

## FIELD TRIP



### The Cultural and Cider Riches of the Historic

# HUDSON VALLEY

BY JEFF BOOK

**F**rom late summer through fall, New Yorkers flock to the Hudson Valley's many U-Pick orchards and cideries. The lower valley boasts the biggest concentration of cidemakers in the state (if not the country), while scattered others extend all the way to Albany. And more are on the way: State law facilitates farm-based cideries, provided that they use only New York fruit (a low hurdle in the country's second-largest apple-growing state).

On a recent trip, I focused on target-rich Orange and Ulster counties, west of the eponymous Hudson River. A broad swathe from Warwick to Kingston is home to more than a dozen cider and apple-spirit producers with tasting rooms. The cider tradition here is old indeed: 17th century Dutch colonists drank it, and during the dark days of the Revolutionary War, it lifted the spirits of General Washington and his men.

"When the first leaf turns on Fifth Avenue, people start heading up to the orchards," says cidemaker Jonathan Hull of Applewood Winery. Breathtaking fall foliage is a major draw, but the Hudson Valley is appealing in any season. Along with charming towns and historic houses, major attractions worth a visit include Storm King Art Center, a splendid sculpture park; Dia:Beacon, a factory-turned-contemporary art showcase; and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. You can also tour The Culinary Institute of America's Hyde Park campus or just dine at any of its five restaurants.

TOP RIGHT PHOTO BY STEVE ROE; BOTTOM RIGHT BY JERRY L. THOMPSON







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#### ORANGE COUNTY

Established in 1994, **WARWICK VALLEY WINERY & DISTILLERY** pioneered the area's cider comeback. In 2002 it added American Fruits Distillery, the Hudson Valley's first licensed distillery since Prohibition, and more recently, **BLACK DIRT DISTILLERY**, named for the area's rich ebony soil. Visitors today find a flower-framed patio, café and tasting room. Managing partners Jason Grizzanti and Jeremy Kidde oversee a wide array of offerings that emphasize high fruit quality. Here you can try any of their well-crafted, widely popular **DOC'S DRAFT** ciders — apple, pear, sour cherry, raspberry, pumpkin, cassis and hopped — as well as award-winning fruit brandies, liqueurs and cordials. The port-style apple liqueur, a barrel-aged blend of cider and apple brandy, is one of many delights.

In their expansive Warwick farm stand, the Pennings family sells baked goods, ice cream, pub fare and much else along with the bounty of their land, which they've owned since the 1950s. Stephen Pennings is only half-joking when he says they built the new cidery, **PENNINGS FARM CIDER**, to keep the next generation involved. Set amid the orchard, the barn-style structure houses an airy taproom with maple-slab bar and tabletops, where cider is served

by the pint, growler, bottle or in tastings or flights. Cidermaker Steve Pennings, Jr. — known as S.J. — crafts a mainstay off-dry cider, along with a drier, dry-hopped one and others incorporating honey, raspberries and other estate-grown fruit. He's planting and sourcing traditional cider apples, so Pennings ciders will continue to evolve.

At three centuries and counting, **APPLEWOOD WINERY** in Warwick is the oldest working farm in Orange County. The Hull family began planting apple and peach trees in 1949, adding grapes in 1994. "We opened the winery 20 years ago," Jonathan Hull says. "We actually produced cider first, then wine." Overlooking a pretty lake, the tasting room offers at least six of his **NAKED FLOCK** ciders on tap (also available in bottles, cans and growlers), including the anchors of Original, Draft and Citra-hopped ciders, and others such as Lemon Ginger, Pumpkin (spiced with cloves), Currant (made with fermented currants) and a cider-Riesling blend. In summer and fall, U-Pick crowds find live music and applewood-fired pizzas and paninis. "I like to say that every weekend we have a focus group," Hull says. "I can carbonate a keg of something new and see how people like it." A recent addition: apple-based Applewood Vodka.

Farther north in Washingtonville, America's oldest winery (in operation since 1839), **BROTHERHOOD WINERY**, has recently added hard cider to its tasting

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“I like to say that every weekend we have a focus group,” says Jonathan Hull of Applewood Winery. “I can carbonate a keg of something new and see how people like it.”

room offerings. Made from dessert apples, the sippers from its **STANDARD CIDER CO.** are fruity and off-dry to sweet in style, and come in 750-milliliter bottles. Tour the vast underground cellars, then try offerings such as ginger-infused True Companion cider or Rebel Reserve, which includes cider apples and spends four months in oak barrels before bottling.

