

MINERAL POINT, WISCONSIN  
U.S.A.

THE CIDER FARM

# Cider Production and Management

Deirdre Birmingham



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# The Cider Farm:

How we started



- 🍏 Late 2002 - 'Bought the Land'  
-- Clean sheet of paper
- 🍏 Organic & high quality  
finished product
- 🍏 Land where apples did well
- 🍏 But...Cider was unknown in  
U.S.





# The Cider Farm:

How we started



- 🍏 Learned of English and French cider varieties
- 🍏 Tannin give complexity, mouthfeel like a wine grape
- 🍏 Wine grapes of apples
- 🍏 But...none commercially available in U.S.





# Our First Problem

No trees available commercially

## The Solution





# Started Small and Scaled

Propagation now a strategic strength?



# Our Second Problem

## Cider production

- 🍏 Considered building a winery on the farm
  - challenging topography, esp. for semi-trucks
  - expensive
- 🍏 Looked for a winery in 2011
  - made high quality wines
  - capacity to do contract ciders
  - interest in cider
- 🍏 Considered all options -- including brandy







For many,  
craftsmanship  
is  
a relic from the  
distant past.  
But for the few that  
still embrace it,  
the rewards  
are  
immeasurable.

Crafted without compromise.

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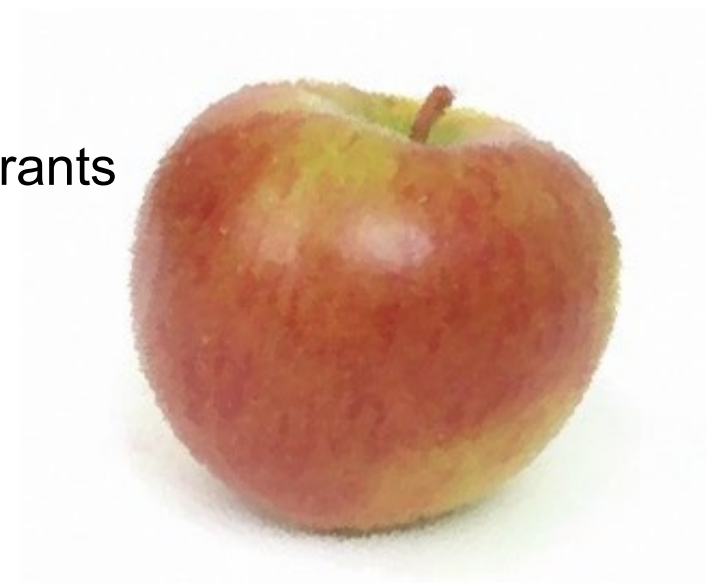
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# Our Second Problem

cider production

- 🍏 Apple Brandy from 2013 to now
- 🍏 New farm neighbors – farm to table restaurants
- 🍏 Introduced us to a Chicago-area winery
- 🍏 Beta-test of winery & Chicago market
- 🍏 Both did well!





# The Cider Farm:

One Orchard, two products



The Cider Farm =  
The Orchard

--English & French  
Bitter Apples



Fermented = Cider



Distilled = Wisconsin  
Apple Brandy

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# The Cider Farm:

## Ciders



Kegging equipment only in 2016

Can't build a brand via kegs



Added bottling line in 2017







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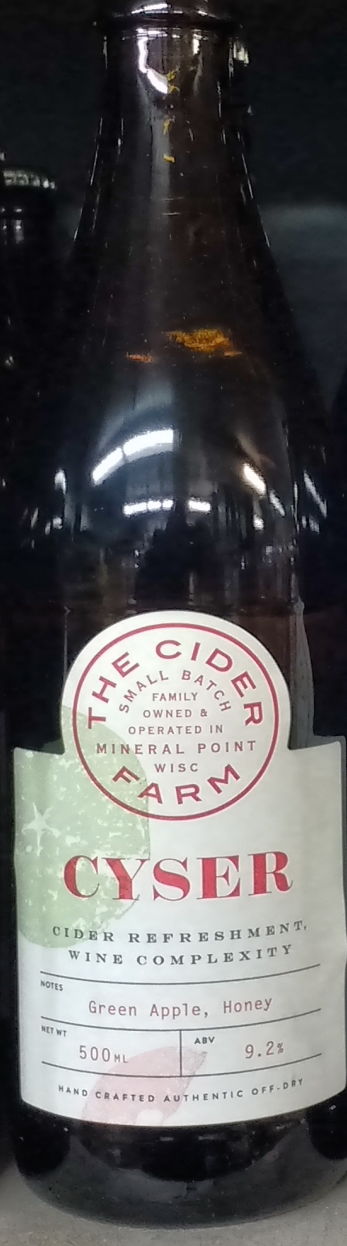
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# Horticultural Details

