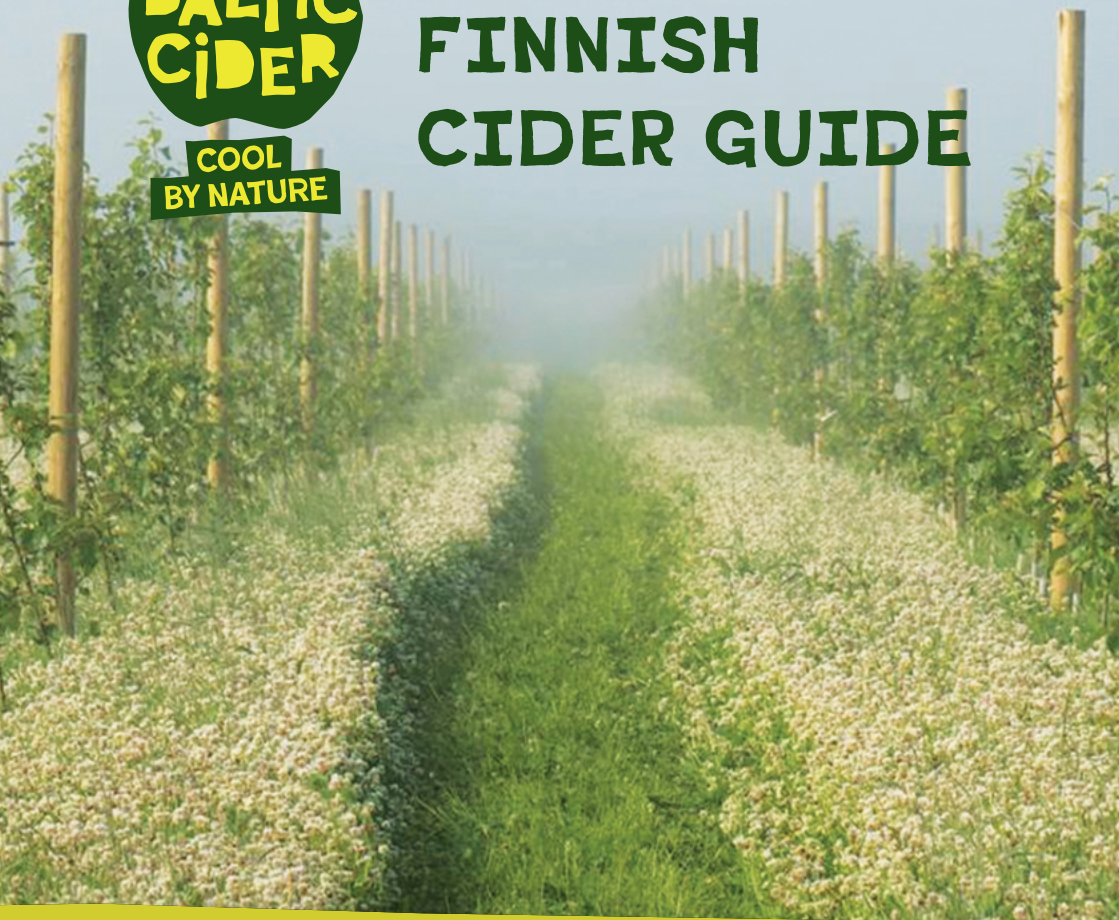




BALTIC & FINNISH CIDER GUIDE



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BALT-FIN-CIDER



THIS IS THE STORY OF BALTIC CIDER: how it began, and why it is remarkable. From fragrant fruit in old, romantic orchards to modern cider-apple plantings, and wild woodland apples, our landscape shapes every glass. Beautiful summers, long springs and autumns, and true winters create the finely balanced Baltic Cider flavour. Above all, it is defined by passionate cider makers—curious and independent—who are not copying others, but crafting something unmistakably their own: Baltic Cider, something we can be proud of.

**COOL
BY NATURE**

www.balticcider.com

WHAT IS BALTIC CIDER

Baltic Cider is a vibrant newcomer to the global cider community, reshaping perceptions of what cider can be. Our ciders are crafted from whole, fresh apple juice pressed from hand-picked apples grown in local gardens and other natural ingredients – never from concentrate, and always free from artificial additives.

With no fixed traditions and no legal standards governing cider production—such as requirements for alcohol content or permitted ingredients—producers have a high degree of freedom to experiment.

The Baltic Cider community brings together dedicated makers of real cider from Latvia, Estonia, and Finland.

