



Cider Cocktails: A History and Principles

United States Association of Cider Makers

Written by Darlene Hayes

History of cider cocktails

Cider has been used in mixed drinks for many hundreds of years. One of the earliest examples is a mixture of cider and rum called the Stone Fence that was enjoyed by colonists in New England even before the American Revolution. As the availability of other distilled spirits rose in the new United States, a version of the Stone Fence would be made with whatever spirit was popular in a particular area such as rye, bourbon or apple brandy. Pre-Prohibition cocktail manuals such as *How to Mix Drinks or the Bon Vivant's Companion* by bartender Jerry Thomas (1862), have any number of recipes that include cider. Many are available digitally and can be the inspiration for modern interpretations.

Why cider cocktails?

A cider cocktail program can have any number of benefits for a restaurant or bar. Cocktails that include cider are, for example, an innovative and imaginative way to connect with customers and extend cider sales. It is especially cost effective to use a cider that is on draft. Cider cocktails can also work in an establishment that is only licensed to sell wine and beer since low ABV cocktails, which are becoming more popular in their own right, can be made with creative mixes of cider and various types of vermouth, which is defined as a wine under the liquor laws of many states, and other non-spirits ingredients.

There are a few general principles to keep in mind when crafting a cider cocktail.

- (1) **Tonic/Soda Replacement** Cider can successfully step in for other sparkling liquids in well-known mixed drinks such as a Gin and Tonic or Moscow Mule. It is an easy way to build a cocktail that will already have some amount of familiarity with the customer, and the addition of a cider in place of a neutral mixer will dilute the heat of the spirits while simultaneously augmenting the cocktail's overall flavor.
- (2) **Mixer Replacement** The concept of replacement can extend to other sorts of mixers. A botanical-infused sour cider, for example, can stand in for a sour mix, providing a more complex sour element and brightening a cocktail's overall profile. An ice cider can add more depth than just using a simple syrup when a sweet element is called for.
- (3) **Develop from a Flavor Mood** When developing a cocktail from scratch it can be helpful to start with an overall concept and work out from there. Start with a cider that will set a flavor mood. For example, a pineapple fruit cider calls up images of the tropics and rum but could work equally well with a less obvious smoky mezcal. Keep in mind that using a pineapple fruit cider won't be the equivalent of pineapple juice itself as the cider will probably have a different overall sweet/acid balance and body. One can play with these differences by the addition of a sweet element, honey perhaps, and maybe some citrus. In the end, the right mix will be dictated by the mixologist's individual palette and can be as straightforward or complex as fits a particular establishment's needs.