
APPLE NOTES '19

Producing the 2019 Crop...

The 2018 harvest ended early, in mid-October. As you may recall, the 2018 crop was short due to an untimely freeze in late February. In contrast, for 2019, we are anticipating one of the best crops we have ever produced. The 2018-19 winter was relatively mild, although it seemed to drag on and on, with snow on the ground into March. Due to snow in the orchard, we were unable to begin pruning until March. When we did begin, we were mucking around in some pretty deep snow. We had to really scramble to get the pruning done before the trees began to bloom. The first blooms appeared on May 4, and full bloom occurred in mid-May. Interestingly, the bloom in the new orchard was about three days behind the bloom in the old orchard.

We ran the wind machines on three consecutive nights in late April. The wind machines are used to prevent frost damage to the developing blossoms. A typical spring frost will occur as the result of a nighttime air inversion. An air inversion happens when air warmed by daytime sun is displaced during the night by cooler, upper level air sinking to ground level. As the heavier, cool air descends, the warm air rises. If the inversion is strong enough, the temperature difference between the air at the ground and the air at the top of the wind machines can be several degrees. When a fruit tree is in bloom, the difference of one degree can be critical. At full bloom, most of the blossoms can survive temperatures down to 28-29°; as the temperature drops below that critical point, increasingly large numbers of blossoms are lost. At 25°, there will be few, if any, survivors. Apples begin as blossoms - without blossoms, there will be no apples; hence preventing frost is critical if we hope to have any fruit.

The wind machines are basically huge fans. When they are running, they break up the inversions by mixing the warm air above with the colder air below. We generally have an indication that a frost may occur when we find the dew point has dropped below 30° by the time we turn in for the night. Unfortunately, what usually follows is a restless, sleepless night, with us waking up every little while to check the temperature in anticipation of the sounding the frost alarm. The frost alarm emits a high pitched electronic squeal once the critical temperature is reached. The noise is really irritating, and we always scramble to shut the thing off as quickly as possible. The alarm gets our hearts pounding and we quickly pile out of bed, throw on our clothes, and dash out to one of the Gators and head up the hill in a great rush. One of us jumps out to start the machine at the top of the hill, and the other continues on to the machine in the new orchard. Once the machines are warmed up and the blades are spinning, the throttles are pulled to full speed. We then head back to the house, fully awake and up for the remainder of the night. It is always a relief when the sun begins to come up in the morning. We keep the machines running until all danger of frost has passed, usually sometime around 6:30 in the morning.

We had excellent bee coverage for pollination this year, thanks to our two beekeepers, Dave Tysz and Mike Durst. Dave sells his honey under the "Grandpa's Bees" name, and Mike's is sold under the "Mark Durst and Sons" name (Mark was Mike's grandfather, and Mike is a third generation beekeeper).

Rains throughout the first half of the summer kept the grass green until August. We found ourselves mowing the orchard at least three times, and using the weed whackers constantly throughout the summer. It usually takes 2-3 days to

mow the entire orchard, and about 3 weeks to whack any weeds growing in the tree rows.

The growing season was near perfect for the apples and pears. The relatively cool summer temperatures we experienced this summer have helped size and color the apples nicely. Pest control was uneventful, with no outbreaks of codling moth or apple scab. Now, let's just hope for a nice, long fall with lots of warm sunshine and no frost until after harvest...

Opening day...

We will open the season again this year with Summer Reds. We expect they will be ready for harvest September 2. The estimated harvest dates for all apples will be updated regularly on our website beginning September 2 - (www.bishop-orchard.com).

Hours...

Our hours are 9:00-5:00 on weekends, and 5:15 to sundown Thursday and Friday. **THE CIDER PRESSES ARE ONLY AVAILABLE ON SATURDAY AND SUNDAY.** We are not open on school holidays or weekdays other than Thursday and Friday evenings. If you are coming to pick on Thursday or Friday evening, please allow sufficient time to finish picking before dusk. This is important. Wandering the orchard after sundown is risky because it is not only too dark to see what you are picking, but it is too dark to see sticks or anything else that could cause you to trip.

Cider...

We expect to have sufficient apples for cider making beginning September 7. Please check our website or Facebook for more up-to-date information. Once cider making begins, you might want to keep an eye on Facebook to monitor the supply of cider apples available as the season progresses (although we do not at this time expect any shortages anytime during harvest - we have a very full crop).

PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR OWN JUGS!

We generally have a limited supply of jugs for first-timers who may not realize they need to bring jugs, and for those who space out and forget their jugs at home. However, please keep in mind that demand can quickly exceed our supply. It is tough to see the disappointment when someone shows up to make cider without jugs, only to learn we have no jugs.

Like any natural fruit juice, cider can become contaminated by harmful bacteria. Using good food preparation habits while handling cider is a must to minimize the risk of bacterial contamination. The biggest risk of contamination comes from those handling the cider, an important vector being unwashed hands. To reduce risk of contamination, ALWAYS wash your hands before you begin making cider, and keep them clean until you are done and the corks in the jug. Improperly cleaned jugs can also pose a hazard. Clean our jugs by placing one or two teaspoons of automatic dishwasher detergent in each jug, then filling them with very hot water. We then cap the jugs and let them sit for several hours before thoroughly rinsing them.

