



**New Zealand Fruit Wine & Cider
Awards 2026**

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New Zealand Cider Awards 2026

Introduction to the 2026 Cider Awards & Style Guidelines

The Fruit Wine and Cider Makers Association of New Zealand (FWCMA) is pleased to present the 2026 New Zealand Fruit Wine & Cider Awards. First held in 1984, the Awards recognise excellence in New Zealand-made cider, fruit wine, mead and other fruit-based beverages, while celebrating innovation and quality across the industry.

To reflect the growth and diversity of the sector, the Awards continue to operate as two competitions: the New Zealand Cider Awards and the Fruit Wine & Mead Awards.

The New Zealand Cider Style Guidelines are reviewed annually by the Organising Committee and updated as required prior to each competition. The Guidelines are intended to:

acknowledge the diversity of cider styles being produced in New Zealand;
identify the characteristics and style expectations for each competition class; and
provide a consistent reference for entrants and judges.

All enquiries regarding the Awards should be directed to fwcmanz@gmail.com.

Rules For Entry

1. Entry is open to all New Zealand non-grape wine makers involved in commercial operation. Non-grape wine includes mead, cider, perry and fruit/vegetable wine.
2. All producers must have paid all the annual levy prior to the close of entries before their entries will be accepted. Producers who become members after the current levy has fallen due are exempt from this requirement but must pay the first levy invoiced following their membership within seven days of receipt of that invoice.
3. Entries must be commercially available at the date of the Awards Presentation, with the exception of the Evaluation and New Zealand Origin Class.
4. When Fruit Wine & Cider medals are used for marketing purposes, the year that the award was attained must be included, ie: 'Gold Medal 2023' not simply 'Gold Medal'
5. Entries are restricted to commercially packaged cider, with the exception of the Evaluation Class 6 and New Zealand Origin Class 13.
6. All entries must comply with the FSANZ code for fruit and vegetable wine (i.e. are compliant for supermarket sale). FWCMA considers that entries using herbs (e.g. hops) and culinary flowers (e.g. elderflowers) are also eligible.
7. The MINIMUM production batch of any product entered must be 225 litres of packaged product for Classes 1 - 5. Class 6 (evaluation) and Class 13 (NZ Origin Cider) has no batch size requirements.
8. Entry forms are online.

9. Payment of all entry fees must be received by the published payment due date. Entries for which payment has not been received by that date may be disqualified from the Awards.
10. Entries must be sent to "NZ Fruit Wine & Cider Awards", c/o Elemental Cider, 129 Taylors Rd, Otaki, 5583.
11. Entries will be eligible for awards and trophies. Class 6 are not eligible for trophies.
12. All entries must comply with the statutory requirements of Country of origin. E.g. production and subsequent amendments as to composition and labelling, which must include alcohol and capacity statements.
13. There shall be no limit to the number of entries provided that each entry is a different product clearly and separately identifiable by label. The same product cannot be entered into two different classes.
14. Temporary clearly marked labels may be used where commercial labels are not available, temporary labels must comply with the above requirements.
15. Label descriptors or product claims will dominate which category it is entered into. E.g. If a product is called "dry", it needs to be entered into the dry category regardless of sugar content.
16. Participation of entries that are late or do not meet with the above requirements will be determined by the Head Steward.

Disputes

The decision of the Chief Steward in the matter of any dispute or doubt arising from the interpretation of these Award regulations or in the conduct of the competition or analyses shall be final.

Important Dates for 2026:

- 7 August - Entries open
- 29 August - Entries close.
- 1 September - invoices sent
- 4 September - Entries must be received by the Stewards. To: NZ Fruit Wine & Cider Awards c/o Elemental Cider, 129 Taylors Rd, Otaki, 5583
- 7 September - Payment due.
- 15-16 September - Judging
- 13 November - AGM & Awards Presentation, Nelson

Judging

Judging Protocol

- All judging will be conducted using “Blind” panels. Each entry will be identified by a number assigned by the Stewards. Judges will see only that number, along with any other information required to properly assess the entry, such as turbidity, stylistic notes etc.
- Entries will be judged on appearance, aroma, flavour and overall impression. Gold, Silver and Bronze awards are awarded based on this assessment. Judges are not compelled to make awards if the entries do not merit them.
- Medals are awarded on the following basis
Gold: *Outstanding example* 95 – 100 pts
Silver: *Excellent example* 90 – 94.5pts
Bronze: *Very good example* 85 – 89.5 pts

Trophies

Trophies will be allocated to the highest scoring cider in each trophy category as prescribed below:

