

February 3, 2023

Is this Cider's Moment?

Dear Client:

Your editor escaped the winter storm in Texas this week to head to a place much, much colder – Chicago – to cover the American Cider Association’s annual CiderCon event.

We haven’t covered CiderCon in many years, so we weren’t sure what to expect. The cider community – characterized as an “island of misfit toys” by one attendee, as they’re not really brewers, vintners, or distillers – welcomed us with open arms on kickoff night at a cider sharing event.

The event showed off a tight-knit, yet competitive bunch approaching the segment in a highly diverse set of ways. We saw ciders of all different flavors (mango, blueberry, peach, you name it), with ABVs ranging all over the place – being poured from small cans, big cans, small bottles, big bottles, tall skinny bottles, crowlers, and even in bags.

Suffice it to say, this is a highly innovative space where suppliers can cater to existing cider drinkers, beer drinkers, wine drinkers and even the new and growing RTD drinkers.

And though the overall cider segment has posted lackluster trends in recent years as the large brewers have begun to pay less attention to – or even discontinue – their cider brands, after coming down from the rosé craze in 2018, the regional cider segment is still generating solid growth.

NielsenIQ data, presented by 3-Tier Beverages’ Mary Mills at CiderCon, showed that regional ciders grew dollars by 5.4% in food over 2022, generated a whopping 20.4% growth in convenience during the year, and even snagged double-digit growth in drug over the year (+10.3%).

That said, it’s no surprise to hear that regional ciders have seen their share of overall cider jump quite considerably over the past few years, moving from a 33 share in 2018 to a 54 share this past year.

So, there was an optimistic tone of where cider is heading at CiderCon. Not just from cider suppliers, but also prominent retailers too, like Whole Foods. Indeed, Whole Foods’ global principle category merchant for beer, Mary Guiver, shared in a retailer panel at the conference today that she “really and truly” believes this is “cider’s moment.”

As negative attention begins to surround alcohol, like what we have seen in Canada [recently](#), it’s important to call out that products like beer, wine and cider have had a historical context in society for thousands of years, Mary shared.

And Mary detailed her opinion on why cider is uniquely positioned compared to other bev alc.

Cider is a “living” beverage, as opposed to spirits, she said. Plus, cider has a really “beautiful carbon footprint aspect and terroir aspect,” compared to beer. And it has “accessibility” vs. wine – as cider holds a lower ABV, there’s often lower sugar, there’s (more) single-serve, and a lower barrier to entry, Mary said.

So, if you were to create a Venn diagram, “cider is uniquely positioned for consumers to get really excited [about] this year,” according to Mary. “It has a lot of things that all of these other categories don’t have... and this is an opportunity to really shine.”

Much more to come, stay tuned.

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