

# Cider House Jewels

By Karen Edwards

After the blistering heat of summer, autumn's cooler temperatures seem to invigorate not only us but nature as well. Trees pop out in brilliant hues, and farmers' markets teem with a colorful array of produce, including crisp apples and sweet cider. Increasingly, however, adults are reaching for the effervescent punch of hard cider, a variation of its traditional sweet cousin. Hard (or alcoholic) cider has a long history in America, but lately it is experiencing a revival, as more and more cider houses spring up around the Great Lakes. Even some wineries have begun to produce their own hard ciders. Here are just a few of the options out there. Why not try some of your area's hard cider as a seasonal alternative to wine and beer?

## Indiana

### McClure's Orchard, Peru

Jerry and Paige McClure began with an overgrown orchard that produced a single apple and nurtured it until it became a full-fledged orchard. In 2009, McClure's became a farm winery, producing not only wine but hard cider, all from their home-grown fruits. Their cider list is extensive, ranging from a naturally carbonated, slightly acidic Farmhouse Cider to their award-winning Goldensap, a dry, bitter cider most reminiscent of the early American ciders once drunk by our forefathers. They even offer a jalapeno cider for those who like a little heat with their fruit. [www.mccluresorchard.com](http://www.mccluresorchard.com)

### Oliver Winery, Bloomington

This is a multigenerational family winery that distributes 270,000 cases of wine each year in 14 states. (Oliver is one of the largest wineries in the eastern U.S.) Their wine is hugely popular and their ciders are rapidly gaining a following throughout the Midwest. Oliver produces a traditional hard cider and flavored versions in strawberry, raspberry and peach. The ciders are widely available at groceries, wine shops and other locations. [www.oliverwinery.com](http://www.oliverwinery.com)

## Indiana

### Prima Cider, Chicago

Like others in the business, Richard Bertsche began by crafting homemade cider. Then, after building a following,

he moved on to the commercial level. Bertsche and his sons source their apples from farms in Wisconsin, Michigan and Illinois. They also have a small orchard for specialty cider apples. Prima Cider produces an interesting variety of hard ciders, ranging from a still hard cider (no carbonation) to a brut sparkling cider made using the traditional champagne method. Of Prima's latest release, Apear, Rich Bertsche says: "We are purists in the sense that for us it's first and foremost about the apples and/or pears and how they define the cider. Inspired by the knowledge that traditionally, apple and pears were grown in the same orchard, and combined to create an apple pear cider, Prima Apear captures that tradition." Prima Cider is available in Chicago and surrounding areas. [www.primacider.com](http://www.primacider.com)

## Michigan

### The Peoples Cider Company, Grand Rapids

Although owner Jason Lummen began serving his home-pressed cider to friends in 2002, it wasn't until 2012 that he created The Peoples Cider Company so he could make and distribute his dry hard cider, sourced from locally grown apples. His Batch #1 Cider (his first offering) is aged in bourbon barrels he acquired from Kentucky's Heaven Hill distillery. He's holding onto a few barrels for later release. However, his Batch #2 (Barrel Aged Dry Cider), American Wedding (Cherry Mead), and Morrison's Jig (Bourbon Barrel Strong Cider) are currently available, but only in the Grand Rapids area – and only on tap. Lummen plans to expand his distribution and his cider selection soon. [www.thepeoplescider.com](http://www.thepeoplescider.com)



Jason Lummen

## Ohio

### Griffin Cider Works, Westlake

Established in 2010, Griffin Cider Works was the first cider house in the state.

It's owned and operated by British expat Richard Read who started his cider business when he failed to find the kind of hard English-style cider he drank in his home country. "English cider apples have



Richard Read with sons Myles and Richard Jr.

high tannin content," he says. Although cider apples were hard to find in Ohio, Read created his first blend from both cider and traditional apples, and in addition to his British-style ciders, like Burley and Griffin Original, he's gone on to produce specialty ciders as well. Lolo Romy, for example, is a specialty cider he compares to a white wine – on the sweet side. Look for Griffin Cider Works ciders in north and northeast Ohio stores. [www.griffinciderworks.com/home.htm](http://www.griffinciderworks.com/home.htm)

### Meier's Wine Cellars, Cincinnati

Located in the Cincinnati suburb of Silverton, Ohio's oldest winery has been making wine from native grapes since 1890. Perhaps best known for its award-winning #44 Cream Sherry, Meier's recently launched into the cider market with its Kentucky Pete's ciders.

Currently there are three ciders, all on the dry side and gently carbonated. The flavor of Just Apple Cider is just that: clean, fresh apples. Cherry Apple Cider is infused with Michigan cherries, while Kentucky Pete's Cask Apple Cider is finished off in bourbon oak barrels, giving it subtle hints of oak and smoke under fresh apple flavor.

Meier's spokesperson Paul Lux said, "In addition to being flavorful and gluten-free, [Kentucky Pete's] lends itself toward a beer-centric crowd. With its refreshing – less sweet – character and higher alcohol content, Kentucky Pete's is a delightful alternative to beer and other apple cider products."

Kentucky Pete's is widely available throughout Ohio, in retail stores, restaurants and bars. Lux says there's at least one other flavor in the works, but details are being kept under wraps for now. [www.meierswinecellars.com](http://www.meierswinecellars.com)

## Wisconsin

### Maiden Rock Winery/Cidery, Stockholm

When home brewer Herdie Baisden and his wife Carol Wiersma bought an 80-acre farm in 2000 to grow apples, they included varieties typically grown in southwestern England for hard cider production. They used dessert apples to produce sweet cider while waiting for their cider trees to develop. In 2008, when there was adequate production, Maiden Rock Winery & Cidery was born. Since then, its offerings have expanded and the cidery's style has been set – signature hard ciders similar to the farmhouse ciders of southwestern England. Maiden Rock uses all local fruit – and even local honey for their Honeycrisp Hard Cider. It has also established the largest collection of cider apples in the region.

[www.maidenrockwinerycidery.com](http://www.maidenrockwinerycidery.com)



### Kentucky Pete's Cider Sangria

As the temperatures cool down, enjoy this fall twist on an old favorite.

#### To make a pitcher:

- 2 bottles Kentucky Pete's Just Apple or Cherry Apple Cider
- 1 bottle Meier's Sinful Sangria
- 2 oranges
- ½ lb tart cherries
- 2 sprigs fresh mint for garnish
- 1 oz. rhubarb syrup

Mix and serve over ice.

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