While not wanting to seem too bossy or interfere when people are making cider, we do try to keep an eye out for

problems and point them out to cider makers. However, the reality is, we simply can't see everything. Hence, as a condition of making cider using our facilities, you will have the responsibility to assure that your cider is free of bad bacteria. The only practical method that we know of to completely eliminate the risk of bacterial contamination is pasteurization. Pasteurization is a relatively simple process; it involves heating the raw cider to approximately 160° F, then quickly cooling and storing it in good, clean containers. We suggest using a candy thermometer or similar instrument to monitor the temperature as the cider is heating. By no means should you boil the cider - boiling destroys the unique flavor of cider. Once pasteurized, the cider should be refrigerated and treated with the same care as any other food.

Signs...

The State Legislature enacted a law that clarifies responsibility for injuries suffered when participating in agritourism activities. While the designation "agritourism" raises our hackles a bit when applied to our orchard operation (we don't consider our customers "tourists" nor do we like to think of our operation as a tourist site), picking apples and making cider at our orchard does come within the law's definition of agritourism. If we expect to be covered by the law, we are required to post the premises with signs advising customers of the law. The size, text, and location of the signs are dictated by the law. We will dutifully place one sign at the large cider shed, and one at the entry to the orchard. The signs themselves are pretty imposing, and the text a bit intimidating, but apparently this is what the modern world has come to. Anyhow, we wanted to take this opportunity to explain what the signs are about so you won't wonder what possessed us to post them.

Hard cider apples for home cider-makers...

As an experiment late in the season last year, we offered some of our hard cider apples to home cider-makers using our presses. Basically, we were curious if anyone would be interested in making hard cider from traditional English hard cider apples. The offering seemed to be well received by those cider makers who used the apples, although we have not yet received any feedback as to how the cider turned out. We are again considering making some of the English apples available to cider makers, provided enough are ready to harvest before our regular, sweet apple harvest ends. The English apples are very late-ripening and we usually end up harvesting them after we close for the season. If we do offer them, we may sell them by weight rather than by the gallon. If you are interested, please check with us toward the end of the season.

Incidentally, Liberty Ciderworks in Spokane produces an artisan, single variety hard cider made exclusively from our McIntosh apples. The cider has won some prestigious awards and is a strong seller. What this means is that those of you who are home cider makers might want to consider using the McIntosh for hard cider. While we can't say that your cider would be comparable to that produced by Liberty, you might be surprised as to the quality of hard cider they produce.

And speaking of our McIntosh and awards, in January we flew to San Francisco to attend the awards ceremony when Liberty Ciderworks received a coveted Good Foods award for its McIntosh cider. Liberty makes its single varietal McIntosh exclusively from our McIntosh. The pre-award reception featured Liberty's McIntosh cider. At times, we felt like real country bumpkins coming to the Big City, but seeing a couple hundred celebrants drinking Liberty's cider and knowing that we grew and picked every single apple that went into the cider made us feel pretty giddy. We returned home to the orchard the next day after

briefly basking in San Francisco's warm, winter sun. We are particularly proud of the Good Foods award Liberty received because not only was the cider judged for its presentation and taste, but how the apples were grown; weight was given to the cultural and pest control practices we use to grow our apples.

Tasting room...

Liberty Ciderworks has obtained a license for a seasonal tasting room at the orchard. We provide many of the apples Liberty uses to produce their ciders. The tasting room will be in the shop building just above the large cider shed. The building at one time was our wood shop. After we built a larger shop, it became the place where we stashed "stuff" that we had nowhere else to store. It also became the garage for our Model A Ford. This summer, we began what seemed like an endless job of clearing out the building. We hauled to the landfill an enormous quantity of treasures which we doggedly saved over the years "because we might need them someday," and we stuffed the rest into nooks and crannies wherever we could find room in other buildings. At the moment, the new tasting room can be best described as "rustic" - it is pretty rudimentary and we can say it offers absolutely none of the pretentious snobbery sometimes associated with tasting rooms. We are delighted to host the tasting room at the orchard because it will provide to those of you who are interested an opportunity to taste and, if desired, to purchase artisan cider made from our very own apples.

Future Apple Notes...

We may post future Apple Notes on our website in lieu of mailing copies to everyone on our mailing list. If we do, we will mail postcards ahead of time, notifying you of the change. For those who want a printed copy or do not have access to the internet, just let us know and we will happily mail a printed copy to you when we post the Apple Notes on the website.

Prices...

Apples, pears and prunes are .50/lb., and cider is \$6/gal.

Some final comments...

- ▶ We encourage apple pickers to bring a picnic lunch to enjoy under the shade of an apple tree or in a private corner of the orchard. We do not presently have a café in Garfield, but we are pleased to have Becky's Meet Shop, Too, where you can get espresso, snacks, and sandwiches or wraps. Search Facebook for Meet Shop, Too, to check her hours.
- ▶ Please don't climb the trees; the limbs are very brittle, climbing breaks off fruiting spurs, falling from a tree can be really embarrassing as well as harmful to your health.
- ▶ The orchard floor has sticks and windfall apples - please watch your step to avoid falls.
- ▶ Please remember not to park in front of the homes across the street from the orchard.
- ▶ Please don't enter any of our outbuildings unless authorized.
- ▶ And finally, **please have fun when visiting the orchard!**

*See us on Facebook or visit our website,
www.bishop-orchard.com.*