

# Ciderology with Gabe Cook

## Ologies Podcast

### September 15, 2021

Oh, hi. It's the crusty plant you never suspected would thrive, Alie Ward. I'm here. I'm here with you. I'm here with us. Let us ologize.

It's September. It's the time of year when people in Los Angeles pray for a day that dips into the 60s so we can wear a scarf and drive 90 minutes to find an orchard to pretend fall exists. I know, I've done it, I've cried looking at gourds. So, we're getting into the beverage that is the apple of our eyes: Cider. What is it?? How old is it? Which ones are delicious, heavenly nectar, and which ones taste like butts? We have answers for you.

This guest is the leading cider expert on planet Earth, and he calls himself, like, accurately, The Ciderologist. He has had his hands in or around cider for over 15 years, having brewed, and judged, and championed, and even taught cider courses at the Beer and Cider Academy of London. He has authored two books on the topic: the 2018 debut, *Ciderology: From History and Heritage to the Craft Cider Revolution*, and just released a week ago, a follow up called *Modern British Cider*. He also co-hosts a cider podcast! *Neutral Cider Hotel*. And he is lovely, and passionate about cider, and speaks of it with such mustachioed enthusiasm.

But before we meet him, you can be a Patron, just FYI, at [Patreon.com/Ologies](https://Patreon.com/Ologies). A buck a month lets you submit questions to experts like this. For no money, you can rate us on your podcast app, if you don't mind. And for my undying affection, you can leave a review because I read all of them. And I prove it with a just-juiced, foaming, freshie. This week, thank you to Mohope16, who wrote:

*Recently I needed to hire an employee. My favorite ending interview question is, "What are you a nerd about?" One of the candidates began listing topics of the most recent episodes, and I asked them if they listen to Ologies, and they said it's their favorite podcast! That's all I needed to know in order to hire them.*

Whoa! Mohope16! I hope you start Merch Mondays at the office. [OlogiesMerch.com](https://OlogiesMerch.com).

Okay, Ciderology. Cider comes from the Hebrew *šēkār*, for 'strong drink'. And this ologist is *the* guy when you google cider expert. He's the dude. His mustache and his book come up, and he will happily talk to you about cider for as long as you want, which is why this interview was, like, pulling up to a picnic table with an old friend I had just never met.

So please, belly up and prepare for a crisp cup of appley knowledge, from the history of cider, how wars impacted cider demand, dipping babies into booze, franken-trees, glass vessels, what made Queen Elizabeth scowl at him, how to DIY cider, plenty of flimflam, and the best cider we've ever sipped, with *Ciderology* author, podcaster, and beloved international Ciderologist, Gabe Cook.

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**Alie:** Hi!! Hello!! How are you?

**Gabe:** I am very well. Thanks, Alie. How's it going with you?

**Alie:** You sound great! It's almost as if you have your own podcast or something.

**Gabe:** It's almost as if I've invested in a modest-priced mic.

**Alie:** What a professional! You're making my job too easy. Hardest question I'm going to ask: Can you say your first and last name and then also whatever pronouns you use?

**Gabe:** Yes. My name is Gabe Cook and I am he/him.

**Alie:** Cool beans. And you're a ciderologist.

**Gabe:** I am *the* ciderologist.

**Alie:** [*laughs*] Ho-ho! I didn't realize the article was so definitive!

**Gabe:** Thank you very much.

**Alie:** How long have you been *The Ciderologist*?

**Gabe:** As a full-time profession, a little over four years.

**Alie:** I imagine that you were a very enthusiastic dilettante before that, right?

**Gabe:** I was. I was using 'ciderologist' as my email address for about... since, I think, about 2008 or something like that. So, the idea and the concept of the 'ologist of cider' had been around for a while, but it took a while for it to become fully fledged and for it to actually become a career, as it were. The *Ciderologist* is my company, my brand name; it's trademarked in Europe. Get your hands off. Nobody has tested it. That was a waste of 250 quid, wasn't it?

My role within the cider industry is to be a vocal champion because, you know, cider doesn't always get the love, or the appreciation, or the awareness of other drinks.

**Alie:** Agreed!

**Gabe:** There's entire industries based around the specialized knowledge and serving of beer and wine. We've got sommeliers, we've got fantastic servers, we've got critics, we've got writers. I am, to my knowledge, the world's only full-time, independent cider advocate.

**Aside:** Just for context, I'm Team Cider all the way. I have been since I turned of cider-sipping age, which is a debatable age, as you will find out later in the episode. But despite our 2018 episode on Zymology, which is the science of beer brewing, I have finished exactly one beer in my whole life, and I did not like it. I don't like beer! I'm sorry. I would be happy to appear on a debate team or a mock trial tournament representing cider. Fight me. I'm ready.

**Gabe:** Cider sits in this really interesting and unique space. First of all, you make cider like you make a wine. You do not brew cider. Brewing is the application of heat to extract something, normally like sugars or these characters. That's why you brew beer, it's why you brew tea and coffee, etc. You make cider like you're making wine. This is taking a fruit, in this case, apples rather than grapes, you're squeezing them, you're extracting the juice, which is sugar-rich, really, really easily, readily fermentable sugars; yeasts, whether they be wild yeasts or introduced yeasts, convert that sugar into alcohol.

So, in the same way that the selection of the apple variety, the yeast strain, the vessel that you ferment in, how long you mature it, under what conditions you undertake, all those processes, that is what is going to give you this unique range of different flavors and styles of cider that can exist. But the fact is that, over the course of the last, sort of, 50-60 years, cider has been predominantly tweaked, and made, and certainly packaged and presented, considering, more like a beer. The average alcohol content is closer to your average beer, whatever that is, than an average wine. It's normally carbonated, it comes on tap, you can have it on tap, you can have it as a pint, it comes as a single-serve bottle or can. These are all cues very readily associated with beer. But it is its own unique, wonderful, and amazing drink.

And it's got so many awesome things going for it. [*“Such as?”*] Firstly, it's naturally gluten-free, so anybody who's off the gluten as a lifestyle choice or because it's really beneficial for their health, it's naturally gluten-free. Unlike a considerable proportion of beers and wines out there, which use animal-based fining agents in order to reduce... take out clarity and certain phenolic and other characteristics, cider is very, very easily clarified. There's no need for those fining agents. So, almost to a T, it would be vegan friendly as well.

**Aside:** Wait, the stuff they use to clarify beer isn't vegan?? I looked this up, and apparently fining agents can include – you ready for this? – egg whites, milk, desiccated fish bladders, and blood. Bottoms up! Perhaps that's a big *decider* for vegans. (Ha!)

**Gabe:** It's just this most amazing drink. There is, I say, Alie, a cider for everybody. And it's just trying to get people knowledgeable and enthused about it.

... Hello? I've lost you.

**Aside:** Yes, a leprechaun put a curse on me via a loose mic cable. So, in the lull, Gabe, ciderologist, cracked open a cold one [*opening a can of cider*] as I sorted out my tech diffs. Dude is truly living his best life! Get ready for some ASMR.

**Gabe:** [*liquid pouring into a glass and filling it up; bubbles percolating to the top*] Now that's a good sound, right? Come on. That's awesome. And you know what? I'm going to have a sip. [*drinking/gulping*] Aahh... That's good.

**Alie:** I think I have a loose cable.

**Gabe:** You know, even the microphone is overwhelmed by the awesome power of the cider, you see? Who knew that ciderology was so powerful! Fantastic.

**Aside:** Okay, mic cable, fixed. On we go.

To recap, cider is wine. The legal definition of wine is “Any alcoholic beverage obtained by the fermentation of the natural sugar content of fruits or other agricultural products, like honey.” I repeat: Cider is wine. Cider is wine! It's a type of wine, really.

