

CONSUMER ACCEPTANCE ON THE SENSORY CHARACTERISTICS AND NATURALITY OF DRY AND MEDIUM DRY APPLE CIDERS AVAILABLE ON ESTONIAN MARKET

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The growing popularity of apple cider is giving orchard owners a new opportunity to add value to their product. Although, it is defined by the Estonian Government's regulation what kind of drinks can be produced and sold under the name „cider“, the small producers are finding it difficult to define „natural cider“ to consumers. The production cost of ciders differs a lot within the industry: big producers use apple wine, sugar and flavorings to create cider whereas small producers ferment pure apple juice into cider and do not add sweeteners and flavorings.

The aim of this work is to understand how consumers accept the sensory quality of different dry and medium dry apple ciders available on the Estonian market and how they understand the term “natural cider”. Six different ciders with different sensory characteristics and production technologies were obtained from the Estonian market. The consumer test was carried out in Estonia with 84 consumers who assessed the color, odor, taste, sweetness, acidity, general acceptability and naturalness of the ciders. Consumers also filled a check-all-that-apply questionnaire, explained what does the phrase „natural cider“ mean to them and determined the price they would pay for the assessed ciders. All ciders were tasted from small plastic cups marked with three digit random numbers, therefore there was no additional information influencing the consumers response. The sugar and acid profile of ciders was measured with HPLC to correlate sourness and sweetness with actual sugar/acids ratio.

The results of the consumer test showed that consumers liked a sample that was “unnatural” mass production cider Fizz Original Dry most. This shows the influence of flavorings and sweeteners that are used by big producers. On the other hand, consumers understood well that Fizz Original Dry was not “natural” and labelled some of the other samples as “natural” according to personal understanding. The results from this consumer study also helped to understand the acceptance level of acidity and sweetness in apple cider. This information was later used to balance the flavour of natural apple cider produced by the local Estonian apple cider producer.



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