



**CIDER CULTURE CIDER SCHOOL:  
BARREL-AGING CIDERS**





### WHY USE BARRELS?

- Historically appropriate (brief history of barrel-aging for cider)
- Part of a set of tools available to the maker
- Most commonly-used vessel for fermentation throughout history
- American distinction v. Old World barrels are assumed.

**FUN FACT:** Old timers in New England would put their ciders “down cellah” and even add rum, raisins or molasses during the winter.

### AUDIENCE QUESTION:

When was the **FIRST** time you noticed “barrel-aging” on a label? What was the beverage?



D 16

4,5 LÉAUPARTIE  
8 BONNEBOSO  
23 PONT-L'ÉVÊQUE

8 CAMBREMER

🍏 Route du Cidre

CALVADOS  
POMMEAU  
CIDRE  
D.F.L. DUPONT  
← à 2Kms →





## BARREL-AGING AT VIRTUE CIDER

- Virtue is 48-acre farm in Fennville MI, on Michigan's "Cider Coast"
- Founded in 2011 by Gregory Hall.

PAST: inspired by Greg's travel overseas to Normandy, Asturias and historic English cider regions.

PRESENT: Barrel-aging adds different aspects to cider. Three ways to think about this.  
(Mechanical = oak flavor)  
(Chemical = compounds in the cider change via oxidation and transfer in and out of the oak pores)  
(Biological = every barrel has unique fingerprint of microflora, yeast etc)

THE FUTURE: Cider House 3 allows us to barrel-age more finished cider, will give our cider making team more choices, more room and more lab capacity.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: What are some flavors you associate with barrel-aging?



## CATEGORY THOUGHTS

As in many aspects, cider is taking a page from craft beer.

Barrel-aging is more widespread, and makers are choosing many different types of barrels to impart distinction to their ciders. (EG red wine, gin, bourbon)

Some examples:

- Virtue Lapinette; French oak aged
- Shacksbury – Vermonter; Gin Barrel aged
- Superstition Meadery – Aphrodisia (Syrah, honey, New American and White Series Barrels)
- 2 Towns Ciderhouse – La Mure (Lambic, aged in Willamette Pinot Barrels, wild fermented)
- Seattle Cider – Merlot Barrel aged PNW Berry

AUDIENCE QUESTION: WHAT's the MOST UNUSUAL BARREL that you've seen used for cider? How did you like it?





## OUR BARRELS ARE MAGIC!

Currently there are about 500 barrels at Virtue Cider in Fennville, mostly French Oak.

### WHAT DO WE USE?

Neutral French Oak and Bourbon Barrels (Heaven Hill)

Every barrel is different, and each use will impart slightly different characteristics to the finished cider. Terroir, quality of first use.

**FUN FACT:** French oak (logically!) refers to a species of oak trees that are more common in France. Generally, French oak imparts more of a silky, subtle flavor while American oak (from our species here) tends to impart more notes of vanilla or cream soda.







## THE MITTEN

Award-winning Bourbon barrel-aged cider; grew out of Greg's knowledge from developing Bourbon County Brand Stout

- Cider tasting: 5 steps
- Appearance
- Aroma
- Mouthfeel
- Flavor
- Finish

The Mitten generally does two turns in Bourbon barrels. The first turn (for us) allows the cider to absorb some of the alcohol from the Bourbon. After this is emptied and refilled, the second turn absorbs more of the barrel flavor – char, toast, vanilla, cream or caramel!

WHAT ARE YOU POURING TO SAMPLE? Show us, tell us!





THANK YOU!

Contact me at

[corrie.wolosin@virtuecider.com](mailto:corrie.wolosin@virtuecider.com)

Instagram: @corrienh

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