But Gabe had mentioned that he hails from a part of the UK that has a rich and bubbly cider history, and geographically, cider is cool because it tends to be very location-based like wines. Whereas beers can have hops and grain from all over the damn world.

Also, did he intend to make this a beer versus cider episode? No. But that's just my transparent, pro-cider agenda seeping through. What? I love cider. Cider deserves more love.

**Gabe:** And another really crucial aspect, from a sustainability point of view, is that the way that you're making cider, it doesn't... in its most basic form, like the fantastic cider that I'm drinking, and ciders that I make, and ciders I've been involved with, and ciders I champion, you get apples, you squeeze them, it ferments. [*“That's it?” “That's it!”*] Unlike the brewing process where a huge amount of energy is needed to heat this liquid to get, you know, the enzyme change for the sugars, and then obviously when you're boiling it as well. And if you're making a lager, you then need to chill it right down as well. There's a lot of energy.

And this is an important thing for, you know, consumers, increasingly, today. And then when it comes to the orchards, these magical, magical places. Even if they are, really, kind of commercial orchards, they are still considerably better land uses than monocultures of wheat or maize. They support biodiversity. They are sucking carbon and locking it into the ground. They're fantastic places for people to socialize as well, whether that be for walking

the dog, or going for a run, or just a bit of mindfulness, and peacefulness, and tranquility, learning new skills, community cohesion. There's just so much. It's just lush.

**Alie:** Oh my god. I was just prepared to, like, shit-talk beer because it tastes bad, but you're like... No, those are really valid points. Those are really good points.

**Gabe:** See, cider... If we're being really, really stereotypical here, you could say that the attitude... Spirits, and let's say whiskey, have become a thing that's very, sort of, gentrified; sits in a wingback chair. And wine comes in, elegant and kind of fun. And beer's, like, cool and brash. Cider, we're just the nice people in the corner. Actually, often quite shy.

It's like, "YEAH! I'M BEER!" And it's like, [*meekly*] "Hi... I'm cider. Yeah." And it's because it does sit at this slightly... not lost or forgotten drink. But you know, it's just not as broadly understood. So, cider's general way – or maybe it's just my way – is that you don't need to bad talk those other drinks. [*Alie laughs*] I like beer. I used to make wine in New Zealand. They're really, really cool drinks.

It's just giving cider this platform that it can be an absolute equal to any of those drinks. All of the character. All of the attitude. All of the elegance. All of the finesse. Trying to get past a UK point of view, a lot of old stereotypes which are generally quite negative, are associated with cider for various reasons. On your side of the pond, it's more a case of, "Okay, what is cider?" Or the confusion between unfermented, fresh-pressed farm juice; the cider versus the hard cider, but hard is... The US is the only nation in the world that uses the prefix of 'hard', so that...

**Alie:** Really?

**Gabe:** Yeah. It's all a prohibition thing.

**Alie:** Oh! I didn't know that.

**Gabe:** There is a very, very long history of cider associated with the USA, and it generally... It comes with founding fathers, which isn't necessarily something that is always as boldly celebrated as it might've been once before. But it is a fact that cider really was the first commercial drink of the new colony within the far northeast of the US. Huge amounts of cider was made in Connecticut, in Maine, and in Vermont, and in New York and Pennsylvania. Lots of cider was made. And it was only, really, with the big wave and the end of the 18th century and into the 19th century of Czech and German immigrants that beer really started to come in and gain a real stronghold all across the States.

And when prohibition came in in 1920, unlike beer and, like, moonshine went underground and hid in sheds and things like that, it's quite hard to hide an orchard. So they got burnt. A lot of them got chopped or burnt down, and those that were left were eating apples because, you know, those apples that were being grown then, like the apples that are grown in the western parts of England, northern parts of France, and northern parts of Spain, would be called 'cider apples' by people in those areas. These are varieties grown specifically for the sole purpose of making cider and have been done so for hundreds of years. So they got rid of all those.

What was left were the eating apples, which a bit of juice was made from. So, the term cider got appropriated to mean that fresh-pressed juice. So when prohibition came to an end in the '30s, and booze and fermented cider was allowed, they needed a new name, so they added the prefix of 'hard' in hard cider, and that's how that has come to pass. But nowhere else in the world needed or had the cultural heritage as to why that was a necessity.

**Aside:** So yes, if you clicked on this episode and thought that it would be all about Martinelli's, or cloudy apple juice from the farmer's market, blame prohibition! Not me.

Now, in the 1800s, cider was the most popular beverage in the US. The century before that? 1700s? People in the colonies drank, on average, a barrel a year, each. So, that's a pint a day for everyone. Everyone had a pint a day.

Really quick, let's have a rundown of types of cider. There's farmhouse cider, which is pretty much what you could make if you were stranded on an island with just apples and jars. It's fermented juice, pretty dry because the yeast has gobbled up all the sugars, and it's not super sparkly. Now, you can make a farmhouse cider with nothing but raw apple juice and about a week or two's worth of patience, and a lot of thirst.

Draft cider is what you're used to seeing on restaurant menus. It's clear, maybe cut with juice to lower a high-alcohol content. It's sweet, it's sparkly. It's kind of like a soda pop. And then there's French *cidre*, which is a little more complex and it involves a process called keiving, which we're going to get into in a bit. It has a low alcohol content and you drink it out of a beret. (That's not true.)

But let's back up.

**Alie:** What about before that? Had cider or, you know, fermented apple juice existed long, long before that? I mean, is it called cider if an apple just rots on the ground and it's kind of boozy? At what point did we start understanding what cider was?

**Gabe:** It's an interesting one. You know, apples as we know them for eating, and making cider, and cooking, and all those kinds of things, the ancestor of that can be traced back to the Tian Shan Mountain range, which sits to the northwest of the Himalayas on the Chinese-Kazakh-Kurdistan border. At the end of the last Ice Age, 10,000 years ago, in these valleys in the foothills of these incredible mountains, you had then the last refuges of these wild apple forests. Which, when the Ice Age came to an end and everything got a little bit warmer, they started to flourish and grow a little bit. But it also coincided with humans also flourishing, and growing and, you know, undertaking this amazing trans-continental journey from the East to the West along the Silk Road.

So, people and animals started to pick up these apples and take them along the way. They'd eat, and they'd poop, and pits would go on the ground, and apples started to get taken west. And it underwent this amazing, sort of, genetic diversity journey along the way; because if you plant the pip of an apple... Let's say... What's your favorite eating apple, Alie?

**Alie:** Oh my gosh. I would probably... I'm going to go Granny Smith. I'm going to go super tart. [*"Don't judge me."*] Yeah.

**Gabe:** Yeah, lovely, lovely, lovely and crisp. Lovely and zingy. Awesome. If you planted a pip from a Granny Smith into the ground, the apple variety that will pop up will be guaranteed to *not* be Granny Smith.

**Alie:** R- Okay, so this is grafting? Is this the magic of grafting?

**Gabe:** Exactly. It is. Imagine that you've got the mother tree. That Granny Smith tree gives that fruit and it's got the pip inside. But they're not self-fertile. In order to be able to produce that fruit, you have to have pollen from another variety, often brought over by pollinating insects like the wonderful bees; that's why we love bees very, very much. They bring over the pollen on their legs that pollinates the blossom, and that turns into the apple. The pip

inside has got the genetics, the DNA, of both the mother tree, that Granny Smith, and whatever pollinated it. It won't be the variety that you've got.

So this, obviously, is a little bit of a problem if you really like Granny Smith and you want to continue. This is when the Mesopotamians, circa three-something-thousand years ago somehow worked out that if you snip the end off a growing tip and, you know, fuse it onto something that's already into the ground, they will hold, and it will take, and you can have one tree, two different varieties. Your intended variety at the top and the rootstock at the bottom.