Best Cider Trophy	Classes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 13 eligible
Best Fruit Wine & Mead	Classes 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11 eligible
Best Modern NZ Cider	Class 1 eligible
Alex Peckham Memorial Trophy Traditional Cider	Class 2 eligible
Best Perry/Pear Cider	Class 3 eligible
Best Cider with Fruit	Class 4A eligible
Best Cider with Berries	Class 4D eligible
Best Cider with Hops, Spices, Botanicals, or Honey	Class 4B, 4C eligible
Best Specialty Cider	Class 5 eligible
Best Alcoholic Soda	Class 7 eligible
Best Table Wine	Class 8 eligible
Best Fortified Fruit Wine/Liqueur	Class 9 eligible
Best Mead	Class 10 eligible
Best Alcoholic Kombucha/Hard Tea	Class 11 eligible
Champion Producer	Classes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11 eligible

In the case of a tied highest score, the tied ciders will be re-analysed to allocate the Trophy recipient.

The highest scoring cider must have been awarded at least a silver. If the highest scoring cider is a bronze, then no trophy will be given. No trophy will be given for classes with fewer than two entries.

At the judge's discretion, additional trophies may be awarded to winners of club-classes where there are outstanding examples in competing sub-classes (e.g. Within Classes 4 and 5).

The Champion Producer Trophy awards the producer that exhibits the best range of cider and fruit wine overall in the competition. In determining the winner, points are awarded to producer medal winning entries (gold = 3, silver = 2, bronze = 1) which are totalled and divided by the producer's total number of entries.

The Judges

This year the judging will take place in Nelson. Our judges for 2026 will once again be led by Merophy Hyslop.

Sponsors

This event wouldn't be possible without the continuing support from industry sponsors. They come from all sectors such as supply, delivery and distribution, and retail. We would like to thank the sponsors for their generosity.

Event sponsors will be displaying at the awards, as well as representatives of their companies being present. Please take a moment to talk to them, they could possibly add value to your business.

Awards Fees

Entry fee is \$65 (incl GST) per entry.

An invoice will be emailed on 1 September with payment due on 7 September. In the event of cancellation, all entry fees will be refunded.

Late entries may be accepted at the discretion of the Head Steward and incur a \$5 per entry late fee.

Entry Forms

We are using an online entry and judging system that was successfully used in 2024. It has been adapted from CiderAustralia. Please contact Jack at fwcmanz@gmail.com if you have any issues or questions.

Sweetness: Refers to the apparent amount of sugar present in the finished cider (after fermentation).

The classes are delineated by Specific Gravity (SG) and Residual Sugar (RS) because these measures of sweetness are considered the best way to group products for assessment at the present time. You can use either (SG) or Residual Sugar (RS).

Sweetness	Specific Gravity	Residual Sugar g/L
Dry	Less than 1.004	Less than 9g/L
Off-Dry	1.004 to 1.008	9 to 20.5g/L
Medium	1.008 to 1.015	20.5 to 38.2g/L
Sweet	More than 1.015	More than 38.2g/L

Carbonation: Describes the level of dissolved gas in the cider and does not refer to the process used to put the gas into the cider.

	Carbonation
Still	Still means little or no carbonation, if any bubble should be barely perceptible.
Low	Some prickle contributed by the carbon dioxide, definitely contributing to mouthfeel but not necessarily 'fizzy'.
Moderate	Moderate carbonation, petillant, approaching that of typical beer, less than would be expected in a sparkling wine (1.5g/L (~0.75 vol) to 4g/L (~2 vol)).
High	Highly carbonated, significant presence of carbon dioxide – sparkling, may retain some head or mousse (more than 4g/L (~2vol)). Gushing, foaming and excessive head formation however, are considered as faults.
Methode Traditional (MT)	Fermented in bottle and then disgorged. May have high carbonation.

Alcohol: Refers to the ethanol component present in the cider or fruit wine.

ABV: Alcohol by volume (abbreviated as ABV) is a standard measure of how much alcohol (ethanol) is contained in a given volume of an alcoholic beverage, expressed as a volume percent. A legal requirement on the labels of alcoholic beverages.

2026 NZ Cider Awards Entry Classes

Please refer to the New Zealand Cider Style Guidelines for detailed descriptions of the classes. It is important to ensure products are entered in the correct Class, as the Competition can take no responsibility for judging scores affected adversely by entry into the incorrect class.

Class 1: Modern Cider

- Dry <9g/L residual sugar or Final S.G. of < 1.004
- Off Dry 9-20.5g/L residual sugar or Final S.G. of 1.004-1.008
- Medium 20.5-38.2g/L residual sugar or Final S.G. 1.008-1.015
- Sweet > 38.2 g/L RS residual sugar or Final S.G of > 1.015

Class 2: Traditional Cider

- **2A Dry** - up to 20.5g/L residual sugar or Final S.G. of < 1.008
- **2B Medium** - 20.5-38.2g/L residual sugar or Final S.G. 1.008-1.015
- **2C Sweet** - more than 38.2g/L residual sugar or Final S.G of > 1.015

Class 3: Perry / Pear Cider

Minimum 75% Pear juice, maximum 25% Apple juice, with no other fruit or flavouring, and must have the characteristics of Pear Cider. Maximum of 9% ABV. Please include SG on entry form.

