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Thank you very much to USACM for asking me over and thank you all for coming.

You should get a chance to **Taste 2** perries that are available in the USA through Shelton Brothers, the intro perry is a Bottle Conditioned Herefordshire Perry and the outro perry is the Classic.

We had better keep questions to the end because I have a lot to get through and only 30 minutes. The first run through I did was 60, the second 40, I hope this is 30.

“Cider is a hard master

and PERRY is a beautiful but fickle mistress”.

“You never know what she is going to do next. A defiant rule breaker of immense charm. Brilliant one moment and woeful the next, destined to pull quirky stunts on you. You can never stop learning though, because when it is right, it is a magnificent celebration of the wonderful subtleness and delicacy of the perry pear. The nose hints of hedgerow fruits such as elderflower, laced with a citrus zing with a body of apricot, rhubarb and a touch of ginger, all this anchored by the most stunning, attention grabbing tannic experience in the mouthfeel and finish”.

1. Introduction:

I am Tom Oliver and I farm with my 86 year old Mum and my younger brother in Ocle Pychard, Herefordshire. Many thanks to them for covering the lambing while I over here! We own a 330 acre traditional mixed farm. Extensive rather intensive. A 60 head herd of Hereford single suckler beef cattle and some 300 Texel sheep for fat lamb production. Most of the farm is grass with some woodland, with some corn (barley and oats) and a small amount of orchard.

Back in the early 1900's **my grandfather** grew cider fruit in traditional orchards and sent the bulk of the crop to Bulmers Cider in Hereford. We made a small amount of cider on the farm for family, friends and workers.

In 1923, **Bulmers reneged** on promised price increases and my grandfather threatened to grub up all the trees and plant more hops.

He was a man of his word.

And so when I was **born in 1956**, I grew up thinking Fuggles and hops were the way forward, they were a lucrative cash crop most of the time. However, all good things come to an end and in 1999 we grubbed out all the hops, wilt and poor prices saw to that.

Up until then my cidermaking was mostly helping a couple of old boys, **Ted Jones** of Stanford Bishop near Bromyard and **Roger French** of Checkley near Hereford.

The same Roger French who wrote “The History and Virtue of Cider”.

Roger provided me with a **Eureka moment**, one of those memorable experiences that stay with you for ever, when one evening he emerged from his waterlogged cellar, which he had dug by hand beneath his kitchen, to offer me a slightly mouldy, rusted, crown capped bottle. Prizing the cap off he poured a naturally conditioned Kingston Black cider, and **as the Reverent Nat West might have said, “my future in cider was realised at that moment”**. I knew that I wanted to make cider and perry.

Ted Jones and I had the fruit from one orchard at Instone near Bromyard. I was allowed to have the pears from every tree except one, that was Ted’s tree, something special. Years later I was to identify that tree as “Coppo”, a variety that had been lost. That tree, in this orchard, turned out to be the only and is still the only known mature tree of this variety and we are propagating it and distributing it to preserve it. These old boys knew a thing or two about varieties.

Ted and Roger shared their passion for cider and perry with me and I will always be grateful for that.

2. A little History:

So Pears originated from Syria. The Romans bought culinary and some dessert pears to England, but when they departed, the plantings went wild and the remaining pears self seeded, mingling with the existing wild pears.

Through the middle ages more culinary and dessert were introduced, especially by Thomas Harris, fruiterer to Henry the 8th but the wild, feral pears persisted. These pears were sharp, astringent and bitter-inedible.

In 1629, the herbalist **John Parkinson** noted that these “Choke” pears made a mild, pleasant drink like wine.

Perry was on it's way.

In 1656, **John Beale, vicar and writer**, claimed the Barland Pear made the best perry. Mention of a named variety

In 1676, **John Worlidge** said in his Treatise on Cider, do not let pears get too mellow before pressing and mix with crabs to improve the perry. Good advice even to this day.

The rollercoaster ride for perry had begun.

Most of the characters associated with perry, gained notoriety because they observed the decline of perry pear orchards and of perry making and wanted to turn the decline around.