**Aside:** Can you imagine if you were like, "Wow, I really like my kid... but who knows what the hell kind of grandkids I might have?" so then you just hacked off their limb and sewed it onto another body? Some apple rootstock trees straight-up get the chop mid-trunk, and then they get a new head grafted on! Which, if that's not horticultural gore fit for spooky season, I don't know what the hell is!

**Gabe:** The idea of cultivating apples has been around for a long time, but the evidence of actually making cider, probably about 2,000 years old. There's first talks in the Greek literature, in the Roman literature, about references to cider making, or the 'wine of apples and pears,' things like that. Whereas wine... very strong evidence of that being made considerably further back. The primary difference is around the structure of grapes and apples. Thinking about grapes, they're lovely, and small, lovely and soft, and you want to extract the juice, and you could literally do that by treading them underfoot. Lots of people still do that today. *[squishy splat]*

You try treading some apples and you're going to get some fairly bruised feet quite quickly, aren't you? It's this really strong cell structure. What cider still needs today... It's a two-step process. You don't just press apples. You have to mill the apples first.

*["This mill can do the same amount of work that took many nights with my juicer in simply a matter of hours. The crusher works by spinning tines that grab the apples and mash them through a set of blades."]*

And then you've got to press them. So, this extra bit of technology that's needed to turn these solid apples into something mushy enough that you could then easily extract the juice from, that didn't really come around until, sort of, olive-milling technology was also developed around, about, 2,000 years ago and shared into that Mediterranean area around that time.

**Aside:** Just a side note; I looked it up. Milling is just crushing up the apples any which way you can. People do this with various levels of force. Some just smash apples with mallets in what looks like a wooden bathtub, or you can beat apples with a stone wheel dragged by a horse, or a donkey, or something. There's also mechanical mills; they chew the apples into a really fine pulp. And then all that apple mash has to be squeezed until it cries delicious juice. Sometimes that's done in sacks. It used to be strained through a straw. (No thank you.)

Now, what happens to that giant cake of compressed apple pulp? What do you do with it?! Can you sit on it like a cushion? Maybe. That's not my business. But it gets fed to livestock, you can also do a second wash and make a really weak cider with it. It's called apple mash, but it's also called – according to our friend Werkerpedia – cake, math, pows, mure, or pomage. Who knew cider making came with such a big, frothy mug o' slang? Not me.

But back to history. Cider's been around for centuries because yeast and sugar are like, "Please, let us do our thing. If you just leave us alone for a bit, we'll get you drunk." Written

history through the ages is kind of spotty, but there's evidence that Charlemagne was into orcharding, as a verb. And by Charlemagne, I mean the King of the Franks in the Dark Ages, not *The Breakfast Club* radio host Charlamagne tha God, who was born Lenard McKelvey, and from what I can tell, he does not mill cider apples. ["*You gotta break it in pieces, bro.*" "*Why?? It's just a fruit??*"]

Okay, back to history:

**Gabe:** It seems that the first records of making cider come from the 1100s, but it's really not until, like, the 1500s and especially the 1600s when cider reaches its zenith in the UK as a drink that is heralded as being equal to wine and is drunk with the aristocracy and indeed at the table of kings and queens.

**Alie:** What happened in the 1600s? Did someone have a TikTok go viral?

**Gabe:** [*laughs*] Well, sadly, not as entertaining as that. It comes down to something that is ever prevalent, which is war. Britain being pretty strong warmongers at the time, fighting with Europe for, basically, a millennium. And yeah, in the early part of the 17th century, Britain was at war with large parts of Europe and it prevented the importation of wine into the UK. And the aristocracy got very thirsty and a little bit agitated that they couldn't have their fine wine, so there was a bit of a movement amongst these... they were called the Ciderists, and these were people of prominence within society, whether they be landowners, MPs, scientists, clergy... knowledgeable people with money and power, basically.

They identified that cider could be our native wine, effectively. Which it kind of is, if you think about it as being something that you make like a wine. And that coincided with a chap called Lord Scudamore. He identified a particular variety that was growing on his estate; it produced an apple and a cider that was just gorgeous. Really intense and it was a really precocious tree, and it was amazing, and it was called the Herefordshire Redstreak.

And also, at the same time, what was happening was there was a chap not too many miles away on the banks of the River Severn and the Forest of Dean, and he was into glass furnaces and making glass. He was interested in making strengthened glasses. His name was Sir Kenelm Digby. He was using these extra hot furnaces by using charcoal, burning really hot, and he was making these bottles that were really thick and really strong. So strong, in fact, that you could put some of this amazing, new cider that was on the scene into there. And as the record books show, adding a walnut's worth of sugar into it, putting a lid on the top, and then putting it somewhere nice and cool, in the cellar, burying it into sand, even into little streams running through the estate.

Basically, what was happening was a secondary fermentation in the bottle. We are talking about the first step of the *Méthode Traditionnelle*. The champagne method. Crucially, this paper was presented to the Royal Society on the 10th of December 1662. And this is about seven years before Dom Pérignon, who is thought to be the creator, the godfather of mastering the champagne process... before he had even started his work at the winery. So, what I'm basically saying is that it shouldn't be called the champagne method. It should be called The English Method. Come on, England!

**Alie:** [*laughs delightedly*] And so, that secondary fermentation is that you've already got a little bit of alcohol in the cider, and then it kind of double ferments, and that's what causes the effervescence and the higher alcohol?

**Gabe:** That's right. You've undertaken one fermentation in a tank, a barrel. You've placed it into a bottle. You've then added some extra sugar, and there will still be some yeast, you know,

live yeast, within that cider. Today's there's people who are making *Méthode Traditionnelle* style ciders, or indeed those wines, but add some yeast back as well with the sugar and maybe even some nutrients to ensure that, yes, there is indeed a second fermentation in that bottle.

But of course, carbon dioxide is the byproduct of fermentation. Sugar gets converted by yeast into alcohol and carbon dioxide. Normally, the carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere. In this case, it gets trapped into the bottle, and that's what provides the natural sparkle. That's why you get these lovely little, small, fine bubbles; this fine moose. It gets trapped in there. And depending upon how you're making it, you can have either just a light effervescence or you can actually create quite a strong pressure in there, which is why you need that cork and that wire to hold the liquid in. [*cork popping*]

**Alie:** What is the best glass, or bowl, or cup of cider you've ever had in your life?

**Gabe:** Oh man, that's... That's tough. I will certainly say that I went on... it will be 19 years ago to the day almost... I grew up in this little village called Dymock. I've always got to give a shout-out to Dymock. Go Dymock! Which is in Gloucester, and it's, yeah, in this amazing, old, heartland area. And I grew up knowing that there was a cider thing around, and it was my first drink. And I tried some of the mainstream ciders, and then there's a big-ish cidemaker in the village next door called Westons, in Much Marcle, just next door. I went and tried their ciders, and visited, and really tasty.

And then my eldest brother and I, we wanted to go and visit some of the farmhouse makers; the small, traditional producers around. So we looked on the map and there was one just a few miles away. So, we went to visit. He was driving, we turned off the main road, and suddenly we're down a lane... I don't know whether you get them in the USA, but it's one of the great things about the rural areas of the UK. You've got these old lanes and trackways that have been there for a thousand years. And they're so narrow that you drive along and both wing mirrors are getting whacked by the hedge at the same time. Thwack-thwack!

