



Case's Mansfield Cider Mill is considered a local landmark in the area. The three generation business is run from September through the end of October.

Cider Flows From Mansfield Cider Mill For 50 Years

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MANSFIELD (Tioga Co.) — Ah! You can almost taste the fresh cider as you walk in Case's Mansfield Cider Mill run by David and Dixie Case.

First the smell tantalizes your senses with that familiar sweet apple aroma. Next the sight of the cascading stream of fresh cider flowing from the century old press leaves you in awe as the layers of chopped apples are squeezed to get the last drop of tempting reddish-brown liquid. And finally, the taste...sweet, yet tart...just the right blend to make your tastebuds tingle.

The age-old ritual of pressing cider has been tackled by the Case family for 50 years.

"It's like anything else," said a weary David after he finished pressing the morning's supply of cider. "You get to doing it, like

these guys that make maple syrup, and you don't know enough to quit."

Just like maple syrup season which is highlighted by a few short spring weeks of intense labor, several short weeks in the fall are the prime time for apple harvest and cider pressing, an equally intensive process.

First bushels of apples are picked from nearby orchards. Then they are hauled to the mill and a conveyer moves them to the upper story of the building where the apples are washed and chopped.

When the apples are properly ground, they are spread out on trays covered with "cheeses," or cloths that hold the mashed apples together. The cheeses are then folded over the apples and another layer is stacked on top. The tower of apples is then placed on the press where 144 pounds of pressure per square inch squeezes out

every last drop of juice.

The cider is collected in a tank and then put through three filters to clarify the liquid. Finally it is pumped to the jugging station where each gallon container is filled to the brim with the fresh brown juice.

Then the pressed apples, called pomace, is dumped out of the cheeses and the process starts all over.

"When you open the cloths, the apples are almost dry," Dixie said. "Area people come and get it and take it up on the mountain to feed the wild animals, so there's no waste."

Each year the family presses about 20,000 to 30,000 gallons of cider. They also take in custom work and press cider for others. Depending on the juice content of the apples, you get about two to three gallons of cider per bushel of apples.

In a typical year, most of the apples that are pressed come from area orchards; however, this year, according to Dixie, the apples just aren't plentiful. In order to fill their orders the Case's have had to bring in apples from upstate New York.

A few apples come from the small orchard they maintain on their property. This year they planted 50 new Red Gala trees, a dwarf variety.

What makes the best tasting cider? Dixie loves cider made with the Northern Spy, because it's her favorite apple, but she's careful to add that the best cider is made with a mix of apples, some sweet, some tart.

"We use the apples that are in season. We're careful to use the right blend and always use at least three different kinds," Daisy explained.

It's a sticky job, but one that the family loves, according to Dixie, who married David in 1988 after each lost their mates; Dixie's husband in a logging accident, and David's wife to cancer.

This is a hobby of sorts for the family. When not squeezed in the eight-week cider making season, David sells insurance.

Dixie, who worked bank marketing for 32 years and is now retired noted, "The last few years while I was working, it was hard not to be here making cider."

Now she can devote more of her time to the shop and to managing



David and Chris Case smooth the chopped apples onto the cheeses in preparation of pressing the apples.

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