



## Orchard gives apple picking a new twist

### Ricker Hill tasting room has 8 hard ciders on tap

BY KATHLEEN PIERCE  
BDN STAFF

TURNER — Cider doughnuts have their place. Corn mazes are kid magnets. But dates at apple orchards become suddenly more appealing when hard cider is flowing freely.

And it is at an orchard in Turner. In a new wooden shed, downslope from a sprawling pick-your-own orchard, couples sip cider fermented from pressed McIntosh and Golden Delicious apples at Ricker Hill Orchards. On eight rotating taps, these crisp alcoholic ciders are blended with blueberries, maple syrup and tangy cranberries from a nearby bog. The orchard's year-old hard cider tasting room, complete with flights and flagons (cider's answer to growlers) is like visiting a brewery.

"It's more like a vineyard," owner Andy Ricker said.

Hard cider, after all, is fruit

wine. And after a sample, much like experiencing the tasting rooms of Napa, you can wander through the orchards to see the main ingredient up close.

Since 1803 this orchard in Central Maine has been an apple empire. In 1970 the Ricker family started making sweet cider. Today Ricker Hill produces 500,000 gallons a year. But Andy, the ninth-generation owner and avid home cider maker, convinced his father, uncle, grandfather and cousins that the hard stuff was the way to go.

"It took years," said Ricker, who stood his ground. "We are growing, it's a new venture still."

To help people, from millennials to boomers, fall for the Colonial-era beverage, the 30-year-old Ricker added a cider garden this summer and keeps his tasting room open seven days a week until Thanksgiving.

"We did this to complement our agritainment business with our

pick-your-own and farm stand," said Ricker.

As the hard cider market explodes across the country, Ricker Hill, which owns a handful of other orchards in three counties, is quietly occupying a niche in the market.

**Watch the video**  
bangordailynews.com

Ricker Hill's growing hard cider brand, Mainiac, can be purchased across the state, but going to the tasting room, where experimental flavors such as pumpkin and horseradish flow freely, makes the beverage somehow more appealing. Out of their eight ciders, only four are available for purchase outside the tasting room.

Whether the hard cider business will cut into craft beer sales in Maine is conjecture, but locals at the tasting room Monday were



KATHLEEN PIERCE | BDN

The tasting room at Ricker Hill Orchards in Turner has eight hard ciders, including grapefruit and pumpkin, on tap. A cider garden out back is the newest addition.

lapping it up.

"I love it," said beer distributor Matt Desmond of Windham, sipping a flight at the Turner tasting room Monday. "It's my new favor-

ite place to go."

A few steps away in the packing room, shiny round orbs are washed and graded, with the culls  
*See Cider, Page C2*

## The irony of always being connected

Sometimes it's hard to remember what life was like before we were all super connected all the time. But that's how we grew up, how our parents parented and how life was — until it wasn't.

When I was a little girl, I knew my mom's office phone number and sometimes would call her to say hello while she was working. It was a 50-50 chance that she would actually be there and pick up. And never mind the fact that sometimes my calls would be met with a busy signal. And all that was OK, because instead of text messaging we'd talk about when she'd be home. We had schedules and plans.

When was the last time you heard a busy signal? When was the last time you answered a phone call without knowing who was calling thanks to caller ID?

These days those barriers — the ones that allowed us to focus on one call at a time, to not choose to ignore certain calls and ultimately be less available — don't exist anymore.

We're always connected. I can roll over in the middle of the night, read emails from colleagues and respond without even leaving the cozy comfort of my bed — or fully waking up. Is it a bad habit? Probably. Sometimes, I see friends tweeting in the wee hours and wonder if they, like me, have trouble sleeping some nights.

There are benefits to this technology, though. It means that whether I am in a meeting, out to lunch or driving somewhere, my children's schools can reach me in an emergency. It means that waiting times — such as when I am waiting for my daughter's Girl Scouts meeting to end or when I arrive early to meetings — become productive time to catch up on email, connect with friends on social media and stay abreast of what's happening in the world.