Each member contributes their own skills and creativity, resulting in a vibrant mix of cider styles and flavours. This creates a dynamic network that stays closely connected, sharing experiences—from the finest apple varieties to cider-making techniques—participating in competitions, learning from the best, and taking their ciders to market together.

WHAT MAKES BALTIC CIDER UNIQUE

Shaped by the cool climate of Northern Europe and Nordic Finland, our ciders are crisp, refreshing, and bursting with the natural aroma of fresh apples. The apples ripen slowly, developing lively acidity, rich fragrance, and naturally low sugar levels. Ciders range from clear and delicately sweet-and-sour to fully dry, offering styles that can be subtly to noticeably sweet, all with pronounced apple notes and a light to medium body. Easy to drink and typically low in tannins, these ciders express a clean, distinctive profile.



WHERE IT ALL STARTED

🍏 Apples have been part of cultivated gardens and orchard landscapes in the Baltic region since at least the **16th–17th century**.

🍏 In the **18th and 19th centuries**, apple varieties from Scandinavia, Russia, Germany and Poland were introduced, tested, and cultivated in pomological gardens and by country estates. Pomology is the branch of horticulture that studies and classifies fruit trees, their cultivation, and breeding.

🍏 **After 1918**, when Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania declared their independence, orchards by rural homesteads were a familiar feature of the countryside. The apples were used in cooking or eaten fresh. At that time, cider making was still unknown in the region.

🍏 **In 1945**, after World War II, the Baltic countries came under Soviet occupation. Fruit orchards, along with other private property, were taken from their owners and brought under the management of collective farms.





🍏 The cider tradition in the Baltic countries began **around 2000**, roughly a decade after Latvia and Estonia regained their independence. Following the restitution of land, rural families often recovered their ancestral orchards and sought new ways to create value from their fruit.

🍏 With borders open and the world more accessible following the **collapse of the Soviet Union**, the cider traditions of Old Europe and the United Kingdom became sources of fascination and inspiration. Baltic cider makers embraced traditional techniques, gained hands-on experience at cideries across Europe, and began experimenting with apples from their own orchards.



🍏 **Driven by a passion for cider** and a readiness to learn from both successes and mistakes, it took time for cider making to grow from a hobby into a commercial enterprise. Today, the Baltics are proud to produce high-quality, authentic craft cider.



Jānis Matvejs,
owner of Abuls Cidery and one of the most experienced cider makers in Latvia, recalls:

“We studied geography, and geographers always travel. While in France and Spain, we were really inspired. When we returned, a friend and I fermented our first batch—the first 20 litres—and it turned out great. For about ten years, a large group of friends and I would ferment cider together. The results varied: some batches were vinegary, most were sour. Some would fizz all over the place when opened—there were plenty of failures. While my friends quit, I kept going and learned from my mistakes.”

CRAFTING BALTIC CIDER TODAY

Cider is a low-alcohol beverage with an alcohol content of around 4-8.5%. Options range from organic to non-alcoholic ciders, with perry also available.

Baltic ciders are bold, New World-style ciders. Drawing inspiration from traditional cider cultures, Baltic cider makers forge their own path, crafting a unique Baltic cider style rooted in the region's terroir, distinctive apple varieties, and a spirit of innovation.

The apple harvest takes place from late August to the end of October, depending on when the apples ripen. Many cider makers collaborate with local residents, purchasing apples from orchards they know well. Apples are mostly hand-picked.

Occasionally, after harvesting, late apple varieties may be left to ripen for a few days or even several weeks before being crushed and pressed. The apples are carefully sorted, with damaged ones removed. This is a manual task that requires patience and attention. The apples are then washed, crushed, and pressed to produce a fragrant, fresh juice. The extracted juice is not pasteurised; instead, it is placed fresh into fermentation vessels.

"At Jaanihanso Cidery we strongly believe that Estonian cider made from Estonian apples can stand among the world's best - when crafted with patience, care, and respect for nature. We export more than half of our production to different places around the world and tirelessly seek new cider lovers in new countries. Estonian cider deserves recognition and acclaim."

Alvar Roosimaa,
Jaanihanso Cidery, Estonia



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“At KODAS, we follow the principles of a circular economy. Nothing goes to waste - every part of the apple is used. What remains after cider-making, is distilled into fine apple brandy. Our goal for the future is to increase our beverage production, develop and expand our refining technologies, and with all that conquer the wider world. ”

Ingmar Nömmann,
KODAS, Estonia

Cider production methods vary. Some producers ferment juices separately and blend them later, while others mix juices before fermentation. Fermentation and aging shape flavor and aroma, with yeast choice—wild or selected strains—adding distinct character.