Class 4: Cider Blends

- **4A Cider with Fruit**
Cider or Perry/Pear Cider made with fruits and/or berries. Max ABV 9%. Does not include ciders with a blend of fruit and spices, botanicals etc. Please include SG, what fruit(s) and/or fruit juice(s) were added on entry form.
- **4B Cider with Spices or Botanicals**
Cider or Perry / Pear Cider made with added spices or botanicals, including ginger, chili, chocolate/cocoa, elderflower, as well as these blended with fruit. Max ABV 9%. Please include SG, what spice(s), botanical(s), fruit(s) and/or fruit juice(s) were added on entry form.
- **4C Cider with Hops**
Cider or Perry / Pear Cider made with added hops. Max ABV 9%. Please include SG on entry form.
- **4D Cider with Berries**
Cider or Perry/Pear Cider made with added berries only. Max ABV 9%. Does not include ciders with a blend of fruit and spices, botanicals etc. (Blackcurrant is considered a berry for this category) Please include SG, what fruit(s) and/or fruit juice(s) were added on entry form.

Class 5: Specialty Cider

- **5A Ice Cider**
Cider made from fruit frozen prior to pressing or juice that has been freeze concentrated. No added sweeteners (e.g. sugar or AJC) allowed. ABV 7 -13%. Please include SG on entry form.
- **5B Bottle Fermented Cider**
Cider or Perry / Pear Cider that has been fermented in bottle. Please include alcohol and SG on entry form.

5C Low/zero Alcohol Cider

Cider , Perry / Pear or Cider with Fruit with max ABV 2.5%. Please include alcohol and SG on entry form. These ciders can be made with the addition of any other fruit or flavour.

- **5D Fortified Cider**

Cider or Perry / Pear Cider that has been strengthened by the addition of a spirit (normally distilled cider) to cider or juice (eg Pommeau)

- **5E Other Specialty**

Cider or Perry / Pear Cider that **does not fit in any other category**. Open ended class intended for particularly innovative ciders. Please note SG, alcohol and include notes for judges on intended style on entry form. Judges and stewards reserve the right to put ciders entered into this class into a more appropriate class if they see fit.

Class 6: Evaluation Class

Suitable for cider produced in small non-commercial or experimental quantities. Please note on the entry form which class you wish the entry to be judged in. Medals will be awarded, but entries will not be eligible for trophies.

Class 13: NZ Origin Cider Class

Cider made from apples with:

- Minimum of 85% from apples bred and grown in NZ (see note below).
- No minimum volume requirement,
- Temporary labels compliant with regulations are acceptable for competition entry/judging.

Gold Medal winners eligible for Trophy, however entries in volumes not meeting minimum requirements (rule 7) and commercial availability (rule 5) will not be eligible for higher awards.

The list of Apples bred and grown in New Zealand includes CANZ apples and many others including: Gala, Braeburn, Jazz, Envy, Pacific Rose, Pacific Queen, Smitten, and Lemonade. If you are unsure, please contact us to confirm which apple varieties are NZ bred and eligible for this category.



New Zealand Cider Style Guidelines 2026

Introduction

These Cider Style Guidelines acknowledge the diversity of cider styles being made in New Zealand, identify common characteristics and descriptions for the types of cider, and act as a reference point for competition entrants and judges.

Please note that excessive sulphides, acetification or brettanomyces character are faults. If the judges perceive these characteristics to be detrimental to the cider more than adding complexity, ciders will be judged as having faults.

Class 1: Modern Cider

Modern ciders are simpler in style than Traditional ciders and accentuate the fruit used. They tend to be cleaner and more wine-like and can be carbonated or still. Cider is a minimum 75% fermented apple juice with a maximum 25% pear juice and a maximum 9% ABV.

- Fruit forward with apple character.
- Clean with little to no sulphides.
- Generally lower in tannin although not necessarily.
- Straw to gold in colour.
- Light to medium body. May be short-lived.
- Sweet ciders should not be cloying, dry cider should not be too austere.

Class 2: Traditional Cider

Traditional Ciders are more complex in style than Modern Cider and may be reminiscent of English or French ciders. May be carbonated or still. Cider is a minimum 75% fermented apple juice with a maximum 25% pear juice and a maximum 9% ABV.

- Characters such as bitterness, astringency, smoky, spicy, phenolic.
- May have use of oak or malolactic fermentation for complexity.
- Low level sulphides acceptable.
- Generally higher in tannin.
- Gold to amber colour.
- Medium to full body.
- Sweet ciders should not be cloying, dry cider should not be too austere.

