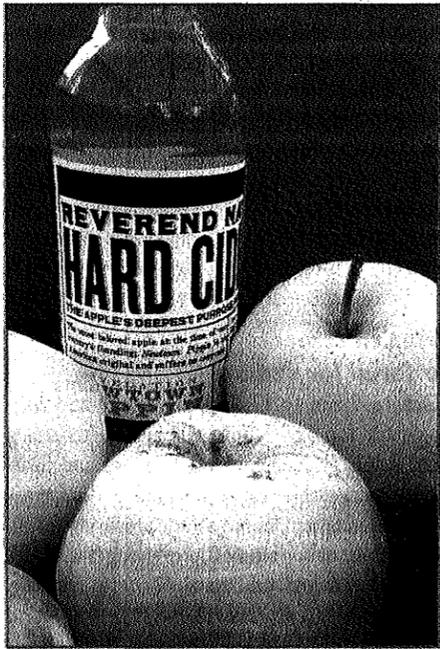


Hard cider booms in the Pacific Northwest

By Shelley Stearns, volunteer, Hollywood Farmers Market



Reverend Nat's Hard Cider makes summer and winter seasonals. — Photo courtesy of Hollywood Farmers Market

Portland residents consume more cider than residents of any other city in the United States and, according to Nat West of Reverend Nat's Hard Cider, we are uniquely positioned to produce it.

The Pacific Northwest's climate and existing infrastructure create an optimal environment in which the industry can flourish. Apple storage here is so advanced that Reverend Nat's has access to quality apples year round. And, due to the success of local craft beer, there is already an existing customer base willing and excited to sample and purchase the end product.

Certainly however, creativity and persistence will sustain the industry; its future depends on cider makers like Nat, orchardists like Randy Kiyokawa and government attention to fairness in legislation.

On August 2, 2013, Oregon's Congressman Earl Blumenauer and New York's Congressman Chris Collins introduced the bipartisan bill HR 2921: Cider Industry Deserves Equal Regulation (CIDER) Act. Congress has not yet voted on the bill.

Reverend Nat: Dissecting the alchemy of the apple

With more than 200 accounts in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and British Columbia, Reverend Nat's Hard Cider is the sixth largest cidery in the Northwest, the fifth largest in Oregon and the largest in Portland — all accomplished in fourteen months.

Amazingly, Nat says, "The first hard cider that I tasted was my own."

Nat started making cider because a friend had a big apple tree. He loved juice so he constructed an apple press. Soon, though, due to sheer volume, it became obvious that he needed to ferment in order to preserve it. After eight years of making cider privately, Nat began to sell it commercially.

If your experience with hard cider is limited, Nat's will probably surprise you. It is likely to be more complex and tart than you

expect. Nat only makes dry and off-dry ciders. He uses beer yeast and a host of other ingredients, such as quinine, ginger, hibiscus and fresh squeezed lemon. "We kinda beat you over the head with the flavors and make it explode in your mouth," he says.

His company makes summer and winter seasonals, limited releases and experimental brews. In his tasting room, some ciders on draft may never see a bottle. Look for the winter seasonal cider at his cidery, at 1813 N.E. 2nd Ave., starting October 1st.

Randy Kiyokawa: Planting cider trees by the thousand

Nat says Randy Kiyokawa of Kiyokawa Family Orchards is "the perfect kind of farmer for what the cider industry needs."

Randy is the kind of guy who's willing to pull out trees that are guaranteed to sell in order to experiment with varieties such as Kingston Black, an apple used specifically in cider making. He thrives on the newness and the challenge. "The hard cider industry is exciting," he says. "I'm kind of like an artist that has a blank canvas. I can't wait to see more varieties."

Kiyokawa Family Orchards will plant 3,000 cider apple trees next year and 4,000 the year after. It will be three or four years before these will produce, and you won't see the fruit at the Hollywood Farmers Market. With a bitter-sharp flavor profile, these aren't sold for eating. Amateur cider makers, though, would be able to put in a special order with Kiyokawa and pick them up at the Market. Kiyokawa's apples at the Hollywood Farmers Market are not washed, waxed or passed through a sorting line. Randy currently uses synthetic fertilizers, but only organic insecticides and his horticultural practices follow organic standards.

