



# CIDER TASTING 101

## USE YOUR SENSES

Make sure you use all your senses. Most cider judges follow a standard tasting process when evaluating a cider.

1. **Look** - How is the color, the clarity and the carbonation?
2. **Smell** - Get your nose in the glass to evaluate the aroma.
3. **Taste** - Roll the cider onto all parts of the tongue.
4. **Touch** - How does the cider feel in your mouth?
5. **Wait for it** - How does it evolve and finish?
6. **Reflect** - What is the overall impression?

## QUICK TIPS

1. **Take your time!**
2. **Drink cider around 55°F**
3. **Use a white wine glass**
4. **Drink in a well lit, odor free place.**
5. **Drink ciders dry to sweet, light bodied to full bodied.**

## KEY TERMS

### Acidity (Flavor)

How tart is the cider? The malic acid in apples will give all cider a certain amount of tartness but there is a wide range of acidity. Not enough acidity will leave the cider flat. Just the right amount accentuates the other flavors. Too much acidity, especially if it tastes like vinegar, is typically identified as a flaw.

### Carbonation (Appearance and Mouthfeel)

The amount of bubbles in your cider. Carbonation can be detected visually and by feeling the bubbles on your tongue.

Still	little to none
Petillant	moderate carbonation
Sparkling	high carbonation

### Clarity (Appearance)

The clarity of a cider how cloudy or clear a cider is. It ranges from cloudy, to hazy, to clear, and then brilliant. A cloudy cider looks like fresh pressed apple cider while you can usually read newsprint through a brilliant cider. While this doesn't necessarily affect flavor, it can tell you about how the cider was made and packaged.

### Mouthfeel

Refers to how a cider feels in your mouth. Is the cider thin like water or full bodied like juice? Is it syrupy and clings to your palate? Does it dry your mouth out and make it feel fuzzy?

### Tannin (Flavor and Mouthfeel)

Tannins are the compounds that dry out your mouth, and they provide complexity and balance to the sweetness in cider. Tannin kind of feels like you have cotton balls in your mouth. Red wines have lots of tannin to balance the sweetness of the grapes. Tannin in cider usually comes from heirloom apple varieties.

## SWEET VS. DRY

The amount of sugar that remains in the final product is called the residual sweetness. Most people tend towards dryer ciders as they develop their taste buds.

Dry	0 - 1% residual sugar
Semi - Dry	1 - 2% residual sugar
Semi - Sweet	2 - 3% residual sugar
Sweet	Above 3% residual sugar

## SCORE A CIDER

### Appearance:

Total:  / 5

**COLOR** pale - straw - gold - amber - apricot - copper

**BRIGHTNESS** dull - bright - vivid

**CLARITY** cloudy - hazy - slight haze - clear - brilliant

**CARBONATION** still - petillant - sparkling

### Aroma

Total:  / 17

**INTENSITY** none | | | | high

**QUALITY** dull | | | | complex

NOTES

### Flavor

Total:  / 18

**SWEETNESS** bone dry | | | | cloying

**ACIDITY** low | | | | high

**BITTERNESS** low | | | | high

**SALT** yes no

NOTES

### Body & Finish

Total:  / 10

**ASTRINGENCY** bone dry | | | | cloying

**BODY** thin | | | | full

**LENGTH** short | | | | long

**BALANCE** unbalanced | | | | very balanced

NOTES

**TOTAL SCORE:**  / 50

# CIDER SPEAK

When you really dig into the organoleptic experience of cider, you will find yourself needing more adjectives to describe the subtle nuances. The terminology below is a great place to start being more specific. However, if you don't find the word you're looking for here, make one up! Even if your descriptor is totally weird, it will help you remember that attribute for the next time you encounter it. Associating sensory attributes with real life things is also a great way to log flavors and aromas in your memory bank. For example, a lot of people describe the character of *bretanomyces*, a wild yeast, as smelling like "barnyard" or "horse blanket." Chances are, once you smell the horse blanket you will never forget it.

## Appearance

**Clarity:** clear, cloudy, hazy, bright, brilliant  
Color: white, straw, amber, golden, copper  
**Depth:** pale, dark, light, deep, dense  
**Carbonation:** still, petillant, sparkling  
**Viscosity:** watery, thin, full-bodied, syrupy

## Aromatics

**Cidery:** distinctive cider-like characteristic typical of many ciders using traditional cider apples.  
**Winey:** wine-like, vinous, bouquet  
**Pear drops:** intense pear aroma  
**Estery:** sweet-solvent, banana, acetone, chemical-like, artificial fruity-floral aroma  
**Floral:** perfumed, fragrant, orange blossom, blossom, rose, geranium  
**Spirituos:** like alcohol, hot, burning, heady; rum, whisky or brandy characteristics  
**Piquant:** pungent, sulfuric, like a burnt match, prickling, stinging, tangy

## Fruit Aromas and Flavors

**Citrus:** grapefruit, lemon, orange, tangerine  
**Berry:** blackberry, raspberry, strawberry, black currant  
**Tree/Pomme Fruit:** apple, cherry, rainier cherry, apricot, peach, nectarine  
**Topical:** pineapple, mango, melon, banana, guava  
**Dried/Preserved Fruit:** strawberry jam, raisins, prune, dried fig  
**Cooked Fruit:** apples, pears

## Herbaceous Aromas and Flavors

**Fresh:** stemmy, cut grass, grassy, sweet grass, herb, bell pepper, eucalyptus, mint  
**Canned or Cooked:** cabbage, green beans, asparagus, green olive, black olive, artichoke  
**Dried:** tea, tobacco, hay, straw  
**Musty:** wet leaves, forest floor  
**Mousy:** smells like a rodents cage  
**Nutty:** walnut, hazelnut, almond, brazil nuts, marzipan

## Sweet Aromas and Flavors

**Caramel:** burnt sugar, toffee, molasses  
Butterscotch: buttery, diacetyl  
**Vanilla:** vanilla, custard powder, french oak  
**Honey:** honey, meadowfoam, alfalfa  
**Syrupy:** maple syrup, corn syrup  
**Confectionary:** candy, bubblegum, taffy, sweet tarts, chocolate, cookies

## Spicy / Woody Aromas and Flavors

**Spicy:** cloves, allspice, nutmeg, black pepper, licorice, cinnamon, cardamom,  
**Phenolic:** smoky, wood fires, tar, medicinal, plastic, barnyard, horse blanket, leathery  
**Woody:** seasoned wood, resinous, cedarwood, fresh sawdust, woodchips, fir needles, oaky,  
**Moldy/musty:** unpleasant smell sometimes compared to damp cardboard or sherry

## Taste

**Sweet:** sugary; perception of sweetness depends on balance with bitterness and acidity  
**Acidic:** sour, sharp, tart, makes you salivate, accentuates other flavors like salt does  
**Acetic:** a smell and sharp taste like vinegar, solvent, or acetone/nail polish remover;  
**Bitter:** quinine, tonic water, black coffee  
**Salty:** like salt, mineral like  
**Umami:** savory, soy sauce

## Mouthfeel

**Body:** the "middle" or weight of a mouthful of cider; thin, medium, full body  
**Warming:** hot, fiery in the mouth, warm at back of the throat and belly; either from alcohol or chili peppers  
**Creamy:** like cream, thick-soft  
**Metallic:** a tinny or coppery taste  
**Astringent:** tannic, mouth-puckering, drying, like sucking on a tea bag