But the downside is considerable. It also means that we have a harder time separating from that connectedness, letting phones infiltrate the family dinner and prioritize doing "one more thing" over actually paying attention to the people we're with. The convenience has made us less observant and more tolerant of ignoring each other and being ignored. Ironically, in the connectedness of the modern world we have become — to an extent — less connected to each other.

But I don't want to be less connected. I want to instill in my kids the art of conversation, the grace of paying attention to each other and the dignity of living in the moment.

Next time you sit down to dinner with your friends or family,



## TURKEY BACON PESTO PARTY SANDWICHES

SERVES 12

### INGREDIENTS

- rolls to fill a 9x13-inch baking pan (I used 12 club rolls)
- 1/3 cup pesto
- 1/2 lb sliced deli oven roasted turkey breast
- 1 7-oz jar roasted red peppers, drained and chopped
- 1/4 lb sliced deli mozzarella
- 1 8-oz package bacon, prepared

### DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Spray a 9x13-inch baking pan with cooking oil spray.
2. Slice open the rolls, and place the bottoms in tight rows in the prepared pan. You don't want there to be space between them.
3. Spoon the pesto onto the rolls, dividing equally among the bottoms. Top with turkey slices, roasted red pepper bits, mozzarella cheese and bacon. Cover with the roll tops. (Make sure they are in the same row pattern as the bottoms!)
4. Slide the pan into the oven and bake for 10-15 minutes, until the sandwiches are hot and the cheese is melty. Use a sharp knife to slice between the rolls to separate the meat and cheese filling. Let cool slightly, and then serve.
5. **HINT** a slim spatula or a fork is handy for getting the first few sandwiches out.



RECIPE: SARAH WALKER CARON  
ART: ERIC ZELZ

put the phone away. Turn off the volume — if you don't already do all these things. And then talk. Really talk. Talk about what

books you're reading. The movies you've seen. The conversations you had at work today. Talk about the classes your kids are taking.

Be there, and enjoy it. Because while we're always connected, it's OK to disconnect and just be to-  
*See Caron, Page C2*

## Another good relish

There is a row of reddening tomatoes on the windowsill, a few more zucchini in a basket, a mere handful of green pole beans, onions drying on the barn floor, red peppers in the hoop house, and believe it or not, we are still picking and eating sweet corn. Most of my big preserving is over but there is still a little more than we can eat up as it comes along.

There are a few easy ways to preserve produce at the end of the season (or any other time, for that matter). As much as I love looking at my cellar-way shelves lined with pint and quart jars full of red tomato sauce, green pickles and deep yellow peaches, and jam jars with strawberry or peach preserves, chutneys and chili sauces, sometimes life is too busy (or it is too warm and lovely outdoors) to retreat to the kitchen, heat a canner full of water, get out the lids and rings, and process all the food. And sometimes there are too few tomatoes to make a batch and I'm not canning zucchini anyway. So here are a few things you can do.

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SANDY OLIVER  
TASTE BUDS

## Rockland food truck heads inside for winter

BY STEPHEN BETTS  
BDN STAFF

ROCKLAND — The food truck 'Wich, Please — which got its start through a Kickstarter campaign last fall — will be moving indoors for the winter.

The final day of the season for the food wagon at Rockland's Buoy Park will be Wednesday. Beginning Saturday, owner Malcolm Bedell will offer daily lunch service at Comida Restaurant, located at 421 Main St.

Comida will continue to operate from 5 to 9 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. Bedell will be open from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. six days a week. On Monday evenings, instead of lunch, Bedell will host 'Wich, Please's weekly "India Night."

"This collaboration with Comida is an absolute dream come true," Bedell said in a news release. "We can't wait to bring our most popular dishes indoors for the long winter, offering our customers a cozy place to eat lunch, while contributing to keeping  
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