

Week Seven Newsletter

Why Pair Specialty Crops with Beverages

Pairing West Virginia specialty crops with wines and ciders enhances both flavor and overall enjoyment by bringing out the best qualities in each. Fruits like apples, berries, grapes, and peaches, along with fresh herbs, can complement or contrast the sweetness, acidity, and aroma of a beverage, creating a more balanced and interesting tasting experience. For example, tart apples can balance a slightly sweet cider, while berries can highlight fruity notes in wines.

Using seasonal, locally grown crops also ensures peak freshness and flavor, while supporting West Virginia farmers and reducing the environmental impact of transporting food long distances. These pairings connect agriculture with everyday meals and special occasions, helping participants better understand how local foods can be used in creative and meaningful ways.

Up to 50%

unfiltered locally made ciders
contain up to 50% more
antioxidants than store bought cider



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Pairing Principles and Tips

Successful pairings are built on a few simple principles: flavor, texture, aroma, and seasonality. Complementary flavors, such as sweet fruit with a fruity wine, enhance each other, while contrasting flavors, like tart berries with a slightly sweet cider, can create a more dynamic experience. Texture also matters, crisp fruits pair well with sparkling beverages, while richer or softer foods can complement fuller-bodied wines.

Aroma plays an important role in how we experience taste. Fresh herbs like basil, mint, or thyme can enhance floral or fruity notes in beverages, adding complexity. Choosing crops that are in season ensures better taste and higher nutritional value. Starting with simple combinations helps build confidence, and experimenting with different pairings encourages creativity.



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Applying Pairings at Home

Bringing specialty crop pairings into your home can be simple, enjoyable, and a great way to support local agriculture. Start by selecting a few seasonal crops from a farmers market or local store, and pair them with a wine, cider, or non-alcoholic beverage you enjoy. For example, fresh berries can be paired with sparkling drinks, sliced apples with cider, or herbs added to infused beverages or mocktails.

These pairings can be incorporated into everyday meals, snacks, or small gatherings, making them both practical and enjoyable. Creating simple pairings can also inspire new recipes, such as fruit-based salads, herb-infused drinks, or appetizer boards featuring local ingredients. Sharing these experiences with family and friends can strengthen community connections and increase appreciation for locally grown foods.

