



- by [Grant McOmie](#)
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There are some Oregon traditions as old as the territory's earliest days when pioneers set down roots and planted crops – like the simple apple. Recently, I discovered a strong resurgence of interest in Oregon apples that are not only delicious to eat but wonderful to drink as apple cider.

In fact, Oregon's apple cider business has taken root with a new generation.

It is a 'pressing' time of year at [Bull Run Cider](#) near Forest Grove in Washington County. They are processing apples with names you've likely never heard Mendocino Cox, Newtown Pippin, Jonwin or Harry Masters Jersey.

Hundreds of apples roll along a conveyor and get scooped up by the handful, then chopped up and hard squeezed until all the juices run out.

It's the 'payoff' time of year for two young businessmen who are betting that an old industry will make an Oregon comeback. Bull Run Cider started as fun hobby three years ago for Galen Williams and Peter Mulligan, but it turned into serious business last year when friends and customers couldn't get enough of the team's varied Oregon grown hard cider products.

“People are looking for another alternative,” said Mulligan. “We are in the right place at the right time to offer another beverage choice.”

“The craft brew business has really laid the groundwork for cider,” noted Williams. “People are looking for something that has less alcohol than wine, but without the hoppy bitterness of beer. Cider fits that bill.”

It also turns out that cider making is an American history story that’s as rich in nuance and flavor as the apples that made it happen.

Kevin Zielinski, [EZ Orchards](#) cider maker, said that America’s love affair with cider started “down on the farm” during the country’s earliest days.

“Cider has quite a heritage,” said Zielinski. “It has a heritage that goes back many centuries before colonial history.”

In Pre-Revolutionary War America, everyone grew apples and made cider as a way to store the fruits of their labor.

Cider was the preferred beverage of the times, but all of that changed by the 1920’s.

“During prohibition, many orchards were taken out that had been used for cider making,” said Zielinski. “After Prohibition, those orchards took many years to restore – plus, there wasn’t as much interest in the beverage because beer and spirits dominated the market; cider has made a slow comeback.”

Zielinski has produced E Z Orchards “Willamette Valley Cidre” for the past decade and he is passionate supporter of the historic resurgence in cider making.

When he began a decade ago, there were half a dozen cider makers across the Northwest. Today, there are more than 30.

He planted 10 apple varieties across 11 acres in 2003, and he follows the French tradition of cider making that dates back centuries.

“Cider is something people can share socially or partner with food and use a product that they are already familiar with – the apple.”

[“2 Towns Cider”](#) in Corvallis offers more than a dozen innovative ciders on tap to customers who visit their tasting room. Their craft cider is available in bottles and even cans.

Cider maker and co-owner, Dave Takush, said that consumers are eager for variety:

“There’s really a cider comeback in Oregon. People are finding out that craft cider has a place at the table. You can get really sweet, mellow ciders from Normandy or you can get crisp, tangy ciders from England. We offer our own Oregon twist on ciders.”

Back at Bull Run Cider, apple grower Shaun Shepherd advises Williams and Mulligan on the variety of apples they should plant across their farm.

So far, he has planted more than 1100 trees and 60 apple varieties on Bull Run’s four acres. He plans to triple the production in the next couple of years.

“We are not certain which varieties will do best in this climate, so we plant different ones to have a better chance of some doing really well.”

That is the ultimate goal for all cider makers, added Mulligan. Each bottling delivers a deliciously unique product and keeps a centuries-old American craft alive in Oregon: “It is grown here, made here and consumed here and that’s what we’re looking to do.”