Thomas Andrew Knight 1759-1838 founder of RHS and Father of Modern Pomology-Pomona Herefordiensis in which he described perry pears and cider apples

Robert Hogg and Henry Bull, between 1878-1884 compiled the beautiful Hereford Pomona at the behest of The Reverend Charles Bulmer, father to the brothers who started Bulmers cider.

Charles Radcliffe Cook, 1841-1911 was The MP for Cider and wrote a fine Book about Cider and Perry making during the depression to encourage farmers to take cider and perry seriously.

Ted Barker-Director of National Fruit and Cider Institute in 1904 which became LA Research Station where Andrew Lea worked.

Dr Herbert Durham published in 1920 The Beauty and Use of the Vintage Pear. He started recording Perry Pear varieties and **Ray Williams** continued recording perry pear varieties from 1930 onwards in **Perry Pears** edited by Luckwill and Pollard.

And now in recent times Charles Martell has written Pears of Gloucestershire and Perry Pears of the Three Counties and planted the First National Collection of Perry Pears.

Jim Chapman planted the second National Collection at Hartpury, Gloucester and is what I would call a modern day Benefactor of Perry.

3. Brief Overview of my how I make Perry:

I make perry with perry pears, not baking pears, not eating pears, not dessert pears, not culinary pears but perry pears. The raw material is everything. I do not believe that the way I make perry would be possible with any other pears.

We take what the fruit gives us.

It is made in (relatively) small batches.

Oliver's is all about **minimum intervention**, (don't do anything unless you can really justify it).

We ferment ambiently with the wild yeasts.

We do not use SO₂ prior to fermentation or yeast nutrient.

We do use moderate levels of SO₂ at bottling, about 80-100ppm total. No SO₂ in BC perry at all.

About 60% (by volume) of our perry is sold as draught, still perry either blended or as single varietals. 40% is packaged in glass as still, carbonated, bottle conditioned or bottle fermented.

Apologies to you all, the science here will be minimal, due to my poor command of it, but, never the less, I have total admiration and respect for it.

In 1999 I did Peter Mitchell's embryonic Principles and Practice course. It was the best thing I ever did. All I had ever known was farmhouse style cider making, I had no idea about the big wide world of cidermaking. It was a revelation and helped me make my mind up about how I wanted to proceed.

Like wise, I feel the same about the Cider Certification program that Erik West is running on Saturday. I was and still am, involved with The NACM Cider and Perry Appreciation Program, that runs both here and in the UK. The more facts and correct information cider makers, cider consumers, cider evangelists, cider sommeliers, chefs, waiters, distributors, orchardists, tree propagators and the person on the street and in the bar have, the better. I also think every cider and perry maker should do an annual Sensory Evaluation refresher course.

There are so many aspects of perry that make for interesting talking points, we will touch briefly on a few.

4. Perry Pears in the Orchard.

a. Standards v Bush

My preference is for pears from tall **standard** trees. Planted at 40 foot spacing. Less than 40 trees per acre, taking at least 30 years to reach “full” cropping potential. However they can be productive for well over 100-200 years.

In this situation the saying that “**you plant pears for your heirs**” is so true.

I frequently take visitors to view the rooted branches of an old seedling perry pear tree, now called **The Holme Lacy perry pear**. In 1790, this tree had a canopy that covered three quarters of an acre and yielded some 7 tons of fruit at a single harvest.

I also get pears from **Bush trees** that have being planted much more densely, 8 feet apart, rows 16 feet apart, giving about 300 trees per acre on Kirchenstaller root stocks. In terms of tree growth we are seeing some good results. Management is possible/easier and harvesting is showing much better possibilities in terms of mechanization. However not all varieties seem happy, Blakeney Red is one.

Generally yields are increasing year on year, **however the sugar levels are low** and these gravities are about 10-15 degrees down on fruit from mature standard trees.

I am hoping that this is merely typical of young trees. My experience with standards is that they keep getting better till about 30 years old, then it becomes much more down to the season.