## The Evolving Cider Farm

- 🍏 Silt-loam Soils—began with fallow ground of 3.5 ac, then row crop ground of 14 ac, and later 9 ac.
- 🍏 Started with M-7s--Early switch to Bud-9s
- 🍏 Vertical Axe—15' to 20' x 8' staked  
Now Tall Spindle—12' x 3'-4' on 4-wire trellis, drip irrigated
- 🍏 Some disease resistant cultivars (Liberty & Pricilla) in addition to non-disease resistant cider apples
- 🍏 I focus on tannic apples. Use Hoch Orchards for additional organic tart table apple juice when needed.



# Varieties

What to leave in, what to leave out

- 🍏 faux Ellis Bitter
- 🍏 Chisel Jersey
- 🍏 Kingston Black
- 🍏 Bramley's Seedling
- 🍏 Medaille d'Or
- 🍏 Major      🍏 Tremlett's Bitter
- 🍏 Dabinett      🍏 Brown's Apple
- 🍏 Somerset Redstreak



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# Varieties

What to leave in, what to leave out

- 🍏 real Ellis Bitter
- 🍏 Chisel Jersey
- 🍏 (Kingston Black)
- 🍏 ~~Bramley's Seedling~~
- 🍏 ~~Medaille d'Or~~
- 🍏 Major      🍏 Tremlett's Bitter
- 🍏 Dabinett      🍏 (Brown's Apple)
- 🍏 (Somerset Redstreak)



# Varieties—What We Have Added

What to leave in, what to leave out

- 🍏 Liberty on M-26 then Bud-9
- 🍏 Priscilla on M-26 then Bud-9
- 🍏 Porter's Perfection – tannic & tart
- 🍏 Kronebusch—wild, high tannins & sugars (MN)
- 🍏 Redflesh varieties
- 🍏 Mettais – French brandy
- 🍏 2 American brandy apples

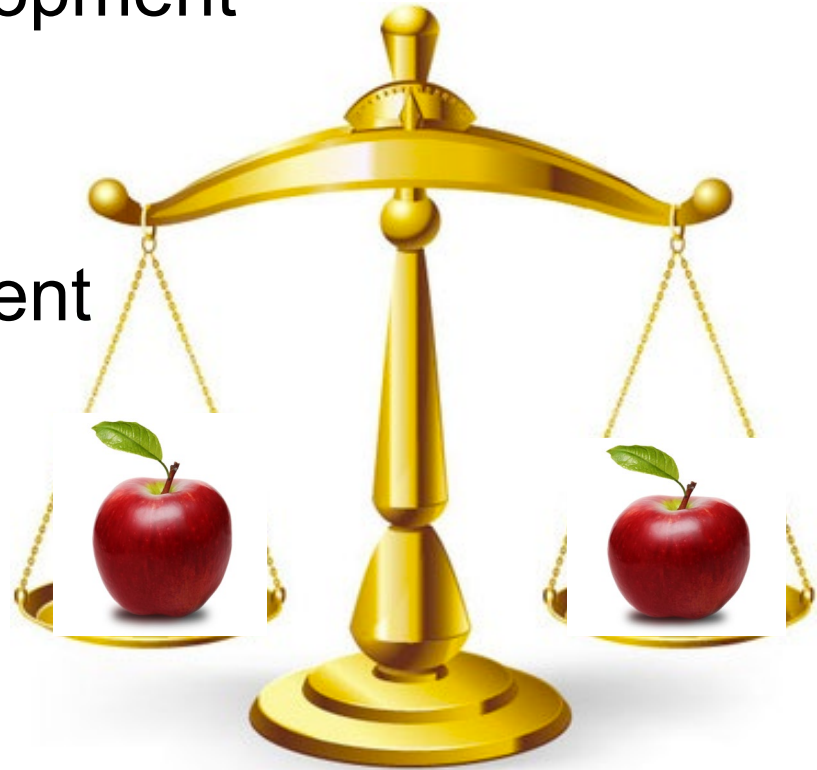




# Varieties—Considerations

What to leave in, what to leave out

- 🍏 Marketing & Product Development
- 🍏 Horticultural Concerns
- 🍏 Agricultural Risk Management



