



# 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 pairing 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 overpower lighter foods.
  - a. 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 low sweetness modern 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 low sweetness modern 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 basic 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 choosy 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 heritage 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.*

	<p><b>Acid forward Modern Cider</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Great with – Cheese</li> <li>▪ Why? – The acidity in the cider will <b>cut</b> through the rich milk fat</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Sweet Modern Cider</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Great with – Spicy food</li> <li>▪ Why? – The sweetness <b>contrasts</b> with the spice to allow other subtler flavors to come through.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Semi- sweet (Medium) Modern Cider</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Great with – BBQ</li> <li>▪ Why? – The mild sweetness in the cider <b>complements</b> the molasses base of some BBQ sauce while the acidity in the cider <b>cuts</b> through the richness of the BBQ.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Dry Modern Cider</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fried Food</li> <li>▪ Why? – The carbonation will cut through the fat/grease of the fried food and leave your palate refreshed.</li> </ul>



### Highly tannic Heritage Cider (high astringency/Bitterness)

- Fatty cuts of meat (steak, duck, pork chop)
- Why? – The bitterness and acidity in the cider will help **complete** the dish by adding two components that are not there. The tannins and acid will help to cleanse the palate and make each new bite of steak taste like the first bite.



### Medium tannin Heritage Cider (medium astringency/Bitterness)

- Rich Pasta Dishes (alfredo, gnocchi)
- Why? – The tannins and the acidity in the cider will **cut** through the richness in the dish. Those same tastes (bitter, sourness from acidity) will help to **complete** the dish since most pasta dishes have fat, salt, umami, but lack acid and bitterness.



### Acid forward Heritage Cider

- Briny seafood (oysters, paella)
- Why? – the acidity in the cider will **contrast** against the saltiness of the seafood and allow other flavors to shine through. It can also **complement** some of the sweetness that is found in certain types of seafood.



### “Berry” Fruit Cider

- Marinated Roasts
- Why? – These ciders tend to **complement** well with the marinates on the roasts. The cider can even be used to cook with. Additionally, most of these roasts lack sweetness, and the fruit cider will help to **complete** the dish.



### “Citrus” Fruit Cider

- Fish
- Why? – most fish dishes are served with a slice of lemon to squeeze on top, the citrus in the fruit cider will **complement** that fresh lemon.



### “Stone” Fruit Cider

- Salads
- Why? – there are many types of salads that incorporate stone fruit in them, and this type of cider will **complement** well with that. Salads can also be topped with blue or goat cheese, and the fruit cider can help to **cut** through the richness of the cheese.



### Hopped Cider

- Tacos
- Why? – Hopped ciders have big hop aromas, and these citrus, floral, piney hop notes will **complement** the flavors in most tacos perfectly. Most tacos have a squeeze of lime on them that will tie the cider in.



### Spiced Cider

- Cakes/Breads/Pies
- Why? – Spiced cider can pair with so many different dishes depending on the spice used in the cider. However, most of the spices used in spiced ciders will complement with the baking spices used in many baked goods.



### Wood- Aged Cider

- Grilled Meats and Veggies
- Why? – The toasted wood character in the cider as well as the complex tannins and slight vanilla notes will **complement** well with the caramelization that takes place while grilling.



### Sour Cider

- Sweet Desserts
- Why? – The purposeful addition of souring bacteria into a cider gives the resulting cider a delightful sour taste that **contrasts** perfectly with the sweetness in most desserts. For a deeper pairing, pair with a sweet dessert that has some sort of fruit component in it that will allow the acidity in the fruit and the sourness of the cider to **complement** as well.



### Ice Cider

- Blue Cheese
- Why? – This is a true example of **matching intensities**. These two intense flavors will elevate each other for a truly amazing experience. The sweetness in the ice cider and the rich milk fat in the blue cheese **contrast** each other and bring many more nuanced flavors to the forefront.