Still cider undergoes a single fermentation, whereas naturally sparkling cider requires two. Primary fermentation typically lasts from one to 24 months at low temperatures of around 8 °C.

Many producers opt for secondary fermentation in the bottle to create naturally sparkling ciders. For this process, yeast is added on the day of bottling, which completes its work after approximately two months, creating a pressure of 2–2.5 bar within the bottle. Secondary fermentation can take up to 10 years, though three years is more common. Many producers also carbonate with CO₂ to achieve a crisp, refreshing finish.

Traditional ciders are most often available in 0.75-litre champagne bottles sealed with a wire cage and cork or in beer bottles of various sizes. Increasingly, cider is also being packaged in aluminium cans to protect cider from sunlight, helping maintain its high quality.

STANDING FOR REAL CIDER

While cider production was still finding its footing in the Baltics, the market had already been flooded with sweet, sticky drinks made from chemical concentrates and water. Only now is the public beginning to discover real cider, and one of the main challenges for cider makers today is explaining the difference between industrial cider and craft cider, which is made from pure apple juice.

THE BALTIC CIDER brand was created to promote authentic cider, helping consumers distinguish genuinely crafted products from industrial alternatives and easily identify and discover authentic ciders in the market.

The Baltic Cider network members work together across Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Finland to build upon the previous achievements and take the next steps forward:

🍏 The Association of Finnish Authentic Cider (SASS) launched in 2016 the definition of Finnish authentic cider. The main idea is clear: the authentic Finnish cider is made 100 % of Finnish apple.

🍏 Baltic cider makers are actively engaged in discussions at the European Union level about how cider should be defined and regulated. Their aim is to ensure that the term “cider” remains associated with authentic, traditionally crafted products and that consumers can distinguish them from industrial alternatives.

🍏 The debate focuses on key differences in ingredients and production methods—from natural ingredients and traditional fermentation to the use of concentrates, artificial flavourings, and other cost-reducing methods. A clear definition of cider is therefore essential to protect authentic producers, ensure fair competition, and help consumers make informed choices.

“Vaski Cider & Distillery combines the skills of an internationally awarded cider maker, the expertise of a Michelin-awarded sommelier, and the creative vision of a renowned visual artist. The result is a unique experience where high-quality cider meets art. Our cider selection offers something for every taste: ice ciders, sparkling ciders crafted using the Champagne method, unfiltered natural ciders, and innovative small batches. Every drink is handcrafted using local ingredients to ensure authenticity and exceptional quality.”

Tapani Levanto,
Vaski Cider & Distillery,
Finland

CIDER TYPES AND STYLES



Baltic cider has no single traditional style. Styles range from modern carbonated ciders to traditional-method, wild-fermented, and keeved styles.

Ciders come in **dry**, **semi-dry**, **semi-sweet**, and **sweet styles**.

Based on production methods, Baltic Cider includes the following types of cider:

PET NAT

This method involves bottling cider before fermentation is complete, allowing it to develop natural carbonation in the bottle, resulting in a lightly sparkling, rustic-style cider. It is unfiltered and often slightly cloudy, retaining the natural flavours of the apples.

NATURAL CIDER

Natural cider is made with minimal intervention, using wild yeast for fermentation and no added sulphites or filtration. This results in a cider that is authentic and reflective of the local terroir.

WOOD OR BARREL-AGED

Ciders aged in wooden barrels develop complex flavours, often with notes of oak, vanilla, or spices.

MULLED CIDER

This is a warm cider infused with spices like cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg, often sweetened and served as a comforting hot drink during colder months.

TRADITIONAL METHOD

Cider made using the traditional champagne method undergoes secondary fermentation in the bottle, creating fine bubbles and a refined taste. It is often aged on the lees for added complexity.

FLAVOURED CIDERS

These ciders are enhanced with added fruits, berries, botanicals, or spices to create unique and diverse flavour profiles. Most popular flavours are aronia (chokeberry), rhubarb, chaenomeles japonica (Japanese quince), elderflower, hops, black currant.

STILL CIDER

Still cider is non-carbonated and has a smooth, flat texture, allowing the pure flavours of the apples to shine through without the distraction of bubbles.

NON-ALCOHOLIC CIDER

Made by removing or bypassing the alcohol in the production process, non-alcoholic cider offers the flavour and refreshment of cider without the intoxicating effects.

