



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 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 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 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.