And we're like, "Where the fuck ... Where are we?!" We'd just turned off the main road and we're expecting Frodo to run across the road. [*Frodo voice*] "Hello. Good morning." And suddenly there's a tiny little sign pointing to the right saying "Cider." So we follow that. We end up going up a driveway, and pulling in, and there's this big, white farmhouse. We walk up and there's a door, almost underneath the house. And there's a little chalk-written note on there that says, "Pull string for cider."

And indeed, there's a big of bailer twine, a little bit of orange string, which we duly give a bit of a yank on, and then suddenly "ding-a-ling-a-ling." The bell goes, and this very cheery, genial-looking chap pokes his head out and says, "Hello! I'll come down and serve you now." And his name is Mike. Mike Johnson, the proprietor of the Ross on Wye Cider & Perry Company. And he opens the door, and we're looking into the old cellar of this 17th-century farmhouse with giant stone flags on the ground and these barrels racked up. The smell that comes out is all sort of earthy, and musty, and it feels like it's been there forever.

And we go in, and he goes to one of the barrels, which has got a tap on it, and he gives it a pour, and he hands it to me, and goes, "Here you go. This is a dry cider. Enjoy." And I can remember the sensation of tasting that. Even if I can't quite remember the taste, the sensation of just going, "I've never tasted anything like this. I like it quite a lot. This is just fermented apple juice, and it's not just fermented apple juice. There's care; there's



attention.” You could almost taste the age, the antiquity. It was a little bit of a stars-aligning moment. I realized that cider brought together all the things that I was interested in.

I was interested in local history. Interested in wildlife. Interested in local culture. Quite enjoyed booze as well. And cider was able to bring all these things together. That was a pretty critical cider to taste, I would say.

**Alie:** Have you been back, or is it something that you want to exist only in memory?

**Gabe:** No, it was only the start. I actually ended up working there! That was what really kickstarted my cider journey. I spent the better part of nine months or so living on the farm; quite literally in a shed in the garden. And I learned the craft of making traditional Western canty style of cider and learning about these varieties. I was taught about the different characters, the acidity, tannins, the astringency, the bitterness, the mouthfeel, the texture, the fruitiness, the potential faults that could come through. This was just learnt through drinking, and talking, and sharing. An amazing and a privileged experience.

**Aside:** PS: I looked this up and I want to live there, please. It’s called Broome Farm. It’s this white brick farmhouse in rural England. It’s also set up as a bed and breakfast, so you can stay in the orchard suite or the cider suite, and, according to their website, they love visitors and they will, “Happily take you on a detailed tour of the orchards and then give you a toured cider tasting, introducing you to our enormous range of bottled cider and perry.” I’ll put a link on my website in case you want to go to heaven without having to die first.

**Gabe:** And I was camping in the orchard there three days ago, so it’s still a very important part of my life. And Mike’s son, Albert, he’s come into the business and he’s taking it on to the next step. They’re really one of the goodies. So, it’s still very much an important part of my life. And yeah, it kickstarted my career in cider. I went to work for Westons, who today are the fifth biggest producer in the UK. So, I went from making cider in 200-liter oak vats to 200,000-liter stainless steel tanks, which was terrifying, especially when... You know, when you dribble a bit down the side of the barrel, no bother. When you dribble a bit down the side of a 50-foot tank and your boss is calling you, like, “Why *is* cider spurting out of the top of this tank in a bit of a fountain fashion?” I don’t have such a good riposte to that.

But I took what I learnt from the small farm and applied it to the big scale, and it really... It set me fair. I’m really proud of the ciders that I made and what I achieved, but I did come to realize I was better at talking about cider rather than making it. So, I got a job with the world’s biggest cider maker, Bulmers, and yeah, I was their Cider Communications Manager for nigh on three years, which is really cool. I got to do awesome stuff with the local community. And the highlight was in 2012; I got to present a bottle of cider to Her Majesty the Queen. [*“Come again?”*]

**Alie:** What did you wear! Did you wear your mustache? #1

**Gabe:** It was pre-mustache, actually. I was young and clean-shaven back then. I had... I say the best suit, the *only* suit that I had. I was quite... I’m still... I’m a bit of a country bumpkin, but I was especially country bumpkin. A bit like a shaved monkey in a suit, to be fair. It’s a bit awkward. [*“Helloooo!!”*] “Hello, Your Majesty.” And somebody took some photos, very kindly. I gave them my camera. And there’s, like, two or three great photos. And I literally had about 20 seconds to present her with a special commemorative bottle of cider, and it was all linked in that it was her Diamond Jubilee, her 60 years, and it was the Bulmers 125th anniversary. And would you believe, in the year that the company was started, that was Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee as well.

And I was telling this enthralling story, and the photo of me presenting it to her... Her Majesty's face... I don't know. She looks like I've said something really offensive or, like, I've done a poo on her shoe or something like that. She's not giving me a great look. I think she said, "Thank you very much." And that was about it. So, Your Majesty, if you're listening, I really apologize. I didn't mean to offend you. I know that you're more of a vermouth and maybe a martini person. But you know, give cider a go sometime.

**Alie:** [*fake British accent*] "Give it a chance!"

**Aside:** *Of course* I found this photo, and I will confirm, she does have an expression as if she has received a poo on her shoe. But being the good little Google goblin that I am, I found another shot of their encounter, taken probably a millisecond later by the same photographer, and Her Majesty is smiling grandly. So, I am surmising that she was just listening intently. But yes, she is known to drink Bulmers cider in addition – I found this out today – she drinks Bacardi, which I hope she enjoys via room temperature shots followed by a Diet Pepsi chaser or something just equally hideous and appalling.

Speaking of shot glasses...

**Alie:** There are very specific glasses for different wines, and different martinis, and even different beers. And I've always wondered... I think some of my most memorable cider, I've had out of bowls. In France, I think, was the first time I had a good cider. It tasted like a tiger lily. I had been up all night, I'd just taken a redeye into Paris, the first and only time I've been. I had crêpes and a bowl of this really floral-tasting cider. But what is the proper vessel? How should we be drinking cider?

**Gabe:** That is a bit of a difficult one. There are some traditional vessels very closely linked to those, kind of, regional things you talked about. The *bolée*, which is very closely associated with the Brittany, especially. In the western part of Germany, in Hessen, they use a glass called a *gerippte*, which has got these, sort of, crisscrosses on them. In Asturias and in the Basque Country in Northern Spain, they use a particular kind of very broad-brimmed glasses; forgive me, I've forgotten the name. But there's really, really thin glass...

**Aside:** Just look up 'Spanish cider glass'. I think they're just called *sidra* glasses. That's Spanish for cider. And in Northern Spain, they pour the cider from over their heads down into the glass. It's like a human fountain. It does look a little like pee. But yes, elegant, wide-mouthed, thin-walled, *sidra* glasses. That's what they're called.

**Gabe:** ... for when you're doing this amazing high cider pouring, cider throwing into the glass; it's a really important cultural thing. In Britain, in certain parts, we would have the earthenware two-handled mug. Generally, the larger the better, I suspect, so you get more cider in. But cider doesn't... This is one of the challenges and potential opportunities that cider finds itself in right now. That cider hasn't had any of the lexicon, the language that wine and beer have had. Everyone knows different styles of beer; everyone can talk about IPA, or a stout, or a saison, or something like that. And in terms of wine, you all know, whether it be a particular region, Bordeaux, or a Chianti, or something like that.

**Aside:** Gabe says that in modern culture, it's common to rattle off all kinds of varieties of other beverages. And just like how different beers and wines call for different kinds of vessels, cider could use those as well. But people don't care, and they should because cider is just sitting in the corner, being chill, and cool like your friend who's so awesome but somehow single because they're shy. Everyone is sleeping on how complex and interesting cider is, and Gabe is its most charming and vocal wingman.

