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NEWS FROM THE TASMANIAN INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Cider tasting keeps Tassie at top of its game

Ten of Tasmania's leading craft cider-makers will gather in Launceston this morning to taste-test multiple batches of trial ciders as part of research that is helping grow the State's premium craft cider industry.

The Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) is advancing the industry through research into strategies that yield unique characteristics and consistently produce high-quality ciders.

Today's taste testing of 20 different ciders is the result of trials led by TIA researcher Dr Fiona Kerlake who has partnered with industry to test different fermentation approaches.

"We analyse the ciders for differences in phenolics that affect mouth feel," Dr Kerlake said.

"From the tasting we will get clues on whether the different yeast and nutrient applications have had a consistent effect on the sensory character of Tasmanian craft ciders.

"By working closely with industry in this way, scientists learn from practitioners and the cider makers have a chance to feed directly into our research. We get terrific support from these people who have skin and heart in the game."

TIA is working with industry collaborators to better understand the hallmarks of top-quality cider and the complexities of cider fermentation as part of the Institute's joint venture between the Tasmanian Government and the University of Tasmania.

TIA cider project member Dr Anna Carew said the 12-month research project is producing a troubleshooting guide for craft cider-making, which will assist new and growing cider businesses to consistently produce top-quality products.

"Our job here is to assist Tasmanian apple growers and cider makers to build their reputation and produce premium products through applied scientific knowledge," Dr Carew said.

"This research will give industry information about strategies for growing and handling apples before they arrive at the cider press, possible adjustments to the primary fermentation process, and on how ciders are handled during that risky time just before bottling to consistently produce ciders of distinction.

"It is important for us to identify practices to consistently produce unique, boutique cider from Tasmania's available dessert apples.

"Targeted and co-operative research with industry like this generates rich and useful outcomes."

Cider is booming in Australia with double-digit growth and retail sales are expected to exceed \$1 billion in retail sales by 2019 (IBIS World).

Tasmania currently has around 16 craft cideries, each contributing to Tasmania's growing reputation as a gourmet foodscape and travel destination.

Local cider maker for Red Brick Road Cider and treasurer of the national industry body Cider Australia, Karina Dambergs, says Tasmanian ciders are gaining international recognition as having a unique and distinctive taste.

“It’s crucial that we maintain and build quality into every part of the production process,” Ms Dambergs said.

“This research by TIA will help us crack some of the main challenges for small cider makers in turning out the very best quality product from every local apple we process.”

The establishment and success of a Tasmanian cider industry offers orchardists an important option for increased profitability through the sale of seconds and thinnings.

After four generations of growing apples for the fresh fruit market, the family-run Spreyton Fresh orchard in north-west Tasmania decided to try value-adding by turning some of their apples into apple juice in 1998 and then cider in 2012.

Spreyton apple grower and cider maker Damien Viney said: “Craft cider-making is giving Tasmanian apple growers a viable option for all that fruit we can’t send to export or put on a supermarket shelf – fruit that’s perfectly wholesome, but just not that pretty.

“If Tasmanian ciders can stay at the top of the pack in terms of quality, that avenue for our fruit is assured.”

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