Ando Eelmaa,
Kloostrimetsa Cidery,
Estonia

“For a cider maker, the most important thing is patience. You must trust that nature will do its part.”

www.balticcider.com



DISCOVERING BALTIC CIDER THROUGH TASTING

Cider tasting is a simple and rewarding way to explore the wide range of cider styles, flavours, and aromas. Tasting with a bit of attention helps reveal what makes each cider unique—from its aroma and flavour profile to its balance and finish—and shows how apples, craftsmanship, and production methods shape the final drink.

As tasting skills develop, so does an understanding of cider, making it easier to choose between new discoveries and familiar favourites. Tasting also creates a closer connection to the people, places, and orchards behind each bottle.



www.balticcider.com

SIMPLE STEPS TO FALL IN LOVE WITH CIDER THROUGH TASTING:



Glass – Pour the cider into a clear white wine glass to better appreciate its colour and aromas.



Rest – Before tasting, allow the cider to rest in the glass for at least a minute so that exposure to air can reveal its aromas and flavours. While the cider is opening up in the glass, take a moment to assess its appearance.



Appearance – Evaluate the cider's colour, clarity, intensity and carbonation (its sparkle).



Aroma – First, smell the cider without swirling the glass. Place your nose inside the glass and inhale slowly and deeply to fully perceive the aroma. Then gently swirl the glass and inhale several times, discovering different aromatic nuances – for example, fruity, floral, citrus, vanilla, caramel, smoky, grassy and more. Note down what you sense in the aroma – use the Flavour Notes as a guide to different aromas.



Taste – Take small sips, allowing the cider to linger in your mouth and gently swishing it around so its balance, texture and nuances come forward. You can intensify the flavour by gently drawing air through it – pulling in a small amount of air while the cider is still in your mouth.



Structure – When tasting, first determine the cider's structure – assess its sweetness (dry, semi-dry, semi-sweet, sweet), acidity (low, medium-low, medium, medium-high, high) and tannins – low, medium or high levels. Is the taste soft, silky, mouth-drying, rough, or slightly bitter? Is the cider well balanced? Does it have a pleasant balance of sweetness and acidity? Is it lacking tannins? Or perhaps too astringent?



Flavour Notes – Identify the flavours, starting with the apple. Is it a green, crisp apple, or a well-ripened, sweet apple? Baked apple? What else do you sense – perhaps sweet notes – floral or honeyed? Something fruity? Pear, citrus, berries? Or maybe another nuance – for example, earthy, smoky or oaky?



Flavour Intensity – Was the flavour pronounced, medium (gentle and delicate), or light?



Finish – Assess the length and character of the aftertaste that remains after sipping. Does the flavour linger? Describe the finish as short (<5 sec), medium (5–8 sec), or long (>8 sec). Is the finish dry, acidic, or sweet.



Notes and Rating – Write down your impressions and associations – this is your personal cider story.

PAIRING CIDER WITH FOOD



Baltic ciders pair beautifully with traditional local foods such as artisan cheeses, smoked meats and fish, poultry, and even desserts. Their balanced acidity and fresh aromas also make them an excellent match for international cuisines.

Cider can be paired with food based on biochemical compatibility, much like wine. Understanding how key components interact helps create balanced and enjoyable combinations.

Acidity in cider works particularly well with fatty dishes, as it helps break down fats and refresh the palate. Tannins, on the other hand, bind with proteins, which makes tannic ciders a good match for red meat—similar to how red wine pairs with steak. Residual sugar helps moderate heat, so sweeter ciders can reduce the burning sensation of spicy foods by softening the perceived impact of capsaicin. Meanwhile, light and dry ciders do not overpower food, making them a good choice for savoury dishes where you want the flavors of the meal to remain dominant.

In practical terms:

- 🍏 Dry and brut ciders pair well with seafood, poultry, grilled meats, and aged cheeses.
- 🍏 Semi-dry and sparkling ciders complement salads, pasta, and moderately spicy dishes.
- 🍏 Sweet ciders are particularly well-suited to intensely spicy foods, while they are also excellent with desserts, fruit dishes, and sweet pastries.

CIDER MAKERS SHARE THEIR OWN SUGGESTIONS FOR THE BEST FOOD PAIRINGS

BOTANICAL & MODERN FLAVOURED CIDERS

These ciders are aromatic and versatile, often paired with bold or complementary flavours.