**Gabe:** These are all things that are entirely new, and I really hope that somebody sees an opportunity to create these kinds of cider glasses, and to do that research. Because it's just all adding to the, kind of, professionalism associated with cider and trying to get it really well known, and respected, and loved.

**Alie:** Glassmakers out there! Come on! Do it! I also love the idea of an earthenware mug. I mean, come on! But, I have also some questions about just the tech specs, right? So, what are the tech specs of cider? Does it have to be apple, or can it be pear, or raspberry, or whatever? And also, how much alcohol by volume does it have to be to be a cider, versus a pressed or fresh-squeezed apple juice you might get, you know, on a crisp fall day at an orchard?

**Gabe:** Yeah, so cider really is a drink where the alcohol is derived from the fermentation of apple juice. In terms of the fermented pear, the traditional name for that where I'm from is called perry. Or if you're in France, it would be *poiré*.

**Aside:** *Oh, très beaucoup François!*

**Gabe:** Pear cider is a term in the UK that is a synonym for perry. In the USA, that is a fermented apple drink with pear juice added as a flavoring. So, there we go. But like a fermented pear drink... could be called perry in the UK. Pear cider is used. Some people like it. Some people don't. I'm not too hung up on it. The most important thing is that you've got to have this fermented apple or potentially fermented pear. You can't ferment a raspberry and call it a raspberry cider. You can't ferment a rhubarb, or a potato, or bark and call it 'X' Cider. That isn't cider. It is one of the things that cider needs to try and protect.

There's been an incredible proliferation of flavored ciders over the course of the last 15 years in the UK, but they are fermented apple juice with the addition of flavors of other things; predominantly fruits, berries especially. Hopped ciders is definitely something that is growing in popularity, and in the US especially where it's been driven from the Pacific Northwest beer scene. You can put elderflowers and things in there too.

A lot of people are really anti-flavored cider because they don't think they're real, or proper, or it doesn't sit in an old cultural heritage. I don't hold the same opinion as people. I'm not anti-flavored cider. I'm anti-shit cider, and it's just that the majority of flavored ciders available, certainly in the UK, very broad commercially, aren't great ciders. They're just not great drinks and they don't uphold the integrity, for me, of what cider is. There are some spectacular ciders being made with the addition of other things to them in the UK and in the US. Some of the best drinks you can get. And they're fun, and they're playful, and they're creative. But the fermentation of apple juice is at the absolute heart of this.

And this, I think, goes onto your second point about what's the average alcohol content. I mean, the average alcohol content is determined by how much sugar there is within the apples in the first place, which is determined by the variety, where you are in the world, and what's happening with the weather that year as well. So, the sugar that can build up within an apple, depending upon those three factors, generally is somewhere between about 4.5% alcohol and about 8.5% alcohol. That's the broader range.

**Aside:** Okay, sidenote. The higher the alcohol, usually the drier the cider because the yeast has just gone to town eating the sugar and leaving you with alcohol as a metabolite. So, sweet cider tends to be less than 3% alcohol; there's semidry, and then there's brute, or dry, which is 4% alcohol or higher. But of course, more sugar can be added for a second fermentation or it can be made pretty strong and then diluted with more juice.

Now, what about hot spiked cider? Is that a thing? Sure. It's just called wassail, and it's a spicy, apple-but-boozy winter beverage. Also it's, not coincidentally, what you are to explain during a toast. But just don't call a cider a cider if it's not a little boozy. That's literally just apple juice. Full stop.

**Gabe:** In order for something called a non-alcoholic cider... cider is a fermented drink, so there has to be some form of fermented character in there. Low alcohol ciders are achieved normally by diluting a fully-formed cider with water and juice to take the alcohol level back down. Or you can use clever technology such as reverse osmosis or cool distillation to take away the alcohol content. But they started their life as a cider. Apple juice is a great drink, but it is juice. The sugar content and the aromatic flavors that you get from juice are something that you don't get in cider because those sugars and those characters have been converted to alcohol.

**Alie:** What, then, is apple cider vinegar? Is that apple cider that has just gone past the sippy stage, or is that a completely different beast altogether?

**Gabe:** No, you're absolutely right. It's the potential next stage of cider, I suppose. And is the logical journey that, if just completely left to its own devices, what the juice would want to do. So, you start off with unfermented juice, you've pressed it, yeast will convert those sugars into alcohol. Once that fermentation has finished, if you leave it and allow air exposure, there's all sorts of different kinds of bacteria that live all around, and one of them is called *Acetobacter*, and it converts the alcohol into acetic acid, into vinegar.

This may or may not be something that you desire, although there are some traditional parts of the southwest where, by the old farmhouse heritage, there was no great care and attention put onto these kind of drinks and they would be referred to as scrumpy; rough, raw, scratchy-at-the-back-of-your-throat kind of cider. But if you do just allow all the air to get to your cider, eventually the considerable majority of the alcohol that was in there does get converted into acetic acid, into vinegar, and it takes on a whole new life of its own. Certainly... It's a massively popular thing from having all the health benefits and how you use it within cooking and cuisine as well.

It's brilliant. I've got a Google Alert for the word cider. I like to keep up to date with what's happening in the world of cider, and what generally happens is about 500 apple cider vinegar articles come up, and then right down at the bottom will be a headline from a local newspaper, *The Southampton Chronicle*, saying, you know, "Man arrested for drinking 19 liters of cider and trying to drive tractor into football stadium," or something like that, you know? It's like, "Ah! Come on cider. You can do this."

**Alie:** [*laughs*] You definitely need a Google Alert for 'scrumpy', because there can't be too many articles with that word.

**Gabe:** I'm going to try it and I will let you know. I'll give you an update. I'll also do Ciderology and see what crops up as well.

**Alie:** Please do. I have a feeling that just you will come up for both of those things.

**Gabe:** Maybe.

**Alie:** I have so many questions from patrons. Can I lightning round you?

**Aside:** But before we strike gold with a lightning round, we will quickly give away some money to a cause of the ologist's choosing. And this week, Gabe asked that it be made to Tiny Changes Foundation. He says, "This was set up in memory of Scott Hutchison, brother

of my friend and fellow podcast host Grant who, sadly, took his life three years ago. That would mean a lot, thank you.”

Tiny Changes is a mental health charity started in memory of the Frightened Rabbit musician Scott Hutchison, and it aims to offer mental health resources and support, so we’re happy to make that donation in your name, Gabe. That donation was made possible by sponsors of the show who you may hear about now.

[Ad Break]

Okay, let’s stop milling about and press on with your questions.

**Gabe:** Let’s go.

**Alie:** Okay, we’re going to answer as many of these as possible, all right?

**Gabe:** [deep breath] I’m ready.

**Alie:** You got this? Okay. Maria Jouravleva, Catherine Gilbert, and Celia LaBonte all wanted to know: Are ice ciders or ciders made from the apple picked in winter a true thing or is it just marketing?

**Gabe:** No, it’s absolutely a true thing. It originated in Quebec in about 1988, 1989, and takes its influence from the German ice winemaking. And yeah, you take frozen fruit, or in warmer places, thankfully, like the UK, you freeze the juice. And what happens is, when you thaw the juice or when you press those frozen apples, the majority of the water component is bound up as ice crystals and you get this hyper sugar-concentrated liquid that comes off, which you then ferment up to 10, 11, 12% alcohol. But there’s still huge amounts of unfermented sugar, so it’s a really rich, viscose drink just like an ice wine, just like a dessert wine. Absolutely amazing as a digestif poured all over your chocolate pudding.