# Marketing and Product Development

considerations



Brand is based on our rare apples and being organic



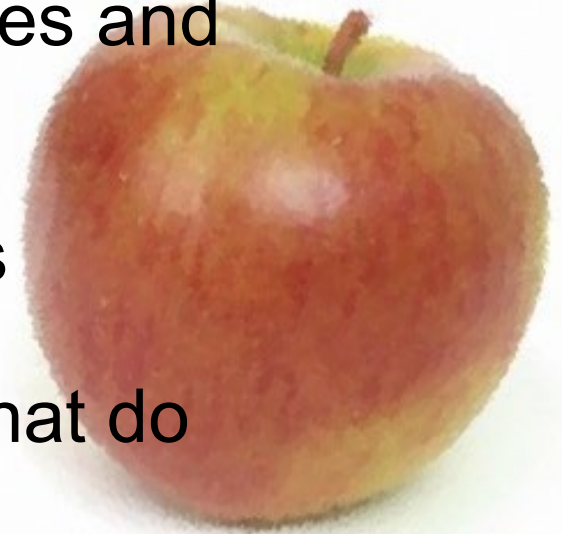
Blends – that feature our apples



Formats – Kegs? Bottles? – What do they communicate?



Can you make cider as cheaply as beer?





# Marketing and Product Development

considerations

- 🍏 Sell on the farm?
- 🍏 Distribution – where and how?
  - Not everyone wants you
- 🍏 Direct to Consumer Retail
  - We are adding this now
  - Bringing production in house
- 🍏 New but related products?



# Horticultural Considerations

What Comes with the Organic territory

- 🍏 The Cider Farm: N = 1 in Upper Midwest
- 🍏 Little & confusing information
  - Wisconsin is not England or France
- 🍏 Organic is our choice
- 🍏 Adds cost—without necessarily a price premium

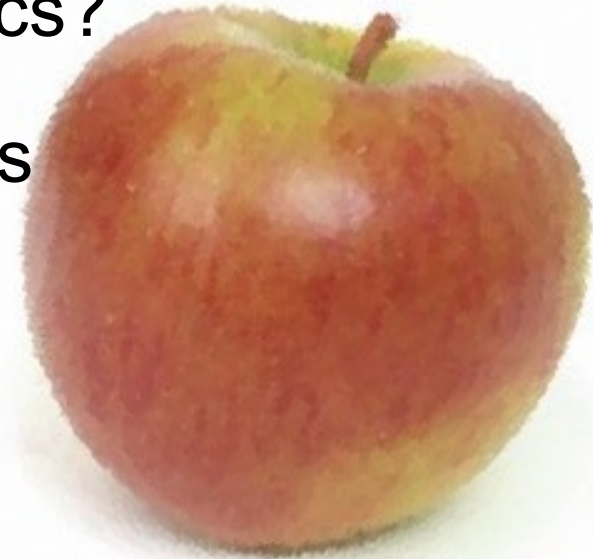




# Horticultural Considerations

What Comes with organic cider apple territory

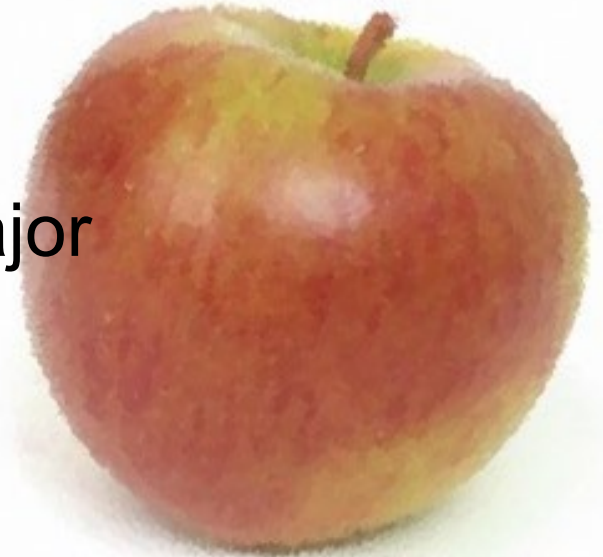
- 🍏 Fire blight
- 🍏 Planting distances and other specs?
- 🍏 Round-Headed Apple Borer for us
- 🍏 Labor intensive issues



# Agricultural Risk Management

Protecting against nature's downside

- 🍏 Irrigation
- 🍏 Diverse bloom times – e.g., Major
- 🍏 Fencing
- 🍏 Insect & disease monitoring





# Cheers!

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



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