



CIDER & CHEESE 2015

Once again the North London branch celebrated CAMRA's cider month by holding a cider and cheese tasting at the Pineapple in Kentish Town.

North London

Six lovely British ciders were matched with cheese from a number of different countries: Ireland, Wales, England, Italy and Holland and using different milks: sheep's, goat's and cow's. All came from the local delicatessen Earth Natural Foods. So what did we try?

The first pairing was **Pecorino Dolce**, a ewe's milk soft cheese with **Apple County Naughty Horsie**. The cider is from award winning cider producer, Ben Culpin, who has been making cider for over six years. Based at Whitehouse Farm in Monmouthshire, his cider uses home grown bittersweet cider apples including Dabinett, Vilberie, Muchelin, Brown Snout and Yarlinton Mill. Naughty Horsie uses just Dabinett apples and was 6.5% ABV. Pecorino Dolce is a sweet sheep's milk cheese. The milk comes from sheep raised on inland pastures in Sardinia, which are known for their rich vegetation. The result is a creamy soft cheese with a buttery nose and flavour with a little yoghurt character. The cider was chosen to cut through the creaminess of the cheese but not to be so overpowering to let the more delicate flavours to come through.

The next cheese was from Gorwydd Caerphilly, a traditional Caerphilly using raw cow's milk made in the shadows of the Cambrian mountains. It is matured for a minimum of two months to give a deep flavour with slight citrus notes and a creamy, moist texture. The cheesemaker, Todd Trethowan, follows a traditional recipe, working the curds by hand and this cheese has deservedly won a number of awards. A cider with some dryness and acidity to balance the sweetness was chosen (Turner's Dry Cider). It is a cider from Kent, an area that traditionally uses dessert and cooking apples rather than cider apple varieties. This cider is unusual for the region is that the ciders are usually sweeter and this cider is definitely dry. It is made up of a blend of five dessert apple varieties chosen from orchards close to Marden and because they each have different characteristics. Its ABV is 7%.

Turners is a family business based in Marden, a village in the Kentish Weald. When they first made cider they used windfall from family and friends' apple trees. Last year they decided to buy apples by the tonne and ferment in stainless steel vats. They ferment the different varieties separately and then blend to get the flavour they desire.

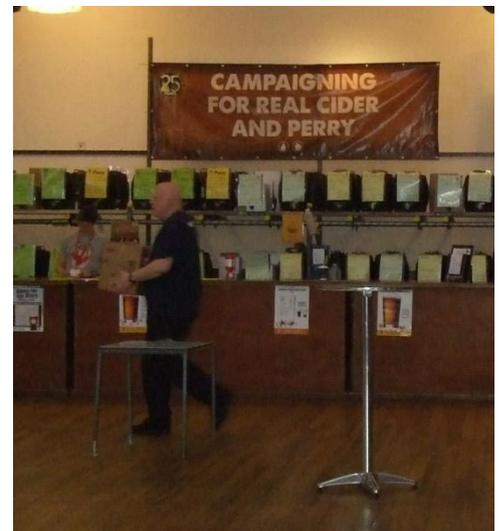


The next cider was again a Dabinett single variety. This time from **Newton Court**. Newton Court Cidery is situated on a farm of the same name in Leominster (Herefordshire). It produces cider pressed on the farm by Paul Stephens plus some of his friends. Paul started the cidery in 2000 as an experiment which turned a passion into a living. As people got more and more excited about the ciders, Paul started to get serious about cider making. The fruit used comes from the farm's orchards surrounding the Cidery. Cows are allowed to graze the orchards in winter, lambs in the spring. This cider (6.4% ABV) had depth of flavour and was chosen to go with the very unusual **Prima Donna** cheese from Bodegraven in Holland. It is an unique combination of Parmesan and traditional Dutch cheese and has the hardness of the Parmesan but with softer flavour overtones from the Dutch cheese so we needed to choose a cider that wouldn't be overwhelmed.

You can't do a cider and cheese tasting without a traditional Cheddar and so **Coastal Cheddar** near Dorchester, Dorset was chosen. This Cheddar is made from free range cows from Ford Farm and has been aged for up to 15 months to give it a sweet, distinctive flavour. The naturally formed calcium crystals in the cheese, which are a sign of age, gave the cheese a pleasant crunch. Of course, a traditional cheese needs a traditional cider, so **Oliver's Traditional Dry** was the chosen match. Oliver's is located in Ocle Pychard in the heart of Herefordshire. The cider house and tasting room are situated in the old hop kilns at Moorhouse farm, which has been the Oliver family for 142 years. After a long absence, cider and perry started again in 1999. It is fermented by wild yeast in small batches using fresh pressed, mostly handpicked fruit with 'minimal Intervention' (sic).

The next cheese too needed a cider that had depth. **Smoked Ribblesdale Cheese** from the Yorkshire Dales is a rare and unusual smooth goats cheese, which has been very lightly smoked over oak (six hours) so that the flavour is not overwhelmed by the smoking process. The result is a cheese with a dry, creamy taste and a delicate smoky tang. It is made by Ribblesdale Cheesemakers, run by three people with a love of cheese. The goats' milk comes from nearby Hackfall farm, home to a pampered herd of goats who eat maize hay and lie on beds of barley straw. This cheese was matched with **Broome Farm Brown Snout** from Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire. It is a single variety using bittersweet Brown Snout apples. This cultivar is said to have been discovered in the mid 19th century on the farm of a Mr Dent at Yarkhill, a village nine miles from Hereford and Ledbury and is very popular in traditional cider making. This 7% ABV cider was full flavoured enough to deal with the smoky character of the cheese without 'fighting it'. Broome Farm has been in the Johnson family for well over 70 years and the cider maker is Mike Johnson. There are over 50 acres of orchards producing 40 varieties of apples and 30 of Perry pears. The farm has gone from initially producing fruit for in house consumption, to making cider and perry for sale with the bulk of the apples grown going to a local national cider maker.

The final cider was another one from **Oliver's, Making Hay** at 6% ABV. It is a bitter sweet cider with a strong fruit character. The cheese choice was from Tipperary and the Grubb family's **Cashel Blue**. Established in 1984 Cashel Blue is the original Irish Farmhouse cow's milk blue cheese. Cashel Blue is a unique creation of J&L Grubb Ltd's founders, Jane and Louis Grubb. Developed at a time when softer blue cheeses were a rarity in the English speaking world, Cashel Blue is an alternative to the traditional and stronger Blue Stilton - creamy & blue. Cashel Blue is named after the historic " Rock of Cashel," a medieval castle that was once the seat of the Kings of Munster and where lore has it St Patrick commenced the conversion of the pagan Irish to Christianity by using a shamrock to explain the Holy Trinity, giving birth to one of Ireland's national symbols.



As everyone's palate is different, different people liked different cheeses, different ciders and different pairings. Why not give it a go and see what your favourite is?

And if you want to try a great selection of ciders, come along to the 2016 London Drinker Beer & Cider Festival in March at King's Cross; see www.northlondon.camra.org.uk

Jess Marsh & Christine Cryne

October 2015