**Alie:** Ah! Okay. That’s so good to know. I will have to get some.

**Gabe:** Absolutely.

**Alie:** So, so many patrons, I will list their names in an aside...

**Aside:** Oh hey, Claire Kostecki, Bonnie, Paige, Alan Kahn, Earl of Greymalkin, Miranda Panda, Dene Dryden, Jackie Silverman, and RJ Doidge.

**Alie:** ... want to know: What is the best kind of apple to make cider from?

**Gabe:** That’s an impossible question to ask because every single apple, *every single apple*, has its own unique flavors, properties, and characteristics. The thing is to understand, what kind of flavor profile do you want? If you were going to be a winemaker, it’s like, “I really like big, chewy, tannic wines,” you should be planting Malbec or something like that. If you plant Sauvignon Blanc, you’re going to be really, really disappointed.

And it’s the same. If you want to have a lovely, fresh, and crisp cider, then make it from Granny Smith. If you want to have something that’s rich and textured, use a classic English variety like Yarlington Mill. If you want to have something that is amazingly herbal and aromatic, use a golden russet or something like that, or Newtown Pippin. These are amazing apples from the Northeast of the US. So, you kind of work backwards as to what kind of drink do I want to have, and therefore try to seek what kind of apple variety.

And makers, especially in the US, you’re ahead of the game compared to where they are in the UK. Celebrating the variety, and celebrating the process, putting it on the packaging so the opportunity to be a more discerning consumer is better than it’s ever been before.

**Alie:** Ah, okay. I love the notion of, like, reverse engineering based on what you want.

**Gabe:** Absolutely.

**Alie:** Alexandra N. Castro Navarro wants to know: What's the strangest tasting cider you've ever had? And Kelly Pavelich asked: What's the weirdest cider flavor or ingredient that you've tried, or made, or used? Any weird ones that stick out in your ciderology brain?

**Gabe:** Yeah, the weirdest one was actually a perry that I made a few years ago. Absolutely not by design but by bad perry making, tasted like sausages. It tasted like sausages. And it also had a little bit of, like, a sulfidey thing, which is like an egg character. I basically had, like, sausages and eggs. I had a fried breakfast in liquid form.

**Aside:** Mm, meat farts.

**Gabe:** Wasn't as pleasant as I had endeavored to achieve. So that was probably the weirdest, you know, natural flavors that came out of something.

In terms of, like, an actual, intended flavored cider, there's a USA producer who recently made a tom yum soup flavored cider. I think they had gone to Thailand, they'd had all the good food, and they'd come back and put that in the cider. Now, my cohost of a podcast that I run... I should probably name at this point, the *Neutral Cider Hotel*, you can go check it out. [*cheesy announcer voice*] Available on all good platforms. Do check out [NeutralCiderHotel.com](http://NeutralCiderHotel.com). Thank you very much.

Lovely Grant, he's less of a fan of the flavored ciders. He gets in a bit of a rage whenever we talk about it. He nearly flew off the handle on this one. He was fuming. But then, he gets a bit grumpy about things like that anyway. So yeah, the tom yum flavored cider.

The most amazing and lovely experience I ever had was, I lived in New Zealand for a bit, and in Wellington, the capital city, I lived in an area called Mount Victoria, and just behind, there's all these woodlands. In fact, it was one of the places where they filmed for *Lord of the Rings*, where in the first movie when all the little hobbits are having to hide from the ring wraith, and they're hiding underneath the roots of the tree, for the *Lord of the Rings* nerds out there.

I used to go walk around there and run around there. I left but then I came back to New Zealand to go to a festival, and the cidemaker gave me a cider, and I smelled it, and I was like, "Oh my god..." I got the sensation of being back in that city, in that time, in that place. And I didn't realize that the cider had been flavored with maple and pine needles. And the pine needles had come from those trees on Mount Victoria.

**Alie:** Wow!

**Gabe:** And it was a direct line to that time and that place. The sensory characters, they tap into our limbic system. It's all about memory formation and, like, emotive state. And yeah, that just took me straight back to that time and place. So that was pretty cool.

**Aside:** Okay, so if you'd like to hear someone who really knows noses, there is a Rhinology episode, which I will link on my website. But just to recap it, a lot of your taste is actually smells traveling up your snooter, which leads to your olfactory bulb in the front of your brain, which takes that information and sends it just directly to your limbic system, including parts of it called the hippocampus and the amygdala; they deal with memory and emotions. Which is why I think about a bowl of cider I had a few decades ago and I still want to cry bittersweet tears.

On that topic:

**Alie:** A lot of people, Diana Burgess and Mofo, they both wanted to know: How are some ciders dry versus sweet? Why is there such a wide variety? And what's the process to get a sweet versus a dry cider?

**Gabe:** That's a really good question. And this is one of the big misnomers about cider, that cider is a sweet drink. The fundamental nature of it is that, ostensibly, every single cider in the world will start its life as a bone-dry cider, no sugar left at all, because the fermentation process is the yeast converting that sugar into alcohol. The cider will stop fermenting when there is no more sugar for the yeast to ferment. So that's how cider starts its life. It's just that.

The majority of consumers don't want a dry cider and have been conditioned that they don't want that, so generally, sugar, sometimes it could be juice, is added back post-fermentation and then the cider is stabilized via pasteurization or a sterile filtration process that removes all the yeast so there's no opportunity for that sugar to be refermented, and that's the sweetness that you've got.

So, you can have bone dry cider because that's how Pachamama wanted it, intended. That is nature taking its course. If you want to have a fermented cider that has some sugar in there, you've either got to add it back or you can do a couple of really fiddly processes to try and retain a residual, natural sweetness; the primary one being called keeving, which is what the French classically do. And there's lots of history of that happening in the UK as well, which is a slightly convoluted process whereby you remove the yeast and the nutrient at the beginning of the process and it results in cider that ferments very slowly, develops quite rich flavors, and then you can control it and base it into a bottle where it finishes a little bit of fermentation.

But the yeast is so weak, and there's so little of it, and it's so hungry because there's no nutrients, that that little bit of carbon dioxide that's built up in the bottle is enough to, sort of, make the yeast wave a little white flag and it stops fermenting before all the sugar's been converted into alcohol. So you get a naturally sweeter, naturally lower ABV, and naturally sparkling drink.

**Alie:** Ah! That's how they do it!

**Gabe:** That's how they do it. So that's why... You said the cider you had in the *bolée* in Paris, it smelled of... What did you say?

**Alie:** Kind of like tiger lilies, oddly.

**Gabe:** Tiger lilies. Amazing. But really rich, oily, intense, aromatic, some spicy characteristics. Really juicy. Yeah. They're wonderful drinks and if you have the opportunity to see any, sort of, classic Bretagne or Normandy *cidres*, you should give it a go. There are a number of producers, especially in the Pacific Northwest, who did, like, a research trip over to Brittany and Normandy a few years ago. There are producers in the USA who are making keeved drinks.

And also a big shout out to the Walden Cider House in the Hudson Valley, which is where Angry Orchard... The USA's largest producer, this is where they get to make all their amazing, fun, creative, experimental stuff. My friend Ryan Burk is the head cidemaker, and you know, they've produced sensational keeved ciders over the years that have won competitions. I'm a big fan of US cider. I'm drinking one right now. It's called... It's from the

Artifact Cider Project, who are in Massachusetts. It's called Wolf at the Door, which is a really mega, kind of hazy juice bomb with some character in there.

**Aside:** So yes, this French style, aka *Cidre Bouché*, is sold in corked bottles like champagne is. And it's the result of keeving, allowing the cider's pectin and calcium to form a brown cap at the top, and that clarifies the juice and develops a nice slow fermentation and a sparkle. The process, in French, by the way, is known as *défécation*, which, let me tell you, do not google 'French defecation.' No matter how many accents you copy and paste over the E's, just don't google it. Don't google it. Keeving's fine. Let's change the subject.

