

## FOOD AND FARMING AWARDS

# Cider with Andy

When life handed Andy Hallett apples, he turned them into traditional craft cider and created an award-winning business

interview CLARE HARGREAVES *recipe* ANDY HALLETT

**M**aking alcoholic drinks had always been a hobby for engineer Andy Hallett. But when he bought a 25-acre farm in Caerphilly in South Wales 17 years ago, he decided to turn his passion for cider-making into a business.

'Shortly after I moved to the farm, a friend turned up with some cider apples and said, "Let's make cider". He had a crushing machine, so we made a press, found some plastic buckets and gave it a go. The cider turned out all right. The next year, I decided to do it again, and things went on from there.'

At first, Andy bought apples from a farmer in Usk. But in 2009 he planted 1,200 trees, including 200 of the Welsh cider apple variety Frederick. He now mostly uses his own apples to make up to 70,000 litres of cider a year.

His main product is a sparkling bottled cider, which combines traditionally fermented juice from Dabinett apples with juice from new-season fruit. He uses keeving – an ancient French method – to produce a naturally sweet cider that is used to balance the final drink. The cider is matured for a minimum of three months, then bottled.

Andy also produces draught and keg cider, as well as perry (made from pears). 'As with wine, the flavours and textures are different each year,' he says. 'It depends on the weather, which affects the sugar level of the apples. The skill is in blending them to ensure we get the perfect combination for that particular year.'

His technique certainly impressed the judges at this year's BBC Food and Farming Awards, where he won the Best Drinks Producer category. 'Andy's approach to cider-making is unlike any I have encountered before,' said Jack Adair Bevan, from The Ethicurean restaurant in Bristol. 'It is more akin to winemaking, resulting in a drink that is complex without losing sight of its homegrown apples.'

Wine writer Fiona Beckett, his fellow judge, added: 'Andy produces modern, clean ciders that have the most amazing flavours. We should be proud of cider in the same way as we are of beer and – to a lesser extent nowadays – of wine. Cider is one of Britain's great drinks.'

[hallettsrealcider.co.uk](http://hallettsrealcider.co.uk)



### Faggots with spring onion mash & cider jus

**SERVES 4** **PREP** 50 mins **COOK** 45 mins  
**MORE EFFORT**

#### For the faggots

300g pig's liver  
300g pork belly, skin removed  
100g fresh breadcrumbs or oats  
small handful fresh sage, thyme or marjoram, finely chopped  
½ tsp ground cumin  
8 slices black pudding, about 1cm thick  
8 slices thin-cut smoked streaky bacon, stretched with the back of a knife to make them as long as possible  
oil, for greasing

#### For the mash

1kg Maris Piper potatoes, cut into chunks  
8 spring onions, trimmed and thinly sliced  
80g salted butter  
50-60ml milk

#### For the cider jus

200ml chicken or vegetable stock  
300ml sweet cider  
1 tbsp light soft brown sugar

- 1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Blitz the liver and pork belly a few times in a food processor or chop very finely with a knife to make a coarse mince. Transfer to a bowl, add the breadcrumbs, herbs, cumin and seasoning, then mix together with your hands. Divide into eight balls and slightly flatten each one so it will sit nicely on the black pudding.
- 2 Put a flattened ball on each slice of black pudding, then wrap a piece of bacon around the circumference (push a cocktail stick into each to prevent it unwrapping). Using a palette knife, lift each faggot onto a lightly oiled, flameproof, shallow roasting tin and cover loosely with foil. Bake for 15 mins, then remove the foil and cook for a further 15 mins.
- 3 Meanwhile, boil the potatoes for 20 mins until a knife can be pushed in easily, then drain and mash. Fry the spring onions in the butter over a medium heat until slightly softened, then mix into the mash along with the milk and season.
- 4 Transfer the faggots to warm plates and remove the cocktail sticks. Put the tin over a medium heat and pour in the stock, reduce by about half, then add in the cider and sugar, and reduce by half again. Strain the jus through a sieve into a jug, then pour over the faggots and mash.

**GOOD TO KNOW** folate • vit c • iron  
**PER SERVING** 1,060 kJ • fat 58g • saturates 25g • carbs 77g • sugars 11g • fibre 5g • protein 50g • salt 3.6g

Portrait: DAVID COTSWORTH | Recipe photograph: CLARE WINFIELD | Food styling: ELLIE JARVIS | Styling: WEI TANG