Tālava Cider – Cider with Hops:

pairs beautifully with Asian dishes, spicy tacos, grilled white meats, falafel wraps or a cheeseboard.

Kodas – Põõripäev (Solstice):

excellent with blue cheese, aged Cheddar, cheese fondue, mince pies, pork schnitzel, pickled fish, saffron buns or ginger biscuits; also suitable hot or cold.

Mürbūdu – “Naked Truth” Cider: medium-sweet

and fruity, great with classic cheesecake, roast pork or mature cheeses.



TRADITIONAL & METHOD-DRIVEN

These generally elegant, often bottle-conditioned ciders pair well with seafood, richer dishes and cheeses.



Jaanihanso – Sec Méthode Traditionnelle:

perfect with Sydney rock oysters, crispy pork belly or creamy Brie – the fine bubbles and balance lift both delicate and savoury flavours.

Jaanihanso – Extra Brut Méthode Traditionnelle:

pairs with roast herb chicken (or turkey), briny oysters or young goat cheese – acidity cuts through richness.

Jaanihanso – Sweet Naturel Cider:

lush and sweet, excellent with tangy blue cheese, spicy Thai curry or warm apple crumble.

MODERN & SEMI-DRY CIDERS

Light to medium styles that work wonderfully with a wide range of everyday meals.

Mürbūdu – Semi-dry Heritage: crisp and fresh, ideal with salads and lighter fare.

Sabiles – Semi-Dry Sparkling Apple Cider: a great aperitif; pairs with salads, pasta and goat or sheep cheese.

Tori Cidery – Siider Semi-Dry: light and fruity, complements spicy Asian dishes and fruit-based desserts.

Lepola – Heritage Apple Cider: medium-dry and balanced, pairs with salads, fish, chicken, turkey, salty snacks and soft cheeses.



PERRY & NON-ALCOHOLIC CIDER

Gentler, softer flavours pair well with lighter or casual foods.



Lepola – Perry: soft and buttery; enjoy with creamy cheeses, salads, mild dishes or savoury snacks.

Tälava – Non-alcoholic Apple Cider: juicy and medium-sweet, great with veggie burgers, picnic sandwiches, fresh salads, or as a refreshing afternoon drink.

Tori Cidery – POPP (Non-alcoholic cider): perfect with pizza, snacks, fruit desserts or soft cheeses, and great for cocktails.

DESSERT & ICE CIDERS

Sweet, concentrated ciders that stand up to rich desserts or bold cheese.

Lepola – Vega Ice Cider: sweet and refined, pairs with desserts or mature cheeses.

Tori Cidery – JÄÄ Ice Cider: rich and creamy, perfect as a digestif or with blue cheese, creamy desserts, chocolate or Tosca cake.

Sabiles – Gardener's Sweet Apple-Quince: juicy and fruit-forward, lovely with coffee and desserts or on its own.

[Read more
about Baltic Ciders:](#)



APPLES BEHIND THE BALTIC CIDER

In northern regions, cider is often made from apple cultivars that grow naturally in the cooler climate. Further south, cider makers commonly blend apple varieties for a smoother taste and sometimes add other fruits or berries.

Cider makers build their orchards with purpose, choosing apple varieties that suit both local growing conditions and the styles of cider they want to create. Many graft their own trees, hunt down classic cider apple varieties, or collect seedlings from wild apple trees. Collaboration is also key: horticultural institutes and researchers help identify, preserve, and cultivate native apple varieties suited to Baltic cider making.

TRADITIONAL HEIRLOOM VARIETIES

Heirloom varieties include cooking and eating varieties – dessert and winter apples, passed down through generations, with their unique flavors.

LIETUVAS PEPIŅŠ

(Lietuvos Pepinas, Glogierowka)



Origin: Lithuania, or possibly Belarus or Western Ukraine. Described in 1868, but thought to be from the 18th century. At present returns to favour as a juice and cider apple.

Harvest: 2nd half of September, stores till February
Brix° 12 | acids 0.8% | juice outcome 70%.

ANTONOVKA

(Common Antonovka)



Origin: Russia, described 1848. Widely grown in older orchards and still planted in home gardens. Fruits acid, juicy, very aromatic. Can be used for blending. Performs best in continental climate.

Harvest: 2nd half of September or October, storage short, till December or January.
Brix° 11-11.5 | sugars 7.6-8% | acids 1.0% | juice yield 65%.

SĪPOLINŠ (Liivi Sibulõun, Livländischer Borsdorfer, Zwiebel-Borsdoref etc..)