**Alie:** Can I toss a couple more questions at you?

**Gabe:** Keep them coming. Let's go.

**Alie:** Okay, Ali Vessels, first-time question-asker, says: Can you home brew apple cider? Is it harder or easier than brewing something like beer or mead? And Celia LaBonte says: One of my favorite things in the fall is to pick up some local, fresh-pressed, unpasteurized local cider and forget about it in the back of my fridge until it gets fizzy. It always ends up tasting better than anything I find in stores. Is my fridge magic, or is there something about the fermentation process? Or is there just something about home fermentation?

Can you DIY cider, or is it best left to professionals?

**Gabe:** You can DIY cider. The tricky bit, as we talked about before, it's the same thing that people had three or four thousand years ago, is converting your apples into the juice. You need this bit of kit and technology; a mill, and a press. And you can – and it has been done – basically, whack the apples with a very big pole in a bucket until they go a bit mushy. And then you can buy these home presses like you would for making apple juice. And they're good fun, especially if you've got a big family, or a little community group, or a neighborhood kind of thing. They're really, really good fun because you get everybody to bring the apples and you do it in one big go and it's kind of easy.

But if you don't want to invest in the equipment, then you do have all these fantastic farms where you can purchase the unpasteurized, the still-raw, live juice. Which, as your patron described, don't think of it as the magic of the fridge; it's the magic of fermentation that's converted this juice into cider. And maybe not in the most controlled kind of way, but obviously, hey, it kind of works. And you know, let's talk about juice content. The reason why it tastes amazing, probably, is because it had a real intensity of flavor profile.

Not all ciders that you get around the world are made from just apple juice. The majority of your mainstream ciders, big store-bought ciders, they will be fermented apple juice, but what often happens is that extra sugar gets added into the juice prior to fermentation. Remember, it's the sugar content that equates to the potential alcohol content. If you add some extra sugar into a juice, you're going to get potential high alcohol, let's say 10 or 12% ABV. And what happens then is you could then dilute that base cider with water, and presto, you could double the literal volume of cider that you produced, at the same alcohol level as you would've had naturally, for the price of some sugar and some water. And why do that? [*"cha-ching!"*]

Of course it's all about the dollar, right? This is a very efficient way of making cider and a cheaper way of making cider. And I'm not puritanical on this. I'm not holding a pitchfork and saying, "Every single cider must be made from just 100% apples! Nothing else can be done!" That's not the attitude and approach that I have. But certainly, in the UK, the minimum juice content in cider sits at 35%, so the majority of the cider can be water. And for me, that's too



far down the line. If the first ingredient on your list is not apple juice, is that a cider? And I would say, for me, No.

In the USA, it's 50%, and that's the level that I would advocate it being at. You know that you've got integrity in there. So, it just depends on what your flavor profile is. For me, the most important thing is enabling the consumer to understand what's in the drink, how's it made, and let them make the decision on what kind of drink they're after.

**Alie:** That makes tons of sense. Yes or No question from Emma Ross: Are there bug bits in my cider, probably?

**Gabe:** Bug bits? As in bits of bugs?

**Alie:** Bits of bugs, you know? You smooosh... I'm thinkin' it's got to be yes.

**Gabe:** Eeehhh... [*hesitating*]

**Alie:** There's got to be a couple of little, tiny bugs in there! [*teasing at Gabe's discomfort*]

**Gabe:** It depends on whether you're getting from your professional cidemaker or you're going to see Old Farmer Brown down the lane who's making Old Lakebender. [*"Don't worry about it."*]

**Alie:** Gareth Askey asked: Is cloudy apple cider the cider equivalent of orange juice with bits? Different types of bits, but why is some cider cloudy? Is that the mother?

**Gabe:** First of all, I want to address the fact that his name is Gareth Askey who's asking a question. That's a brilliant name. Mr. Askey, keep asking away. Ask all the questions. I thoroughly enjoy that you've asked.

Post-fermentation, yeast and large chunks of apple bits will drop to the bottom, but you will still have, within suspension, some bits of pectin and some, just, like, natural appley bits. A bit like natural bits from orange juice. What a majority of makers will then do, they'll put it through a filter. Just put it through something that just sieves out the chunkier bits of apple constituents. The vast majority of ciders you get in the marketplace are, like, crystal clear. It's very easy to put through a filter. I've got nothing wrong with that. I don't think it's a bad thing at all. What I find interesting is when makers choose not to do that.

Again, it's very much a modern thing of the last 50 years, the idea of instilling the clarity in there as, probably, a marker of quality, and cleanliness, and professionalism; moving away from that sort of rustic and traditional viewpoint. Certainly, there's been a bit of a driver, again from a commercial point of view, makers using that as a way of bringing a new product into the marketplace. "We've got a cider which is just, you know, fizzy. And then we've got the sweeter version. What do we do now? [*snaps fingers*] Let's do the cloudy version! Yes!"

This is all part of the amazing diversity that exists for cider. Different ciders, different fruit, different varieties, different fermentation processes, vessels, for different consumers, on different occasions.

**Alie:** Augh! Well, I'm hoping... From a little bit of filtration to flimflam, Robin Kuehn wants to know: I was recently told that in times before refrigeration and indoor water, hard cider was given to the kids to drink. Is this flimflam?

**Gabe:** It's true. It is absolutely true. In the same way that in various parts of, certainly, British history, the beer was considerably safer than the drinking water. Think about the state of the sewage system or lack of sewage system, especially as the populations of cities started

to grow. By having this... The fermentation process is amazing at killing off bugs and beasts, even at relatively low alcohol levels. So, it is genuinely true.

In fact, I'll have to remember the year, I think it's in the 15th century, maybe the 13th century, there's a record of babies being baptized in cider in the UK because the water quality was so poor. Actually, that was from last week. No.

**Alie:** [laughs]

**Gabe:** Yeah, so that is absolutely true.

**Alie:** Ah! Okay, two more questions. Ceri Tully says: I'm a cider girl, born and raised. English by birth and I now live in Canada where, luckily, the cider industry has boomed in the last ten years. (Probably because of you, Gabe.) She says: I've drank many a can of cider but once in a blue moon I get one that, well, smells like a fart or rotten egg, tastes almost as bad, and is flat. Why does this happen? What is going on??

**Gabe:** So, the farty egginess is... Those are the characters of these sulfide compounds. So, these are natural compounds that are released by yeast when they are not very happy. Stressed yeast. So, this is normally a food issue, so they haven't got... The yeast is converting the sugar into alcohol, but yeast has got to eat as well, right? So it needs to have these nutrients, it needs to have some nitrogen, B vitamins in order to easily function properly and convert all that sugar into alcohol. If it hasn't got that, sometimes there's a bit of a breakdown. Sometimes if it's too hot and the process... it gets all a bit too much for the yeast and it throws a bit of a dirty protest, basically.

Or sometimes if the temperature goes too cold partway through the fermentation, it can stop and these sulfidey characters can remain. It is a bit of an issue. It doesn't need to happen. It's one of those things like having vinegar within your cider, it's something that is easily averted, it doesn't need to happen. But it is something that does come around.

**Alie:** Maybe if it happens you should just treat it like it was supposed to happen, make a wish, crack open a different bottle. You know?

**Gabe:** You could do that. One of the things is that if that was a beer, consumers and the drinks trade have the confidence to know, "Thaaaat's not right," would get in touch with the brewery or take it back to the bar. People don't know, like, "Is the cider *supposed* to taste like that?" So, if they end up thinking, "I think that *is* how it's supposed to taste. Cider smells of farts. That's bad. Therefore, I don't like cider." That's a really, really bad thing. So, if you smell that, take it back and get another one.