Class 3: Perry/Pear Cider

Minimum 75% pear juice, maximum 25% apple juice, with no other added fruit or flavouring. Maximum of 9% ABV.

- Can be estery, floral and perfumed.
- Generally quite pale.
- Light to medium body depending on tannin level and sweetness.
- Some pears contain significant amounts of sorbitol, in which case a dry perry may give the impression of sweetness due to the sorbitol in the pears. Perception of sorbitol as sweet is highly variable from one person to the next. Hence, entrants should specify sweetness according to actual residual sugar level, and judges should be aware they might perceive more sweetness than how the perry was entered.
- Sweet ciders should not be cloying, dry cider should not be too austere.

Class 4: Cider Blend

This category covers:

- 4A Cider with Fruits
- 4B Cider with Spices or Botanicals
- 4C Cider with Hops.
- 4D Cider with Berries

- Generally cleanly made with little to no sulphides.
- Blended components should be in harmony with cider character and the aroma and flavour should be reminiscent of what was blended.
- Can vary greatly from light to full bodied depending on the blending components, sweetness and alcohol.
- Sweet ciders should not be cloying, dry cider should not be too austere.

Class 5: Specialty Cider

Specialty Ciders are less common than the styles of Cider in the other Classes and use specialist techniques or processes during production to achieve certain outcomes. Given the huge range of potential different styles, flavours and characters in this Class, each cider will be judged on its own merit in the context of its speciality style.

This category covers:

- Class 5A: Ice Cider.

- Full bodied and rich.
- Sweet but not cloying.
- Balanced sweetness, alcohol, acidity and tannin.

- Class 5B: Bottle Fermented

- Finer bubbles.
- Increased mouthfeel, texture and complexity.
- May be cloudy.

- Class 5C: Low/Zero Alcohol Ciders.

- There is no classic profile for this type of cider, and the end product will vary widely dependent upon the apple variety used and the methods through which this range of alcohol has been achieved.
- Credit will be given to ciders which demonstrate good body, complexity and balance.

- Class 5D Fortified Cider.

- The wood and/or barrel character may be a notable part of the overall flavour profile giving structure and complexity.
- Gold to amber colour.
- Medium to full body.

- Class 5E: Other Specialty Cider.

Cider entered into Class 5E are ciders that **do not fit into any other category** because of some innovative, unique or experimental process used. Please include notes for the judges on the processes used. Credit will be given to ciders that demonstrate good body, complexity and balance. Ciders must also demonstrate characteristics of the techniques or processes used.

Class 13: NZ Origin Cider

This category covers a range of cider apples unique to NZ, to allow development of new styles of cider to potentially excite new consumers and grow export sales. Given the huge range of potential different styles, flavours and characters in this Class, each cider will be judged on its own merit in the context of its speciality style.

- There is no classic profile for this type of cider, and the end product will vary widely dependent upon the apple variety used and the methods through which this range of alcohol has been achieved.
- Credit will be given to ciders which demonstrate good drinkability, balance and overall quality.

2026 Fruit Wine & Mead Awards Entry Classes

It is important to ensure products are entered in the correct Class, as the Competition can take no responsibility for judging scores affected adversely by entry into the incorrect class. **Please include SG and specify fruits and flavours used on entry form.**

- 7 **Alcoholic Soda**
Effervescent, clean tasting, soda like beverages made from fermented fruit or sugar. Additional flavourings derived from added fruit or juice concentrates only.
7A - Seltzer & Spritzer Style Sparkling Fruit Wines
7B – Alcoholic Lemonade
7C – Alcoholic Gingerbeer
7D – Other Alcoholic Soda (incl. kombucha and hard tea)

8. **Table Wine** (8% - 14% Alc. by Vol.)
8A – Still
8B – Sparkling

9. **Fortified Fruit Wine / Fruit Liqueur**
9A Fortified Fruit Wine (14% - 23% Alc. by Vol.)
9B Liqueurs (>15% Alc. by Vol.). Fermented or non-fermented fruit juice base.

10. **Mead**
10A – Honey Mead – honey/sugar only
10B – Metheglin – honey with spices/herbs
10C – Melomel – Honey with fruits
10D – Fortified Mead & Mead Liqueur (>15% alc by Vol)

- 11 Void (no class)

12. **Evaluation Category**
All fruit wine falling into the above classes whereby an evaluation will be given. Suitable for fruit wine produced in small non-commercial or experimental quantities. Please note on the entry form which class you wish the entry to be judged in. Medals will be awarded, but entries will not be eligible for trophies.

The Fruit Wine and Cider Makers of New Zealand would like to wish all entrants the best of luck!