Origin: Baltic region, 19th century. First described in 1868. Supposed to be a seedling of 'Edelborsdorfer'. Widely in the northern Baltic region since the 19th century. Now only home gardens. Fruits are small, sweet with some acidity, and aromatic. In spite of the rather low juice outcome, used for sweet juice and cider.

Harvest: end of September or beginning of October, stores till March.
Brix° 12.8 | sugars 9.9% | acids 0.9%.

VIDZEMES ZELTA RENETE (Liivi Kuldrenett, Livländische Reinette, etc.)



Origin: North Latvia or South Estonia, before 1883. Grown in home gardens. Fruits are sweet with some acidity, juicy, aromatic. At present returns to favour as a juice and cider apple.

Harvest: mid-September, storage short: in Latvia till December, in Estonia – till January.

Brix° 12.0 | sugars 9.2% | acids 0.67%.

COMMERCIAL VARIETIES CULTIVATED IN 1970-IES

AUKSIS



Origin: Lithuania, 1974.

Cross: 'McIntosh' × 'Gravensteiner'

A highly popular commercial cultivar. Dessert, processing.

Harvest: end August– beginning September, storage till March.

Brix° 12-14 | acids 0.5% | polyphenols 100 mg 100g⁻¹ | juice outcome 60%.

Natural freshness and herbal note:

2-Hexenal

Aldehyde with a distinctly fresh aroma; gives fruit juices a natural freshness and herbal note.

1-Hexanol

A combination of alcohol with the aroma of grass, and plants; gives juices a touch of naturalness.

SINAP ORLOVSKY



Origin: Russia, 1972.

Cross: 'Severny Sinap' × 'Pamyat Michurin'

A popular commercial cultivar. Dessert, processing.

Harvest: end September, ripens in November, stores till April-May.

Brix° 11-12 | acids 0.8% | polyphenols 65-68 mg 100 g⁻¹ | juice outcome 54%.

EUROPEAN CIDER APPLE CULTIVARS

Well-known cider apple varieties such as 'Dabinett', 'Yarlington Mill', and others are introduced in Baltic orchards to test their suitability in local conditions.

DABINETT



Origin: United Kingdom, old variety, 1850.

Cross: Chisel Jersey o.p.

Harvest: 1st half of October, ripens in November.

Brix° 14-16 | acids 0,2% | juice outcome 45%.

BALTIC-ORIGIN CIDER APPLE VARIETIES

Cider apple varieties cultivated by horticulture institutes in Latvia and Estonia.

CIDROSS



Origin: Latvia, Institute of Horticulture. Seedling of 'Remo', 1997. Selected as a promising juice and cider apple.

Harvest: mid-October. 1 to 3 weeks storage recommended before processing.

Brix° 13 | acids: 0.7% | polyphenols: 112.5 mg 100 g-1 | juice outcome: 55%.

CRABAPPLES

Crabapples - smaller than typical apples, these fruits have an astringent, tart, sour, or bitter taste, making them excellent for cider.

KERR



Origin: Canada, Morden Experimental Farm, W.L.Kerr, 1938.

Cross: 'Dolgo' × 'Haralson' (or 'Haralson Red')

Harvest: mid-October.

Brix° 13.5 | acids 0.83% | juice outcome: 54.3%

WILD APPLES

(Malus Sylvestris)

Each autumn, cider makers go on "apple safaris," exploring forests and abandoned gardens to gather fruit from wild apple trees, selecting the finest for their collection. Malus Sylvestris is the only wild apple species native to Europe. The wild apple readily cross-pollinates with cultivated apple trees, which is why hybrids of the two species are commonly found in nature. The apples are bitter and aromatic, and rich in tannins.

See more apple varieties:



BALTIC CIDER TERROIR



To define what shapes the unique character of our ciders, we have begun mapping the Baltic cider terroir. Our first dedicated study focuses on **Latvia** and **Estonia** as the region's pioneers, examining climate, topography, soils, orchard management practices, and how the same apple varieties, when grown in different Baltic locations, influence cider style and expression.

CLIMATE



The climate can largely be divided into Continental and Maritime zones. The maritime zone is further subdivided into:

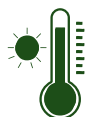
- areas influenced by the open Baltic Sea
- areas influenced by the Gulf of Riga, where the semi-enclosed sea creates more moderate local conditions.

In coastal regions, the milder climate allows the cultivation of less winter-hardy varieties and a longer growing season, though winter conditions there are more unstable and prone to thaws.

