

**Bedford Farmers Club**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of October 18, 2017**  
**Thompson's Cider Mill**  
**335 Blinn Road, Croton-on-Hudson, New York**



President James Wood called the meeting to order at approximately 3:30 pm. The Club's visit was graciously hosted by owners Geoff and Liz Thompson. Approximately 12 club members were in attendance.

Elin Peterson, Club Secretary, summarized the minutes of the September 2017 meeting.

Jim Wood announced Nick Markoff's desire to retire as the Club's Treasurer. This news was greeted with mixed emotions: both with great gratitude and appreciation for a job extremely well done and with hope that his health will soon rebound and place him once again on the crest of the wave. Jim Wood moved to elect Roger Vincent as Club Treasurer to succeed Nick. Roger agreed to serve if elected. The motion also included the elimination of Nick Markoff and Shirley Lindefeld as signatories and the addition of Roger Vincent and Mary Farley as signatories to the Club's accounts with the Tompkins Mahopac Bank. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Geoff Thompson began the meeting by offering a brief history of his business and an explanation of how his volunteer involvement with the adjacent Teatown Lake Reservation led to the establishment and growth of his own apple orchard and cider business.

All assembled then embarked on a tour of the orchard, meeting employee Julio along the way. Geoff stopped at various trees to explain the characteristics of each apple variety and to allow members to sample a slice of each.

One variety is known as Hudson's Golden Gem. It is a russeted apple, with rough skin and brown spots. In older days, this apple was valued both for its excellent taste, as well as for how well it kept. With the onset and proliferation of refrigeration, aesthetics have become more important.

Other varieties sampled included Winter Banana, Red Harrelson, White Winter Pearmain, Jersey Black Twig, Roxbury Russet, Granny Smith, Pink Lady, Arkansas Black and Kidd's Orange Red, Liberty, and Idared.

Jersey Black Twig is good for hard cider. Roxbury Russet is a very early variety. Older heirloom varieties tend to be biannual bearers.

The Idared apple is a variety first developed by Club member Roger Vincent's grandfather, Clarence Cornelius Vincent, while he was a professor at the University of Idaho.

Heat is not good for the maturing fruit. As autumn heat waves can lead to premature dropping, higher temperatures often force earlier picking. Apples freeze below 27 degrees. While cider can be frozen and stored for long periods, the freezing of apples destroys them.

Apples were first brought to the United States by European colonists. They originated in the Caucasus Mountains near the Caspian Sea. It is thought that they first were brought to Europe via the Silk Route and then were dispersed throughout the Roman Empire.

Crab apple trees are used as the hardy rootstock onto which budding branches of apple trees are grafted in order to produce a new tree within the orchard.

Hudson Valley Honey brings their bees to Thompson's orchard for pollination purposes.

One problem Thompson must contend with is voles, which dig tunnels and destroy the apple trees' roots.

Jim Wood noted that his family's cows used to become literally inebriated by eating the apples within their orchard.

The apple residue left after pressing for cider cannot be composted, as it becomes a very thick goop. Thompson's residue goes to Stone Barns, where it is fed to the pigs.

After touring the orchard, Club members entered the store, where Thompson demonstrated the cider press's operation. The steps involved include washing, slicing, pressing, exposure to UV light (per NYS law), and refrigeration. Club members were able to purchase apples, cider and hard cider.

Members were then invited into the Thompsons' home for wine, cider and food.

Respectfully submitted by Elin Peterson.



Geoff Thomson, Jim Wood & Twink Wood.



Roger Vincent in front of an Idared apple tree, a variety developed by his grandfather.







# The New York Times

WESTCHESTER DINING | AT THE FARM

## Doughnuts and Cider: Wonders of Autumn



Thompson's Cider Mill, owned by Geoff Thompson, above, who grows 30 varieties of apples and makes ciders from blending a minimum of seven.

By ALICE GABRIEL  
Published: October 29, 2010

**FRESH** apple cider is one of autumn's great glories, from the first bracing batches, made with early-ripening types like McIntosh and Jonamac, to the last sweet blends, made with late-hanging Winesaps, Yellow Russets and Idareds. Right now, we're in the thick of cider season, which begins around the time children start planning their Halloween costumes and ends between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Geoff Thompson of Thompson's Cider Mill, in Ossining, runs one of the few remaining commercial cider operations in Westchester County. In the mid-1970s, Mr. Thompson had what he describes as a personal epiphany when he drank cider from a hand-cranked press at Teatown Lake Reservation, the nature preserve and education center in Ossining, where he was working part time as a jack-of-all-trades.

