

APPLEJACK

APLENTY

Big Crop of Apples Ensures a large supply of Cider and its Strong Sister.

WHAT EXPERTS SAY
Presidential Year Always A Record Breaker - The Farmers Pay.

There's bound to be good apple When 'lection time is near. And applejack is always best In Presidential year.

In Morris and Sussex counties there is a widespread belief in the theory proclaimed in the above lines. There they assert that the apple crop is always big in a Presidential year, and that, as a consequence, applejack and its little sister cider are then at their best.

This was Presidential year, and those who believed in the adage before have more reason than ever to have faith in it now, for this has been one of the best apple years ever known in New Jersey. The crop has been plentiful and the quality of the fruit is up to the best standards. That is good for the cider manufacturers and the applejack distillers of this State, but the farmers see no cause for joy in it. For them,

overabundant crops are not as good as mediocre crops, because when the fruit is plentiful the price paid for it is not large. It is then that the cider makers and the applejack men reap the advantage of the abundant fruit, and so it happens that the mills of the makers of apple juice are grinding exceeding fast these days.

There was a time when almost every farm of any pretensions in this State maintained its own cider mill and apple distillery. That was in the days before there was a government tax on distillation or a revenue supervision on the quid output of the home distilleries. It was then that New Jersey earned world-wide fame for its applejack, sometimes irreverently designated as "Jersey lightning." Things have changed since then, but the reputation of the State as the producer of the best quality of applejack has not abated one jot. If anything it has been enhanced by the unsuccessful efforts of apple distillers in New York State and in the West to compete with the New Jersey article.

Those who profess to be connoisseurs assert, after the emphatic manner of all professed experts, that there is no liquor made of apples that is to be compared with the New Jersey brand. They go even further, and declare that while applejack of an excellent quality is made in all parts of this State, the very best, the kind that has no known counterpart,

comes from Morris and Sussex counties. They attribute certain excellencies of the brand in these two counties to the superiority of the fruit, which, they say, is due to the high elevation at which it is grown. The soil and atmospheric conditions are also given some credit for the fine fruit, and the excellence of the liquor made from it is said to be due in no small degree to the water that is used in distillation process. These experts on the subject of applejack assert that a peculiar tone and favor is imparted to the liquor by the local conditions, just as there are certain kinds of foreign wines that can only be made in particular districts.



The oldest applejack distillery in this State, so far as a "Sunday News" representative was able to learn, is in Mendham, Morris County. It has been in active operation for many years more than a century, but just how many more

the "Sunday News" man could not ascertain. Simon Thompson, a descendant of the family that controlled the apple mill for generations, is practical farmer, who gave up operating the mill some half dozen years ago. He declared that it would be almost impossible to tell how long the mill had been in operation, but he said he was certain that it had been owned by his family for fully one hundred years and that when the first of his family took charge of it, after the close of the Revolution, it had been in existence for a long time. In the early days men who operated the apple mill did it in conjunction with their usual farm work.

Simon Thompson followed the custom of his family for some years, but not long ago he found that the demands that the mill made on his time interfered with his farm work. It was a question of giving up his farm or the mill, and after serious consideration he concluded to devote all his time to farming. This arrangement was made possible through Thomas Loughlin, of Newark. The latter had for years taken all the liquor that the old mill could produce, and was familiar with its operations. There came a time when the Newarker thought he would like to live in the country for a goodly part of the year, and the operating of the apple mill gave him the excuse that he had long desired. Mr. Loughlin accordingly got control of the oldest apple mill in the State, and there he spends much of his time.

The mill stands in the hollow near the old Mendham road, just below the famous church on the hill. The building has a lowering peaked roof. In fact when it is viewed from the road it appears to be all roof. It is blackened with age, and the old joists and beams indicate its antiquity. At all seasons of the year, but particularly in summer, when the countryside is full of sojourners, the mill is a great object of curiosity to visitors. They go there in costly automobiles and lumbering farm wagons to see the ancient structure, and to get an idea how the famous applejack of New Jersey is made.