Our experiences with bush trees are mirrored in some of the work mentioned in Perry Pears by Luckwill and Pollard and also a general reflection on fruit from young v old trees.

b. My favourites varieties:

Moorcroft, Thorn, Blakeney Red, Hendre Huffcap, Winnal's Longdon, Copsy, Rock, Gin, Oldfield and Butt.

c. Harvesting and Ripeness.

Challenging at the best of times with fruit that can be very soft, or very hard. Comes in strange shapes and variable sizes. Ripening over many weeks or all dropping quickly.

Some will not drop-Yellow Huffcap

Some drop over long periods, so need staggered picking-

Blakeney Red

Some soften from the inside out and over ripen in a variable manner-Winnals Longdon

This softening is Bletting and not to be confused with Rotting. **Bletting** is a fermentation process of softening and taking pears beyond ripe which brings about an increase in sugars and a decrease in the acids and tannins that cause the unripe fruit to be astringent. Blet is derived from the French “poire blette” meaning 'overripe pear'.

Rot, on the other hand, is to decompose due to biological action, usually fungal or bacterial.

Beware the mixed load of fruit because just a few rotting pears can take down a trailer load of good in a short space of time. Especially when the weather is warm. I prefer hand picking but off the floor.

If harvesting early off the tree an adaptation of an olive picker might show promise but may need to be in tandem with some pruning/tree training.

Dislike the herbicide strips.

5. Back at the ciderhouse.

a. Sweating, Washing, Milling, Maceration and Pressing:

Generally with perry pears we do not **sweat** them, not on purpose anyway!

Wash but be aware that some pears sink. Mike Beck uses a saline solution to float his pears. That's clever.

Milling:

Always aim for a **chunky, thick porridge consistency** after milling. Not like baby food. We are finding some of the new plantings of Green Horse and Brown Bess give a very, thin, slimy consistency. Not good in belt or pack presses.

Maceration-leave the milled pears open to the air for 24-48 hours. Large surface area, shallow vessels, not more than 6 inches deep, are most effective. However, even letting it stand in tubs or tanks can help both pressing, better juice extraction, break down of pectins (not so relevant with pears) and the **reduction and mellowing of tannins in the finished perry.**

This is the most effective and natural way to relieve yourself of tannin problems later on. Blending becomes easier too. A step like this though does not fit in with highly automated pressing plants, another reason why smaller producers can excel at perry.

Butt, Rock, Flakey Bark must be macerated. **Tannin levels can after 24 hours typically drop by 2/3rds.**

b. Wild Yeast Fermentations and Sulphur:

When I started making cider and perry, I never used sulphur or yeasts because that was the way the “old boys” did it.

Now there were many things the **old boys** did that I did not like. The use of water from the same pond that the cattle drank at, the wonderful assertion that your cider was not any good unless it caught you at the back of the throat courtesy of the presence of acetic acid and the relatively high levels of volatile acidity that pervaded many perries.

However, some of the finer results were complex, rich ciders and perries that captivated me.

Wild Yeasts, the wonderful random succession of various apiculate through to sacchromyces yeasts, fermenting away, in a nutrient depleted pear juice, they do their job in a wonderful way and rarely complain.

And H₂S is rare.

There are drawbacks with wild yeasts but not enough to make me want to pitch yeast, yet. The preservation of the delicate pear aroma is one area though where I am open to persuasion.

6. You finally get her in the bottle and “it” comes back to haunt you.

a. Tannins, beautiful tannins, citric acid and sorbitol.

No sign in bulk, filtered and still no sign, bottled and bright and then 6 months later little snowflakes or solid lumps of tannin form. **These are the tannins, the polyphenols, primarily leucoanthocyanin. They contribute the astringency and bitterness that elevates perry over a pear drink made solely from other pears.**

However they are colloidal and responsible for heavy precipitates and these changes can occur over time! So macerate and be amazed how things change. Rock will rock your world if you get a chance to taste it.

Citric acid, while imbuing gorgeous nuances of flavour can, anaerobically in the presence of LAB, be converted into acetic acid/vinegar. Green Horse. Yellow Huffcap. Gin. Brown Bess. Oldfield can all fall prey to this. So even if you obey the basic tenets of perry-making, she can still turn on you.