"The director was trying to come up with little fun programs for Saturdays, and he rounded up some old cider presses," Mr. Thompson said. "I'd drunk apple juice as a kid, but never cider. I'd never tasted anything remotely like it — it was like a nectar of the gods. After that, I noticed how each variety of apple imparted a different flavor, and from that moment, literally that day, I became fascinated with apples."

Having drunk the cider, Mr. Thompson bought an old orchard, cleared it out and planted anew. He credits Drew and Wayne Outhouse, of

Outhouse Orchards, in North Salem, for providing lore and logistics when he was starting out.

"They said they'd be happy to help anyone who was crazy enough to go into the cider business," Mr. Thompson said.

Taking a scholar's approach to pomology, he also turned to "The Apples of New York," first published in 1903, which in two volumes describes more than 1,000 varieties of apples growing at the turn of the century in the state.

Mr. Thompson's 520-tree orchard now produces a staggering 30 varieties, both modern and heirloom, which he blends with an alchemist's zeal. Each weekend, he lists the apples starring in that week's cider on a little blackboard — the minimum number is seven — and sets it out where customers can see it. His late-season cider, which incorporates apples that have been in cold storage, tends to be more sweet and complex.

"Apples are always oxidizing, so the sugar is always going up — the longer they're sitting, the sweeter they're getting," said Mr. Thompson, who holds back enough tart varieties to ensure that his cider is never cloying. "The cider I like the best is in November, when I have every apple from my orchard to draw on."

Few matches in the culinary universe rival that of cold, cloudy apple cider and a warm cider

doughnut dusted with cinnamon sugar. One of the perks of buying apple cider at its source is that most self-respecting cider operations also make their own fresh cider doughnuts. Doughnut machines are marvels of mechanical engineering, and children especially delight in watching one at work. Most involve a sequence that goes something like this: Rings of cakelike batter drop from an overhead hopper and plop into a canal of hot fat; a current nudges the sizzling doughnuts along, and once they are brown on one side, a little arm flips them over to brown on the other side. Drained of fat, the fried beauties are carried up a conveyor and toppled into a pile, destined to a life as either sugared or plain.

Salinger's Orchard, Outhouse Orchards and Wilkens Fruit and Fir Farm all have machines that are open to view. Mr. Thompson, who is something of a purist, focuses on making cider, but he gamely stocks doughnuts from a local baker. "You almost have to have them," he said.

Cider season is fleeting, but real aficionados know that cider in plastic jugs freezes beautifully. Mr. Thompson said that one customer bought a freezer for the sole purpose of preserving cider throughout the year. "He proudly comes around every fall and says, 'I just finished my last gallon of cider,'" Mr. Thompson said. "And then he starts filling up his freezer again."

### IN SEASON

Sources for fresh-pressed apple cider and cider doughnuts in Westchester and southern Putnam Counties:

#### OUTHOUSE ORCHARDS

130 Hardscrabble Road, North Salem; (914) 277-3188 or outhouseorchards.info. Proximity to I-684 translates into big crowds on weekends; it's a saner scene on weekdays. Open daily, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Cider is \$5.95 a gallon; doughnuts are 75 cents each, or \$6 a dozen.

#### SALINGER'S ORCHARD

230 Guinea Road, Brewster; (845) 277-3521 or salingersorchard.com. Salinger's, established in 1901, is just north of the Westchester County line, off I-684. Attractions include a glass-enclosed hive crawling with honeybees, which treats visitors to a close-up view. Open daily, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Cider is \$5.49 a gallon; doughnuts are 55 cents each, \$2.99 a half dozen, or \$5.59 a dozen.

#### THOMPSON'S CIDER MILL

335 Blinn Road, Croton-on-Hudson; (914) 271-2254 or thompsonscidermill.com. Visitors can watch the cider press in action from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. Open Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., through Thanksgiving weekend. Cider is \$7.50 a gallon; doughnuts are \$1 each.

#### WILKENS FRUIT AND FIR FARM

1335 White Hill Road, Yorktown Heights; (914) 245-5111 or wilkensfarm.com. Fresh cider is sold through the Christmas-tree cutting season; frozen cider is sold year-round. Open daily, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Cider is \$5.75 a gallon; doughnuts are 75 cents each, or \$4 a half dozen.