The present owner has made several additions to the place and installed some modern improvements, but he has not changed the old mill in any of its architectural details, except to make necessary repairs, for he is a native Jersey man, who takes delight in ancient things. Inside the mill are many huge vats for storing the apple juice, the big copper retort, in which the liquor is distilled, and the knuckle press, in which the fruit is placed after it has been chopped up fine by the knives set in a cylinder. The miller of today, unlike his predecessors, does not depend altogether upon manual labor for extracting the juice of the fruit; steam and improved mechanism have taken the place of the slow-moving hand toilers.

It was a busy scene that greeted the "Sunday News" man and a staff

photographer when they visited the apple mill this fall. There was a string of farmers' wagons, all loaded with apples, waiting their turn to dump their fruit on the rosy hillock of apples that stood close to the mill doors. That hill of apples, red and green, with the red fruit predominating, presented a pleasing sight. About 10,000 bushels of the fruit were heaped there, and more was being added to it all the while.



The season at the mill begins with the month of September, and lasts as long as there is a bushel of apples to be gathered from the trees or picked from the ground. It is well known among the apple growers that there are prizes and souvenirs for the men who add to the applejack man's store of apples. The man who brings in the first load of apples is sure of a present of a quart of the best apple jack man's store of apples. The man who brings the biggest load also wins a prize. There is keen competition among the farmers to see who will win the latter prize and some of the wagons are so heavily loaded that it takes double teams to draw them. Thus far the applejack man has had about

40,000 bushels of apples unloaded at his mill, and he expects ten or twelve thousand additional bushels before the entire apple crop of the countryside is gathered.

The apple growers take their pay for the fruit in cash, cider or applejack. Most of the apples taken to the mill are the wind-falls. Not a few farmers, however, are picking apples off the trees this year and sending them to mill because they cannot get a price sufficient to pay them to ship the fruit to the produce dealers. The farmers who take pay for their fruit in applejack are allowed one gallon of the liquor for eight bushels of apples, and must also pay the revenue tax on it. Nearly all those who take their apples to the mills take full or part payment in cider or applejack for home consumption.

It is computed by one who delights in getting down to the base of things that it requires ten apples to make one drink of applejack. It takes from one and three quarters to two bushels of apples to make a gallon of cider; eleven gallons of cider are needed to make one gallon of apple brandy. The late apples yield more juice than the early fruit. When the fruit is ground and pressed and the juice is vatted it goes into the elder vats, where it is allowed to foment for three weeks. It is then distilled.

The distilling process requires experience and constant watchfulness, and when the still is in operation there must always be a man on guard with a

hydrometer to take the proof tests of the liquor as it is run off. No rectifying is done at the mill. The revenue officers pay periodic visits to the place and make inspections of the mill and its contents. When the liquor has been barreled it is sent to the bonded warehouse, where it may remain for eight years.

Expert applejack makers declare that the liquor is at its best when it is four years of age: after that it does not improve in the wood. It is estimated that the applejack output for this State this year will reach fully 1,000,000 gallons. This includes the output of the distilleries in North and South Jersey, besides those of the home of the applejack in Morris and Sussex counties.

Mendham Distillery

Mendham, N. J., August 24, 1906.

Dear Sir:

Being desirous of making a large quantity of "Tiger Apple Jack" this season, I have decided to offer a series of **Cash Prizes**, divided into four parts, to the parties bringing to the distillery the four largest numbers of bushels of apples during the season, as follows:

\$30	for the largest No. of bushels.
\$15	for the 2d largest No. of bushels
\$10	" 3d " " "
\$5	" 4th " " "

In addition to these prizes, I propose to pay a fair price for apples, as I have always done.

No tedious waiting.

Hoping that you can see your way clear to bring your apples to me, I am,

Yours, very truly,

Thomas J. Loughlin.