Sorbitol, the naturally occurring unfermentable sugar, that can give even a fully fermented perry some residual sweetness. Blakeney Red has pleasing, moderate levels. Sorbitol is of course a **diuretic**, giving rise to the reputation

that perry has of “**going in like velvet, and out like thunder**”.

Holmer Perry is reserved for my very special guests.

Another little quirk is that even if you add **SO₂ at bottling**, the higher levels of ethyl acetate and acetaldehyde in perry can lead to problems, as the acetaldehyde binds SO₂ immediately.

7. So what is Perry?

So to conclude, does anyone know what perry is?

In 1663 the Reverend John Beale, a founding fellow of the Royal Society and cider scribe observed perry was “**most pleasing to the female palate**”.

So, a drink for the ladies?

Perry was used to bulk up poor wine stocks when we were at war with the French and we were always at war with the French.

So a drink for the unscrupulous wine merchant?

It was reputed to be **Napoleon Bonaparte’s** favourite drink?

He, indeed, called Perry “the English Champagne”.

“In victory you deserve champagne, in defeat you need it.”

That could well have been his Waterloo.

So, a drink for ill fated leaders of men?

In 1953, the first alcoholic product to be advertised on television in the UK was **Babycham, the ‘genuine champagne perry.’** It was sold in tiny bottles and was always shown with the old-style champagne glasses.

So a “fine” drink for the sophisticated?

In 2005 Mathew Fort, food critic and writer, described my Perry ‘as debonair as a Savile Row suit, with a long, long finish.’

Ah, a drink for the fashionable?

What I do know is that it is not Pear Cider.

Not that I know what Pear Cider is, because it is not a cider made from pears necessarily, but the fact that the industry chose a term that helped the marketing team get behind a line extension is fine with me. **IT ALLOWS PERRY TO BE MADE FROM PERRY PEARS and Pear Cider from whatever.**

So, I say again, does anyone know what Perry is?

The answer is probably no, yet it has the potential to outstrip many over priced champagnes with it's fuller fruitiness, more exotic aroma and altogether richer taste. A still, fine dry perry when drunk with a Thomas Crump Single Gloucester Cheese or Bob Keene's Somerset Cheddar is a sublime experience. No wedding is complete without some sparkling perry to toast the bride and groom.

However, the scarcity of the raw material, the perry pear, the difficulties that the making of perry presents and the fact that most of the perry makers in the UK are old codgers means the epic rise and fall, rollercoaster ride of perry is probably destined to continue in the UK.

So to finish, I trust that all you "revivalist" US perrymakers will tempt the world with your fine perries and make the route to market easier for us old cumudgeons back in the UK.

Thank you.

Notes.

1. How can you spot a perrymaker? They will have:
 - a. A source of vintage varieties of perry pears grown in a “traditional” manner.
 - b. Patience.
 - c. A great palate.
 - d. Great patience.
 - e. Imagination.
 - f. Infinite patience.
 - g. Be in need of skills they have yet to acquire.

2. Some suggested Reading:
 - a. Hogg and Bull-The Apple and Pear as Vintage Fruits and The Herefordshire Pomona
 - b. Herbert Durham-The Beauty and Use of the Vintage Pear
 - c. Luckwill and Pollard-Perry Pears
 - d. Charles Martell- Pears of Gloucestershire and Perry Pears of the Three Counties
 - e. Joan Morgan-The Book of Pears.

3. Some suggested Drinking:

Aepeltreow WI

Eric Bordelet, France

EZ Orchards, OR

Jorg Geiger, Germany.

Mike Johnson Ross on Wye, UK,

James Marsden, Greggs Pit, UK,

James McCrindle's Loiterpin, UK

Kevin Minchew, UK.

Dr Mike Penney, Troggi, Wales

Snowdrift, WA

4. Anything else you want me to discuss please email me t-oliver@sky.com or catch me at #CiderCon2016.

Cheers from Tom.