

## The history of apples



1875

The introduction of apples to Hirosaki is credited to John Ing, a teacher of To-o Gijuku School in Hirosaki, who treated his students to Western apples on Christmas of this year. Since around that time, the new government actively pursued agricultural promotion policies, seeking new varieties of seeds and saplings from overseas and distributing them nationwide.

1877

Shigeki Yamano, a sericulturist from Hirosaki, achieved the first successful apple cultivation at kitchen garden (currently Hirosaki University School of Medicine), harvesting three apples. The cultivation of apples progressed through the research and efforts of pioneering individuals, paving the way for the establishment of apple orchards in various places. After the abolition of the feudal domains, apple cultivation became a recommended occupation for former samurai families.

1890

At the 3rd National Industrial Exhibitions held in Tokyo, Hirosaki apples were awarded the Second-Class Merit Prize. Subsequently, the value of apples as a commodity was increasingly recognized, and with the opening of railways, distribution expanded from Tohoku to Hokkaido, Kanto, and Kansai regions.

1904

With the introduction of innovative bagging technology (bagged farming) and spraying of chemicals like Bordeaux mixture, and as new pruning methods were researched, cultivation technologies significantly advanced, thereby establishing the commercial position of apples.

1906

Aomori Port was designated a special export port, and the Tsugaru Apple Export Union was established, exporting apples overseas including to Shanghai.

1908

Refrigeration was used for apple transportation.

1964

The First Apple Flower Festival was held in Tokiwazaka, Hirosaki (currently Apple Park).

1968

Due to changes in consumer preferences such as a significant increase in the production of oranges and strawberries and an increase in banana imports, the price of Jonathan apples and Ralls Janet apples plummeted, leading to a phenomenon known as the "Mountain and River Market," where large quantities of apples were discarded in mountains and rivers. As a fundamental measure to overcome the recession, rapid promotion of variety renewal was undertaken.

1973

Verifying the high-performance mechanization technology system through dwarf apple cultivation, Apple-dwarfing model orchards were established in Hirosaki and elsewhere to serve as dissemination base.

1974

In Hirosaki, the Aomori Apple Centennial Celebration Ceremony was held. Relatives of John Ing, who first introduced apples to Hirosaki were invited from the U.S.

1989

The 37th National Apple Research Conference was held in Hirosaki.

1990

Sales of apples from Aomori Prefecture in 1989 exceeded 100 billion yen for the first time, reaching approximately 109.3 billion yen, the highest ever.

1991

Typhoon No. 19 caused unprecedented damage ever in the history of apple cultivation.

2008

Hail damage caused the largest-scale damage in history.

2023

Sales of apples in 2022 were approximately 118.4 billion yen, exceeding 100 billion yen for nine consecutive years. It was also the highest ever recorded since the calculation began in 1980.

## What makes cider so appealing?



Cider is an alcoholic beverage made by fermenting apple juice. The ciders produced in Hirosaki are made from a blend of one or more types of apples for raw consumption, as well as immature apples removed during the production process.

Depending on variations in production methods such as yeast strains and fermentation durations, a diverse array of flavors emerges, ranging from sweetness to dryness, each imbued with distinctive characteristics and crafted with meticulous attention to detail. How about enjoying the great cider of Hirosaki?



The Apple House in Hirosaki City Apple Park offers a wide range of ciders from both within and outside Hirosaki.

### Hirosaki City Apple Park

125 Terasawa, Shimizu Tomita, Hirosaki, 036-8262

Tel: (81)172-36-7439 Fax: (81)172-36-7458

Open all year Admission: free

Hours: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.



# Hirosaki is the origin of Japan's cider!

## Hirosaki cider history



In 1954, inspired by western cider, Isamu Yoshii founded Asahi Cidre Co., Ltd. as a cider company. The company established its factory at the present location, now known as the Hirosaki Museum of Contemporary (Yoshino, Hirosaki), and produced Japan's first authentic cider, "Asahi Cidre." The manufacturing techniques was passed on to Nikka Whisky, and currently, cider production takes



place at the Nikka Whisky Hirosaki Distillery. In 2014, Hirosaki was certified as House Wine Cider Special Zone, leading to an increase of cidre breweries in the city and a thriving craft cider industry.