**Alie:** But make a wish.

**Gabe:** And make a wish, obviously.

**Alie:** Consider it lucky. Sara Hoover wants to know: If I were to go to a store looking for the best possible cider... Again, I'm going to editorialize that and say I know it's subjective, but what should Sara look for? Any hidden info we should know about?

**Gabe:** So, what I would say is just check out your local producers. There are over a thousand makers in the USA today and being made in basically every single state. Maybe not Alaska, I'm going to say, possibly, but everywhere else... Please prove me wrong, somebody. But there is cider being made everywhere. Just go and seek out your local. There are some of the best cider makers in the world within the USA.

You're based in California, Alie, is that correct?

**Alie:** Mm-hmm. Yep.

**Gabe:** So you need to check out people like Tanuki Cider, who are in Santa Cruz; people like Tilted Shed who are in Sonoma. Absolutely fantastic makers there. And then as you get into the Pacific Northwest, people like Reverend Nat's. Then you get into Michigan, you've got people like John's Hard Cider. In Pennsylvania, you've got Big Hill Ciderworks and Ploughman Farm Cider. New York, Eve's, and Eden... Eve's are in the Finger Lakes area. Eden in Vermont. We're talking about drinks that are exuding all of the quality and elegance of wine. There's just so many fantastic producers out there. So just go to the store and drink loads of cider, I think is what I'm trying to say.

**Aside:** I will post links on my website, you sweet, thirsty people. Or here's an idea, you could put on clothes and you could leave the house.

**Gabe:** You've got cider bars! We don't really have cider bars over here, but almost every single city has got a cider bar. You've got 101 Barrelhouse in LA; you've got a San Francisco cider house. Portland's got like five cider houses alone. It's crazy. If you're in DC, do head to ANXO. It's one of the best cider experiences that you'll have anywhere in the world. So, it's not just that at-home thing. It's getting out there and seeking it in any city that you are. It's an awesome experience.

**Alie:** Last questions I always ask: What about the worst thing about cider? It can't all be roses! What sucks?

**Gabe:** Uh, that there is, maybe, amongst the community, a feeling of... whether it be inferiority to other drinks, or maybe in some instances a little bit of gatekeeping. Like, "Cider can only be this and we can never change." It's like, come on people! Just be open to the opportunity. And really, I use the word opportunity a lot because I see it, and there are so many consumers today who are interested in so many different types of drinks, who are less siloed in terms of, "I'm just a beer drinker." "I'm just a wine drinker." "I'm just a spirits drinker."

It's like, "No, no. You can be interested in interesting drinks," and cider very much sits within that spectrum and within that opportunity. So, the thing that annoys me the most is that cider doesn't have the reputation or the standing that I think it deserves, but I have considerable faith that we will get there.

**Alie:** I think that you are doing all of the work to get us there. I'm calling it now. Cider's it, man. [*"That's hot."*]

What about your favorite, favorite thing about cider? Can you even name one thing?

**Gabe:** I suppose there's two things, which I know is not one thing. Partly it's the people; it's the community element. There is a community of cider people. And in the UK context, we got together for the first time just at the weekend for this event called the Bristol Cider Salon, which I helped to co-organize along with the wonderful Martin Berkeley from Pilton Cider and Tom Oliver from Oliver's Cider and Perry. And it was in the city of Bristol, which I live just outside of in the southwest of England, a real heartland area.

And it was, yeah, makers, enthusiasts, and drinkers all getting together, sharing some drinks. It's a really cool thing. It's something that we all share; it's something that we're passionate about. Cider people are just quite nice people and interesting people. So there's definitely this community, whether it be cider... But also, again, coming back to the sense of

place and the geographical community. I love the fact that there's makers in the area that I'm from.

There's an apple variety called the Dymock Red, a cider apple variety. And you know, I made ten liters of Dymock Red... not last year, two years ago. And I think it tastes all right. It's a little bit farmy on-the-nose. Entered it into the competition; didn't get a medal. Not bitter. *Not bitter*, much. But you know, ultimately, I don't care, it doesn't matter. I just feel so grateful that here is something... That apple variety was being recorded as being an awesome apple 500 years ago. And I know that, like, my grandad used to make cider and perry on this farm where my mum grew up. It's not in the family anymore, but I made a perry from the same tree that I know that he would have. He died before I was born.

And there's nothing sad about this other than just... It's just awesome that I have this connection through this action. I feel slightly responsible, but more just celebratory. It's just something that really gets into your bones, I think.

**Alie:** Wow. That's really amazing. You give so much context to cider, and I love that that is one way for other people to appreciate it as well. It's not just something that tastes good that you sit around and drink, or if you've had a hard day and you absolutely need this to unwind. It's not about that, and I love that that's the message that you're spreading, that cider really is an art to be enjoyed, you know?

**Gabe:** Absolutely.

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So ask dry experts scrumpy questions, because earnestly, they are just bubbly founts of knowledge and passion, and one day we're all going to be eaten by worms anyway, so do whatever you want. Learn what you want. Find out more about Gabe Cook at [TheCiderologist.com](http://TheCiderologist.com), naturally. You can look for him on [social media](#) as [@TheCiderologist](#). Pick up his books. *Ciderology* is his first one, and then he just released *Modern British Ciders*. And his podcast is *Neutral Cider Hotel*. A donation went to [Tiny Changes](#). All those links are in the show notes.

If you liked this episode, send it to a friend. There are a bunch more links at [AlieWard.com/Ologies/Ciderology](http://AlieWard.com/Ologies/Ciderology). We are @Ologies on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). I'm @AlieWard on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#). Come be our friends. Thank you to longtime friend Erin Talbert who is the admin on the *Ologies* podcast [Facebook group](#) full of great people. [OlogiesMerch.com](http://OlogiesMerch.com) is where to go to get t-shirts, and totes, and hoodies, and masks, and all that stuff. And that is handled by sisters Boni Dutch and Shannon Feltus of the comedy podcast *You Are That*. Emily White of The Wordary makes all of our transcripts; she's great. She's available for hire if you need transcripts for anything. Bleeping is done by Caleb Patton and bleeped episodes and transcripts are available at [AlieWard.com/Ologies-Extras](http://AlieWard.com/Ologies-Extras). There's a link in the show notes.

Thank you, of course, to Noel Dilworth and Susan Hale for the *Ologies* business they do behind the scenes and social media help. And of course to the incomparable Jarrett Sleeper, who is both sweet dry, and a bit scrumpy. And thanks to Zeke Rodrigues Thomas and Steven Ray Morris who both help with *Smologies* episodes. More of those are coming soon. Thank you to Nick Thorburn who wrote and performed the theme music, and happy belated birthday to Dr. Mike Natter. Also, it was my pop's birthday last week.

If you stick around, I burden you with a secret from my dark, deep soul. This week's secret was: I was out of underwear because laundry just does not do itself and it's been a busy week. And then I found a new pack of undies in the linen closet and I was like, "Yes!" I totally forgot I bought them. And I'm going to tell you something. I don't always wash things before I wear them. Jarrett is

horrified at this. He washes everything before it touches his body, but I'm like, "Meh." It's not like somebody in the factory wore them around all day. I was like, "Eh, you know..."

[Jarrett yells in the background, "Chemicals!! Gross chemicals could be in there!"]

I don't caaaaare! I don't care. I don't know if wearing clothes without washing them first is, like, cool and chill of me because I don't care or if it's repulsive, but it hasn't killed me yet and I've got bigger fish to fry.

Okay, berbye.

*Transcribed by Emily White at [TheWordary.com](http://TheWordary.com)*

### **More links you may enjoy:**

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