In return, Market goers do not demand the 100-percent, blemish-free specimens that packinghouses require. That provides a financial benefit for consumers and farmers alike. Kiyokawa's direct marketing has evolved to be a huge part of their operation. "It's the most exciting part too," Randy says. "I'm small enough to where I can be nimble enough to make changes."

Kiyokawa Family Orchards has long relied on the hard work and dedication of its

employees. "I have a good crew," Randy says. "Some of them have been with me 35 to 38 years."

Many workers began as single men working migrant jobs. The orchard now has enough work that employees, many of whom have families, can work consistently and not be without work during any season. With input from some of his employees and a desire to help them become more self-sufficient, Randy is working to minimize the labor camp mentality and help people integrate into the local community.

At Hollywood Farmers Market, Kiyokawa sells apples, pears, peaches and nectarines, but you can find many other fruit at his orchard, in Parkdale, Oregon. He started the first U-pick in his region in 1997. Visit his website, mthoodfruit.com, to see what is currently available.

Some Reverend Nat ciders made with Kiyokawa apples

Reverend Nat's Hibiscus Hymnal, this year's summer seasonal, is made purely from Kiyokawa apples. It blends more than 50 American varieties with raspberries, dried hibiscus flowers and oak chips. It is refreshing and decidedly tart and will make the space between your front lip and upper gums feel subtly alive.

Deliverance Ginger Tonic is a slight twist on Nat's Deliverance Ginger, offering a full sensory experience. The ginger encompasses your nostrils and, once in the mouth, stays ever present while other ingredients take hold. Lemongrass, lime juice and quinine draw sensation to the back of the throat then return it to the tip of the tongue and back again with energy and grace.

Nat's Kingston Black won't be on the market for a while, but it's worth mentioning. This creation won a silver medal in the English Cider division at the 2013 Michigan Gint Cap. It is not carbonated, not refrigerated and has a taste that is simultaneously sour and unobtrusive. Nat continues to surprise with product that is as equally exciting as it is comforting and Kiyokawa apples support this vision.

Congressman Blumenauer's HR 2921: The Cider Act

According to U.S. law, hard cider is classified a fruit wine, narrowly defined as "apples or apple juice concentrate reconstituted with water and yeast." Nothing else is allowed in the product. By law, cider must be below 7 percent alcohol and have such low carbonation levels that most people would consider it noncarbonated. If cider falls outside of these guidelines, it is supposed to be taxed as a sparkling wine. That's \$3.40 per gallon versus \$.22 cents per gallon.

Despite this restrictive definition, Nat says that "what's happening in practice is that cider makers are putting anything they want in there, and as high alcohol as they want and as much carbonation as consumers want," even if this puts them out of compliance with the legal definition.

To make matters worse, auditors disagree with how the legislation should be interpreted. This means that cidery owners never know what to expect during their next inspection and, in fact, don't really know what is legal. One local cidery owes back taxes on all of its bottles to date because auditors found one batch to be slightly above the allowed carbonation levels for a still rather than a sparkling wine.

On August 2, 2013, Oregon's Congressman Earl Blumenauer and New York's Congressman Chris Collins introduced the bipartisan bill HR 2921: Cider Industry Deserves Equal Regulation (CIDER) Act. HR 2921 aims to bring regulations in line with practice while avoiding unfair taxation and unpredictability in interpretation of the law. You can find out more about HR2921 at Congressman Blumenauer's website or contact his staffers David Skillman, (202) 225-4811 or Ree Armitage, (503) 231-2300, to voice your opinion on the legislation or other agricultural-related issues.

The Hollywood Farmers Market is located on Northeast Hancock Street between 44th and 45th avenues, one block south of Sandy Boulevard. It is open every Saturday from May through Thanksgiving and the first and third Saturdays from December through April. Market hours are 8 a.m.-1 p.m. from May to October and 9 a.m.-1 p.m. from November to April. Dogs are welcome in the market after 10 a.m. For more information, visit hollywoodfarmersmarket.org.

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