In continental inland areas, temperatures are more contrasting with colder winters and hotter summers. While winter conditions are generally more stable, lower air temperatures can be critical for certain varieties.

Despite the region's small size, local weather patterns and microclimatic conditions vary widely, shaping each orchard's unique character. Lower temperatures and higher rainfall produce fruit with less sugar and higher acidity, resulting in cider with lower alcohol content. More sunshine and less rainfall lead to fruit with higher sugar levels and more concentrated solids, producing cider with a higher alcohol content.

AVERAGE TEMPERATURES



Average temperatures in Latvia and Estonia in January are around - 3°C; in July +17.8°C.

Summers are bright and changeable – bursts of sunshine reaching +30°C alternate with refreshing rain, keeping the fruit vibrant.

Winter temperatures may occasionally fall to around -20 °C or below.

SUNLIGHT



The Baltics receive about **1,868 hours** of sunshine per year on average. Daylight variation across the year in the Baltic region is very large because of high northern latitude. Around the summer solstice (mid-June), daylight is very long, reaching approximately 18 hours of daylight. Around the winter solstice (late-December), daylight is much shorter.

The shortest days last about 6 hours of daylight.

SOILS

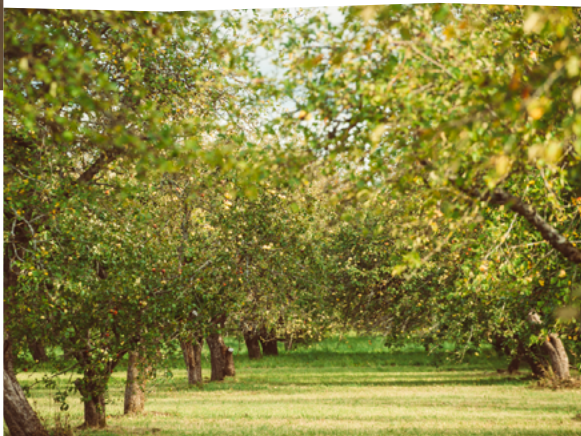


Soils vary across the region: Latvia is dominated by clay-sandy soils, while much of Estonia lies on limestone, with rocky ground and frequent limestone outcrops. Soil reaction is generally slightly acidic to neutral, supporting healthy apple growth and balanced fruit chemistry suitable for cider production.

TOPOGRAPHY



In the region, cider orchards are generally on flat land or gentle slopes facing south, south-east, or south-west. Latvia and Estonia both lie within the lowlands of the Northern European Plain, with gently rolling terrain rarely rising above 100 m.



ORCHARD MANAGEMENT



Management practices range from integrated orchard management to systems with little or no direct intervention.

Many orchards are effectively organic in practice, even if they are not formally certified as such.

Apple trees grown for cider are typically grafted onto semi-dwarf or seedling rootstocks, resulting in orchards that combine vigorous, mature trees with newer, more compact plantings. In recent orchards, MM106 is a commonly used rootstock. Older orchards mostly use vigorous seedling rootstocks ('Antonovka').

Pruning is carried out annually or biennially, mainly during the dormant period or in spring. Old, dead, diseased, or crossing branches are removed, and the lower canopy is often cleared to allow tractor access. Some trees are pruned only lightly to support wildlife habitats, with occasional summer pruning undertaken when needed. Props or ropes may be used to support heavy branches. Overall, pruning remains light, ensuring sufficient sunlight penetration and air circulation while wildlife habitats.

ORCHARD DENSITY

- 🍏 Seedling rootstocks: 8–15 m between rows, 4–15 m within rows
- 🍏 Semi-dwarf: 5–6 m between rows, 3–4 m within rows
- 🍏 Dwarf: 3–5 m between rows, 1.5–3 m between trees

Most of the orchards follow the organic production principles, using the fertilisers and plant protection means accordingly.

Grass between rows is mown to maintain biodiversity, and older trees may be supported with props.

This extensive, low-intervention approach helps apples develop rich flavours naturally, giving Baltic ciders their unique character. Low-intervention means that apple trees need to fight for life themselves without any extra “help” from humans. This will cause the increase in stress level in plants, and this in turn will increase the amount of secondary metabolites (polyphenols, tannins etc) that plants produce for their protection from insect or disease attacks, but from which we obtain the intensity of flavours and aroma of apples.