Drawing on the century-old roots of Soons Orchard in New Hampton, partners Jeff Soons, Andrew Emig and Karl duHoffmann aim to transpose the farmhouse cider traditions of England, France and Spain to the Hudson Valley, making food-friendly ciders with minimal intervention in their **ORCHARD HILL CIDER MILL**. “We don’t pasteurize but use UV light and age our cider for a year to let the flavors come together,” says Soons. Their tasting room presents crisp variations on that philosophy, along with their acclaimed Ten66 pommeau — a nod to Normandy’s history and celebrated cider-brandy blend, properly aged in French oak barrels. Soons is putting in an acre-and-a-half of Kingston Black, Dabinett, Black Twig, Brown Snout and other cider apples to supplement the Northern Spy, Winesap, Suncrisp and other dual-purpose varieties.

Located on an old 60-acre orchard in Walden, **ANGRY ORCHARD**’s new Innovation Cider House has all the flair you’d expect from the best-selling producer. A self-guided tour through the rustic-contemporary structure leads past history-of-cider displays and the small-scale cidery where

head cidemaker Ryan Burk experiments with different ingredients and methods, such as barrel aging and wild fermentation, to come up with new ciders like the new Orchard’s Edge releases. In the light-filled tasting room, you’ll find these and other established ciders such as Hop’n Mad and The Legend of the Muse, along with limited-production concoctions (like the wild-fermented, barrel-aged Farm Cider and the French-style Dear Brittany) not available elsewhere.

The young **CHRISTOPHER JACOBS WINERY** at Pennings Vineyards in Pine Hill owned by Christopher and Monica Pennings makes a single, off-dry apple wine called Appleosa, from Granny Smith, Rome, Gala and Portland apples. Vineyard, mountain and meadow views and a warm welcome await visitors.

#### ULSTER COUNTY

The view from the tasting room (attached to a century-old barn) is reason enough to visit **GLORIE FARM WINERY** near Marlboro. “We’ve grown apples and grapes for more than 30 years,” Doug Glorie says. “We don’t do events — just wine and cider.” After 18 months of testing, he and oenologist Kristop Brown settled on an ideal ratio of four apples (Jonagold, Northern Spy, Granny Smith and Stayman) to make the **MUTINY HARD APPLE CIDER** (named for the 1611 event that cast Henry Hudson fatally adrift on Hudson Bay, depicted on the label). Cider lovers will also appreciate Glorie’s Peach and Black Currant wines.

LEFT AND TOP CENTER PHOTOS  
BY ANGRY ORCHARD

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“We’ve grown apples and grapes for more than 30 years,” says Doug Glorie of Glorie Farm Winery. “We don’t do events — just wine and cider.”

Against a backdrop of scenic rolling hills, **WEED ORCHARDS & WINERY** welcomes agritourists with U-Pick fruit, hayrides, a corn maze, a playground and live music. “We’ll get a couple of thousand visitors on an October weekend,” John Weed notes. The fifth generation to work this land, he added a winery that released its first ciders and wines this year. A former fruit-packing house is now a cozy tasting room presenting Weed’s line of **HOMEGROWN HARD CIDER** (made from estate-grown Winesap, GoldRush and Empire), a drier single varietal GoldRush cider, versions infused with blueberries and peaches, a variety of craft beverages from other New York producers and a menu of pizzas, burgers and other crowd-pleasing fare.

## WHERE TO STAY

**BEAR MOUNTAIN INN**  
Bear Mountain, NY ➔ [visitbearmountain.com](http://visitbearmountain.com)

**CALDWELL HOUSE BED & BREAKFAST**  
Salisbury Mills, NY ➔ [caldwellhouse.com](http://caldwellhouse.com)

**BUTTERMILK FALLS INN**  
Milton, NY ➔ [buttermilkfallsin.com](http://buttermilkfallsin.com)



Old friends Devin Britton (an avid fermenter-brewer) and Albert Wilklow (a sixth-generation apple grower) started **BAD SEED CIDER CO.** in 2011, at first passing out samples in New York City greenmarkets. They’ve grown into a production facility in Highland with a spacious main taproom and upstairs bar. “We make dry cider, unfiltered, with no back-sweetening,” says Britton, who draws from old and new cider techniques and craft beer influences. Along with the flagship Dry cider, look for their dry-hopped IPC (India Pale Cider), Bourbon Barrel Reserve, a raspberry cider (“with a pound of berries per gallon of cider,” according to Britton) and others. “Eighty percent of what’s on tap is only available here,” Britton says (e.g., Space Cadet — made with Apollo hops). Tours are offered in September and October.

