



wvfarmers.org

WEEK SEVEN

Specialty Crop Pairing Wines & Ciders

Information provided with funding provided by USDA Specialty Crop

Week Seven Overview

- **Purpose and Goals:** This session introduces participants to the concept of pairing West Virginia specialty crops with wines and ciders. Participants will explore how flavors, textures, and aromas of fruits, vegetables, and herbs complement beverages, enhancing the culinary experience.
- **Learning Outcomes:**
 - Identify specialty crops commonly used in wine and cider pairings
 - Understand flavor profiles and how they interact with wines and ciders
 - Apply pairing techniques to enhance meals and beverages
 - Appreciate the role of locally grown specialty crops in West Virginia's food and beverage culture



Why Pair Specialty Crops with Beverages?

Pairing specialty crops with wines and ciders can:

- Enhance flavors and aromas of both the food and the beverage
- Highlight seasonal and locally grown ingredients
- Encourage creative culinary exploration using West Virginia crops
- Support local agriculture and regional wineries

Pro Tip: Specialty crops such as apples, berries, grapes, peaches, and herbs are versatile ingredients for pairings with wines, hard ciders, or sparkling beverages.



West Virginia Specialty Crops for Pairing



Many West Virginia specialty crops are ideal for pairing with wines and ciders:

- Apples – Crisp and sweet varieties pair well with dry or semi-dry ciders and white wines.
- Berries (strawberries, blueberries, blackberries) – Their sweetness and tartness complement rosés, sparkling wines, or fruity ciders.
- Grapes – Used in local wines; pair with complementary fruits, cheeses, or desserts.
- Peaches & Stone Fruits – Pair with light, aromatic white wines or sparkling beverages.
- Herbs (mint, basil, thyme) – Can enhance cocktails, infused beverages, or fruit-based wine pairings.

Principles of Pairing

When pairing specialty crops with wine or cider, consider flavor, texture, aroma, and seasonality to create a balanced and enjoyable experience:

- Flavor balance – Match or contrast sweetness, tartness, and savory notes. Tart apples can balance a sweet cider, while juicy berries complement a fruity rosé.
- Texture and mouthfeel – Crisp fruits pair well with sparkling beverages; creamy foods complement richer wines.
- Aroma – Herbs, spices, and fruits can enhance or highlight flavors in the beverage. Fresh basil or mint can elevate floral or fruity notes.
- Seasonality – Using fresh, in-season crops ensures peak flavor and supports local agriculture.
- Complementary vs. contrasting – Some pairings highlight similar flavors; others create interesting contrasts for a dynamic taste experience.



Hawk Knob Lewisburg, WV

Appalachian Hard Cider

West Virginia's first hard cidery, Hawk Knob crafts unfiltered, hand-made ciders from a blend of locally grown apples, celebrating Appalachian heritage and tradition.

Their taproom in scenic Greenbrier County invites visitors to enjoy sunsets, live music, and the natural surroundings while tasting internationally awarded ciders.

Hawk Knob highlights the flavors of West Virginia specialty crops, connecting guests with the region's agriculture, culture, and culinary traditions.



Swilled Dog Upper Tract, WV

Craft Cidery and Distillery

Swilled Dog is a family- and women-owned craft cidery that produces all-natural, unfiltered hard ciders, ready-to-drink cocktails, and spirits.

They proudly feature West Virginia apples in their products, conducting annual apple drives to collect local fruit, especially for their popular “WV Scrumpy” cider, and are planting their own cider-specific orchards to increase local sourcing.

Signature offerings include Caramel Apple, Walk the Dog (dry), Wild Berry, Pineapple, and seasonal specialties like Apple Pie, Pumpkin Patch, and Mango Ginger, showcasing West Virginia specialty crops in approachable, flavorful ways.



WineTree Vineyards

Vienna, WV

West Virginia Farm Winery

Located in Vienna, West Virginia, WineTree Vineyards is a family-owned farm winery founded by Craig and Candice Bandy. All wines are made entirely on the farm, from vineyard to bottling, using West Virginia-grown grapes, a specialty crop that highlights the region's unique flavors.

WineTree produces award-winning dry reds and whites, as well as sweet wines, showcasing the versatility of local grapes. Visitors can explore the vineyard, taste wines made from specialty crops, and experience how locally grown grapes connect West Virginia agriculture with culinary and cultural



Lamberts Winery

Weston, WV

Vintage Wine

Perched on a hillside vineyard, Lambert Winery is a Gothic-inspired structure built from hand-cut West Virginia stones. Inside, the tasting room features a cozy fireplace, a handcrafted bar, and displays of local pottery, creating a warm setting to enjoy wines.

The winery highlights West Virginia specialty crops, especially locally grown grapes, which are crafted into their handcrafted wines. Owners Jim and Debbie Lambert invite visitors to tour the vineyard, taste the wines, and experience the connection between local agriculture and artisanal winemaking.





Discussion Prompts: Specialty Crop Pairing Wines & Ciders

- How do the flavors of local specialty crops, like apples, berries, or grapes, change the way you experience a wine or cider?
- What combinations of fruit, herbs, or vegetables with wine or cider have surprised you with how well they work together?
- How can thinking about sweetness, acidity, and texture help you create better pairings at home?
- In what ways does using seasonal, locally grown crops enhance the pairing experience?
- How might pairing local crops with beverages highlight the unique flavors of West Virginia's agriculture?
- How can experimenting with pairings inspire creativity in cooking or entertaining?
- What role do aroma and presentation play in how we perceive a wine or cider pairing with specialty crops?



Activity: Wine & Specialty Crop Pairing

Overview: Participants will collaborate with a local winery to explore pairings of wines or ciders with West Virginia specialty crops.

Workshop Focus:

- Flavor Exploration – Learn how fruits, berries, apples, and herbs complement wines and ciders.
- Sensory Analysis – Discuss aromas, sweetness, acidity, and texture when tasting combinations.
- Pairing Techniques – Explore simple pairings that can be applied at home or in entertaining.

Workshop Goals:

- Understand how local specialty crops interact with wines and ciders.
- Gain confidence creating simple, balanced pairings using seasonal West Virginia crops.