VEGETATION



Apple trees grow very well and produce abundant crops. Bud break takes place in April in the southern regions and in May further north, though late spring night frosts may still occur in the orchards and harm the flower buds.

Bright summer nights encourage slow ripening, and wide temperature swings help apples develop flavour and acidity. In nordic conditions, the effect of temperature fluctuations on the secondary metabolites is also evident and proved scientifically. Long autumns and extended dormant periods are particularly well suited to apple growing and, in turn, to the crisp profile of Baltic ciders.

CRAFTING BETTER CIDER THROUGH SCIENCE

To support cider makers in achieving their desired cider profiles, ongoing collaboration exists between cider producers and researchers. The Latvian Institute of Horticulture and Polli Horticultural Research Centre of Estonian University of Life Sciences cultivate cider apple varieties and carry out chemical analyses of apples, juice, and finished ciders.

STUDYING KEY

BALTIC APPLE VARIETIES FOR CIDER QUALITY

Three apple varieties widely grown and used for cider production in both Latvia and Estonia were selected for detailed study: 'Auksis', 'Dabinett', and 'Sinap Orlovsky'. Apples from these varieties were harvested from multiple sites in each country and pressed into single-variety juices, which were then fermented into cider. Experimental cider production is being conducted at Abuls Cidery in Latvia, with chemical analyses carried out in 2026 to evaluate and compare cider characteristics.

SOILS AND APPLES

Based on chemical analyses of soil samples, apples, apple juice, and dry cider from the 2024 harvest, cider produced experimental batches of cider. The process has been documented, including photos and videos. Results of soil samples and apples have been analysed. Analyses show, for example, the levels of polyphenols (which contribute to aromas and flavours) and tannins (which influence perceived astringency) in apples from five different orchards with different soils. This work makes it possible to identify which apple varieties are best or least suited for cultivation in particular orchards.

EXPERIMENTAL PILOT CIDERS

Twenty apple juice samples from Latvia and Estonia were chemically analysed to compare varietal characteristics. Using these results, 10 cider makers produced pilot ciders to understand how apple juices with specific attributes can help achieve desired qualities in cider. This work includes adjusting apple varieties or blend proportions, as well as testing production methods not previously used in their cideries.

Examples include different barrel ageing, maceration, the use of ultrasound equipment for filtering to preserve colour and aroma, fermentation with hops, meadow flowers, and other ideas. The experimental process has been documented by participating cider makers.



THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS A BALTIC CIDER TERROIR MAP



www.balticcider.com/terroir

The researchers examined key components of terroir, including climate, topography, soils, apple varieties, and the human factor—specifically orchard management and cultivation practices. The experimental ciders produced from these findings are contributing to the first conclusions on defining a distinct Baltic cider terroir and are forming the basis for the development of the first Baltic Cider Terroir Map.



Karmo Haas,
Tori Cider Farm

“Tori cider farm began its journey in 2014, and of course, what makes this a true cider is knowing exactly which apple varieties to grow. In cider making the whole process is a lifelong journey of learning where each year brings new knowledge and experience.”

www.balticcider.com



CIDERIES WELCOME VISITORS

Cideries across the region open their doors to curious travelers and cider lovers alike, offering lively, immersive experiences that bring the craft of cider to life. Visitors are invited to wander orchards, step inside production spaces, and hear the stories behind the apples and the art of fermentation, all guided by passionate makers. Tastings are at the heart of the visit, often paired with local snacks and engaging explanations that reveal the diversity of cider styles, traditions, and flavors—from crisp and refreshing to complex and refined.

The experience goes well beyond the glass. Many cideries host seasonal celebrations, harvest activities, festivals, and special events that turn a visit into a memorable day out. Cultural programs, historic surroundings, concerts, and spaces for private gatherings add to the atmosphere, making cideries appealing destinations for both leisure and celebration. To complete the visit, guests can purchase ciders on site, taking home a bottle—or several—as a flavorful reminder of their time spent discovering local cider culture.

[Explore Baltic Cideries:](#)





ABOUT US

The Baltic Cider collective brings together 26 dedicated makers of real cider from Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Finland. The producers joined forces with a shared goal: to bring authentic Baltic and Nordic apple cider to the global stage as a high-quality product, recognised by awards at international cider competitions. The collective is focused on quality and growth, learning from the world's leading cider experts while forging its own innovative path.

The Baltic Cider team is dedicated to promoting the unique flavors, craft, and traditions of cider-making in our countries. Through collaboration with local producers and international partners, we aim to bring the best of Baltic cider to the world.



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