CIDER AND FOOD BASICS

Cider in general pairs well with food because of its acidity, tannins, and carbonation.

The basic principles of food and cider paring are as follows:

1.) **Match intensities** – This is the most crucial rule in food and cider pairing. Intense food can easily overpower a delicate cider, and vice versa an intense cider will over power lighter foods.
   - **Examples of this would be**
     - i. Example of cider overpowering – Ice Cider and a lightly grilled piece of fish
     - ii. Example of food overpowering – Blue Cheese and a low acid and dry cider
     - iii. Example of matching intensities – Ice Cider and Blue Cheese
     - iv. Example of matching intensities – Lightly grilled piece of fish and a low acid dry cider

2.) **Complement** – When similar flavors in the cider and food find harmonies in each other
   - Example: Sweet cider and molasses-based BBQ sauce

3.) **Contrast** – Tied to the basic tastes (sweet, sour, salt, bitter, umami), when these elements interact they can accentuate more subtle flavors.
   - Example: Acid forward cider (sour) and briny oysters (salty)

4.) **Cut** – When the carbonation, tannin, and/or acidity in cider wash away the heavy or oily richness in food. Cider can also be considered a palate cleanser because the carbonation scrubs the taste receptacles, the acidity refreshes the palate, and the low alcohol content does not interfere with your ability to taste.
   - Example: Highly tannic or carbonated cider and brie cheese.

5.) **Complete** – A well composed dish has numerous elements of the basics tastes working together. If a dish is lacking in a certain area cider can help fill that void.
   - Example: A skirt steak with a chimichurri sauce on top. This dish has salt from the seasoning on the meat, sour from the chimichurri, and umami from the steak. It is lacking sweetness and bitterness. Pair this with a cider that has sweetness and bitterness from the tannins and you will have “completed” the dish.

6.) **Terroir Matching** – “if it grows together it goes together” This is pairing local food with local or regional ciders, and while this does not always work for everything, it is a really great place to start. You will want to consider the other pairing methods when making sure particular pairings work.
   - Example: Local cheese (be choosey with the cheese) and a local cider (what type of cider will complement the cheese best?). A nutty alpine cheese (with a touch of sweetness) from Virginia might be best complemented by a slightly sweeter tannic cider, First Fruit by Foggy Ridge, for example.
As a very general rule, most cider pairs well with the following:

- **Pork** – Pork tends to have a bit of sweetness and the acidity in the cider contrasts with this, and the sweetness complements.
- **Cheese** – the acidity and tannins in cider cuts through the milk fat in cheese and allows other flavors to shine.
- **Charcuterie** – the acidity and tannins in the cider cut through the rich fatty meats and contrast with the saltiness found in most of the meats.
- **Spicy foods** – The residual sugar in the cider will contrast the spice in the food leaving the dish in balance. Cider’s acidity will help to cut through the spice. Alcohol will intensify spice, since cider is lower in ABV it keeps the pairing in balance better than most alcoholic beverages.

Below is a list of cider and food pairings. The pairings are broad food categories vs complete dishes. This was done purposely to allow it to be used as a reference whilst choosing your cider to pair with your dish or, better yet, choosing the dish to pair with your cider. The pairings below assume the cider and food match intensities, which should always be the goal.

- **Acid forward Modern Cider**
  - Great with **Cheese**
  - Why? The acidity in the cider will cut through the rich milk fat

- **Sweet Modern Cider**
  - Great with **Spicy food**
  - Why? The sweetness contrasts with the spice to allow other subtler flavors to come through.

- **Semi-sweet (Medium) Modern Cider**
  - Great with **BBQ**
  - Why? The mild sweetness in the cider complements the molasses base of some BBQ sauce while the acidity in the cider cuts through the richness of the BBQ.

- **Dry Modern Cider**
  - Great with **Fried Food**
  - Why? The carbonation will cut through the fat/grease of the fried food and leave your palate refreshed.