

# The Apple Cup Runneth Over

As Northwest hard ciders evolve, so do the flavor profiles at a growing number of local cider bars

BY KENDALL JONES

## QUITE UNNOTICED, CIDER

(hard cider, that is) has experienced a soaring spike in popularity in the past three years, with reports showing that growth in the industry has even outpaced the more widely recognized growth of the craft beer industry. According to one report, grocery stores now stock 65 percent more cider than two years ago.

In the Northwest, the growing cider scene is dominated by local and regional artisan producers known for offering creatively flavored ciders. All ciders have apples as their base, but today's cider makers often enrich the flavor profile with other ingredients, such as ginger, peppers, black currants, rhubarb, pomegranate or just about anything else, leaving behind the notion that cider's character only ranges from dry to sweet.

You may have noticed the trend manifesting itself at local pubs, many of which now offer one or more ciders on tap. Around Seattle, there are a few cider-focused bar/restaurants that take the "brew pub" experience to new heights, offering cider lovers a selection of as many as 30 ciders on tap in one place, including many ciders that span an increasingly broad spectrum of flavors—and food to match. Whether you seek out cider because it is a gluten-free alternative to beer or simply because it is refreshing and quaffable, these Seattle spots have a beautiful selection of flavor-forward ciders.



A tasting flight from Citizen Six

## THE WOODS

(SoDo, 4700 Ohio Ave. S; 206.762.0492; [seattlecidercompany.com](http://seattlecidercompany.com)) Located in an industrial complex in SoDo, The Woods serves as the 21-and-older tasting room for Seattle Cider Company and its sister company, Two Beers Brewing. The expansive space, with polished concrete floors and custom-made wood tables and chairs, sprawls onto the loading dock, with outdoor seating beneath a large pergola fashioned from steel I-beams and thick timbers.

Seattle Cider's flagship semisweet cider is widely available and very popular, but the flamboyant use of uncommon ingredients, such as mint, basil and pumpkin spice, is how this company built its reputation among cider aficionados. As you sip your way through as many as a dozen different cider choices, enjoy a game of pool or shuffleboard, then munch on some tasty grub from Bread and Circuses, a local food truck that operates a commissary kitchen on site. Its offerings, which its proprietors have dubbed "circus-inspired street food," is served from a take-out window in the tasting room and includes items such as duck-fat popcorn, toasted ravioli and sourdough doughnuts. Don't forsake the Brussels sprout Caesar salad and always sample the seasonal cider selections.

## » MUST-TRY CIDERS:

Seattle Cider Three Pepper cider (6.9 percent alcohol by volume) offers gobs of garden-fresh vegetal, pepper flavor but just a smidge of heat. Seattle Cider Gin Botanical cider (6.5 percent ABV) is dry and effervescent, with gin-like notes of juniper, lemon, citrus rind and cucumber.

## CAPITOL CIDER (Capitol Hill, 818 E Pike; 206.397.3564; [capitolcider.com](http://capitolcider.com))

Located near the corner of Pike Street and Broadway, this cider-forward pub opened its doors in 2013 and began serving, at the time, the city's broadest selection of draft and bottled ciders. The interior transports you to a traditional English public house, with cozy booths and communal tables with bench seating, surrounded by warmly lit walls adorned with replicas of classic masterpieces and bookshelves cradling timeworn books.

All ages are welcome upstairs, but downstairs is for 21 and older only and presents a more festive, pub-like atmosphere, with shuffleboard and a stage that hosts local musicians. A constantly rotating selection of 20 draft ciders always offers a range of options, from traditional English-style ciders to creatively concocted New World ciders, along with dozens of bottled ciders

and 10 craft beers on tap. Their gluten-free menu exceeds expectations; don't skip the peaches and burrata appetizer.

» **MUST-TRY CIDERS:** Finnriver Cidery black currant cider (6.5 percent ABV) is a beautiful shade of magenta, balancing lush currant tartness with grape-like sweetness. Tieton Cider Works Sparkling Perry (5.5 percent ABV) is dry, bubbly and Champagne-like, with citrus and berry character.

**CITIZEN SIX** (*Interbay, 945 Elliott Ave. W, No. 201; 206.588.2224; citizensix-seattle.com*) The focus at this all-ages eatery and bar is on libations from two adjacent businesses, Number 6 Hard Cider and Six-spirits Distillery, which are owned and operated independently of Citizen Six. Owner Suzana Olmos (who also owns Citizen on Lower Queen Anne—still with us?) serves cider, spirits and beer alongside a menu representing her Mexican-Korean heritage, something she calls “Korexican” food.

In the dark and cozy space, with rough-hewn wooden tables, you may find yourself sitting at something resembling a

**Pouring cider at the Woods**



and crisp, but also juicy and slightly tart. Number 6 coffee cider (6 percent ABV) is made using Stumptown cold-brew coffee: plenty of coffee flavor while maintaining all of its sweet and tart apple character.

**SCHILLING CIDER HOUSE** (*Fremont, 708 N 34th St.; 206.420.7088; schillingciderhouse.com*) Near the bustling corner of Fremont Avenue N and N 34th Street, this 21-and-older cider bar offers 300 ciders in bottles and more than 30 on tap, which it claims is the largest selection of draft cider in the nation. Other than pub-height tables and stools, the most notable decor

is the large, reach-in cooler that allows you to peruse the vast selection of bottled cider, which you can drink on site or take home.

Schilling Cider Company, which makes its cider in Auburn, calls this home, but you'll find that most of the ciders are from other producers, making this a great place to explore different styles.

You're sure to find something to challenge your perception of cider, such as Schilling's own Grapefruit and Chill cider. Part of the mission here is to educate people (the company calls it “cidercation”), so Schilling offers flights of tasters as well as pints, and regularly hosts special events and classes. The Cider House doesn't serve food, but allows you to bring your own from local restaurants and food trucks.

» **MUST-TRY CIDERS:** Schilling Ascender ginger cider (6.5 percent ABV) finishes smooth after attacking your palate with a pleasant but bracing wallop of ginger spice. Schilling Lumberjack rhubarb cider (6 percent ABV) balances moderate sweetness with an earthy tartness and some tropical fruit notes. 5



tree stump as you gaze at the Northwest-inspired photo mural wall behind the bar. Out back, in the shadow of nearby towering grain silos, a deck sits along the railroad tracks so you can watch trains rumble by.

Appropriately, you'll discover six different ciders from Number 6 on tap here, including one seasonal selection, as well as craft cocktails and a few beers from local breweries, but the collage of flavors is best experienced by pairing one of the ciders with a beef bulgogi burrito. The True Original cider is a great entry point, but don't miss the more adventuresome offerings, such as the honey ginger or black cherry ciders.

» **MUST-TRY CIDERS:** Number 6 pomegranate cider (6 percent ABV) pours a rich garnet red and is surprisingly dry