Despite the name and the familiar bridge on the label, **BROOKLYN CIDER HOUSE** is rooted in Twin Star Orchards in New Paltz (with a satellite facility in Bushwick slated to open late this year). After 25 years in the wine business, Peter Yi had a career-changing epiphany in a Basque cidery. “It wasn’t just the cider, it was the way it worked with food,” he says. “Our aim is to make cider as natural as possible, cider that pairs well with food.” With partner Mikel Martiarena (a Basque native) and “Cider Goddess” Lindsey Storm, Yi crafts dry, European-style ciders that do just that. A third of the apples he uses are the sweet varieties that draw U-Pick crowds in fall and the rest are cider and heirloom apples. The tasting room offers the first four — Bone Dry, Still Bone Dry, Kinda Dry and the tart, citrusy Half Sour. The unfiltered and wild-fermented Raw debuts in October. They also sell produce and New York artisanal cheeses, wines and spirits, as well as burgers and wood-fired pizzas.

New York’s first whiskey distillery since Prohibition, **TUTHILLTOWN SPIRITS DISTILLERY** has

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also put local fruit to good use from the start. Its Indigenous apple-based vodka plays well with cider in cocktails. Apples and wheat combine with juniper, cardamom, elderberry and other botanicals to yield the heady Half Moon Orchard gin. Partners Ralph Erenzo and Brian Lee also produce top-shelf triple sec, cassis and cacao liqueurs and bitters. Enjoy any of their libations and seasonal New American cuisine in a well-regarded, on-site restaurant housed in a 1788 gristmill.

Another popular destination for fruit lovers, **DRESSEL FARMS** occupies long-cultivated land beneath the rock-ribbed Shawangunk Mountains (called “the Gunks” by locals). Third-generation grower Tim Dressel helps operate the 450-acre family farm while running his **KETTLEBOROUGH CIDER HOUSE**, where he produces ciders using a traditional rack-and-cloth press. His main cider — made with Northern Spys and Granny Smiths — is bone-dry, with zero residual sugar. A second, Honey Honey, is off-dry, sweetened with Honeycrisp juice and wildflower honey. Another is lightly hopped. To expand his choices, Dressel has planted three acres of coveted cider apples such as Chisel Jersey, Michelin, Medaille d’Or, Golden Russet, Cox’s Orange Pippin and Smokehouse.



The grande dame of Hudson Valley cider (in the late 1990s, she introduced her orchard to Martha Stewart on TV), Elizabeth Ryan favors dry cider in the English and French tradition, made from numerous varieties. At her **STONE RIDGE ORCHARD** in Stone Ridge and another orchard across the river, Ryan and team grow more than 150 varieties of apples. “We do a lot of small-batch ciders, often light, quaffable scrumpys you can only get at the orchard,” she says of her sippers at **HUDSON VALLEY FARMHOUSE CIDER**, available only in growlers or on-tap. Among the pillar bottled offerings is God Speed the Plough, a still blend of English cider apples, and sparkling Maeve’s, a pub-style cider with floral and citrus notes. This fall, a new tasting room will supplant the old red shed where visitors now find cider, local produce and gourmet farm products. “I’m always looking for things that embody craft and tradition and will keep people living on the land,” Ryan declares.

With the ongoing growth of its cider, fruit-spirit and cider-apple production, the Hudson Valley promises increasing rewards to touring tipplers. Come for the cider, linger for this majestic valley’s historic and cultural riches and scenery that inspired early America’s best artists. ♦

## FOR MORE INFO:

Hudson Valley Tourism ➔ [travelhudsonvalley.com](http://travelhudsonvalley.com)

Orange County Tourism ➔ [orangetourism.org](http://orangetourism.org)

Ulster County Tourism ➔ [ulstercountyalive.com](http://ulstercountyalive.com)

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