## How production of apple cider started

The production of apple cider captured people's attention, as they had to deal with a huge amount of apples for processed food, aside from apples for raw consumption

## Towards fully-fledged cider making

Birth of Japan's first authentic domestic cider

Round  
1899

- Junichi Matsuki from Matsumori, Hirosaki, started marketing an apple cider fermented by adding sugar to apple juice.

1930

- Takedate Industry Union, in collaboration with a French trading company, planned cider production.

1939

- Yasaku Sato and Takeo Tanaka launched the Miyuki Champagne Company in Kuroishi, Aomori.

1940

- Miyuki Champagne Company moved to Hirosaki and was renamed Miyuki Company, making apple cider and sparkling apple cider. The factory has relocated several times and borrowed the factories of Hirosaki Meijo, located in Tomita, Hirosaki, as well as brick factory (currently Hirosaki Museum of Contemporary Art) of Fukushima Brewery, located in Yoshino, Hirosaki, which was built by Tosuke Fukushima.

1941

- During Pacific War, apple cider production began in response to insufficient sake production due to the rice shortage.

1953

- Yoshii Isamu, the president of a sake brewery in Hirosaki who succeeded Fukushima Brewery, spent two months inspecting cider-making methods in Europe and recruited skilled cider brewers. This marked the beginning of cider business.

1985

- Nikka Whisky launched fresh Nikka Cidre using an unheated production technique.  
\* Later, Nikka Whisky became Asahi Breweries (today' Asahi Group Holdings)' subsidiary. To this day, the Nikka Whisky Hirosaki Factory has been producing cider and distributing it nationwide.



1972

- Nikka Whisky Hirosaki Factory manufactured and marketed "Nikka Cidre."



1965

- Nikka Whisky Hirosaki Factory constructed and relocated to a new facility in Sakae, Hirosaki.



1960

- Masataka Taketsuru, the founder of Nikka Whisky, was commissioned to take over the cider business, leading to the establishment of the Nikka Whisky Hirosaki Factory.



1956

- "Asahi Cidre" was launched as Japan's first authentic domestically produced cider.



1954

- In collaboration with Asahi Breweries, Ltd. (now Asahi Group Holdings), "Asahi Cidre Co., Ltd." was established.



## Toward the production of new ciders

The start of craft ciders

2006

- Establishment of the "Aomori Apple Cider Study Group."  
\* Administrative office: the current Aomori Industrial Technology Center, Hirosaki Industrial Research Institute (a local independent administrative agency)

2010

- "Act on Agricultural Diversification and on Local Consumption of Local Produce" enacted. Hirosaki was certified as "Hirosaki House Wine Special Zone."

2012

- Hirosaki inspected Beuvron-en-Auge, a village in Normandy, France, signing an agreement for technical guidance on cider production with the village.



2013

- Establishment of the Aomori Apple Cider Promotion Committee. (Administrative office: A-FACTORY). Formation of the "Hirosaki Cider Research Association" (Administrative office: Hirosaki City). Applicants interested in cider production visit Beuvron-en-Auge.



2014

- Certified as "Hirosaki House Wine Cider Special Zone." The minimum production quantity requirement for fruit wine made from apples and grapes produced within Hirosaki City was reduced from 6 kiloliters per year to 2 kiloliters per year.
- Hirosaki's first craft cider was launched, triggering an increase of craft cider breweries in Hirosaki.
- "Cider Night" (a cider grand-prix contest) was held for the first time.
- At this point three cider breweries were seen operating in Hirosaki.



2021

- Hirosaki Cidre Study Group was renamed as Hirosaki Cider Association and began operating as a privately-led organization.

2023

- During the "Hirosaki Downtown Picnic 2023" held at Yoshino Town Green Space, the cider event "Cider Picnic," including "Cider Night," was organized.
- At this point there were eight cider breweries seen operating in Hirosaki.

