CIDER TASTING REPORT

NOV, 2025
AHI POPUP AT W SHANGHAI

On the evening of November 8th, the Ahi Pop-Up at W Shanghai—curated by acclaimed New Zealand Chef Ben Bayly and produced by Tribal Brands Asia—hosted an exclusive cider tasting for Shanghai's leading wine trade and culinary professionals. The session showcased a range of award-winning ciders made from specialty apple varieties cultivated through the Cider Apples NZ (CANZ) programme.

The event served a dual purpose: to collect initial feedback on the cider's sensory profiles and market potential, and to build relationships with key trade professionals—all laying the groundwork for larger-scale trials for the CANZ China market research project.

The event was honored by the presence of Allan White, co-founder of CANZ and the pioneering geneticist behind its cider apple varieties, alongside distinguished New Zealand government officials including Hon. Todd McClay, Minister of Trade and Export Growth; Hon. Jonathan Austin, New Zealand Ambassador to China; and Mr. Chris Metcalfe, Regional Director for Greater China at New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE). They were joined by leaders from renowned NZ exporters such as Regal King Salmon and Fiordland Lobster, coming together in an immersive celebration of New Zealand's food story and unique terroir.

The tasting brought together an influential group of leaders from Shanghai's culinary, hospitality, and trade sectors, ensuring high-quality, actionable feedback.

Culinary & Hospitality Leaders:

- **Chef Samuele Rossi:** Chef & General Manager, Bella Vita Restaurant Group
- **Chef Gianluca Serafin:** Celebrity Italian Chef & Restaurant Consultant
- **Chef 小熊 (Xiao Xiong):** Executive Chef, Waldorf Astoria Shanghai
- **Leon:** Co-owner, One-Michelin Starred Restaurant Obscura
- **Crystal:** Restaurant Manager, Prada Rong Zhai
- **Jonathan:** Executive Chef, Yunnan Bistro Huoshaoyun

Beverage Trade & Distribution:

- **Cao Yang:** Sommelier & Key Account Manager, Summergate
- **Franklin Chiang:** Founder, "Next Bottle" (Wine Dealer)

Retail & E-commerce:

- **Linda Lin:** Head of R&D, Luckin Coffee
- **Kevin Shen:** Research & Development, Starbucks China
- **Zoe & Cici:** Representatives from ”日食记" (Leading Social Commerce Platform)

CIDER PAIRING

‘PĀUA ‘HASH BROWN’
Braised Tahu pāua + potato rosti + asparagus

‘WHITEBAIT FRITTER’
Awarua Whitebait + Wild Legend Lobster mousse & bisque

‘WAREHENGA’
Kingfish + burnt cucumber + ponzu avocado sorbet

’HĀMANA’
Roasted Regal New Zealand King Salmon + Koji chowder + caviar

‘KUMARA & SICHUAN’
Kumara, Sichuan & Tatua Mascarpone ice cream + flambé marshmallow + Whittaker's chocolate crumble

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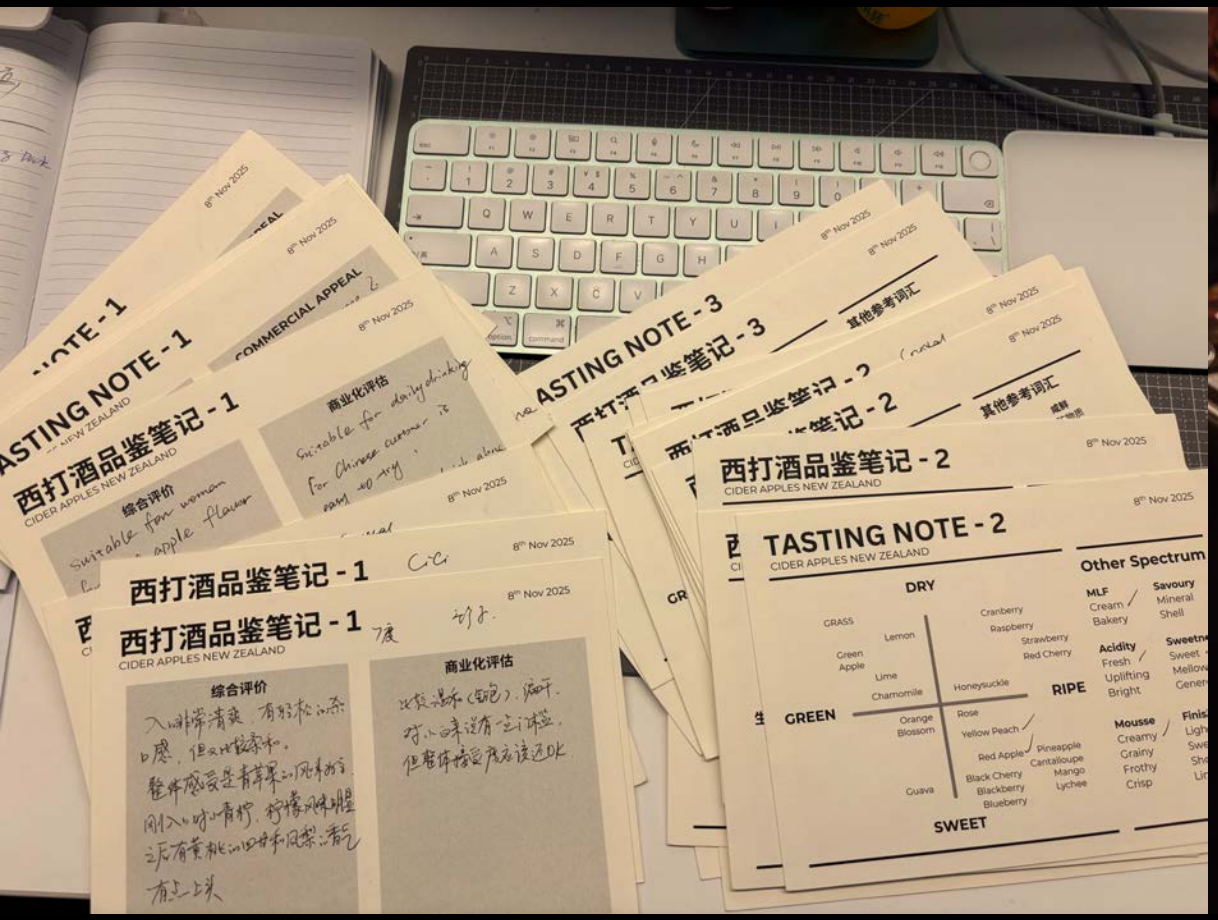
Āporo Secco

AWA

Blushing Pomme



Structured tasting cards were prepared for each cider SKU, capturing detailed sensory profiles across key dimensions—including aroma, flavor, and mouthfeel—alongside a general evaluation of the product and its commercial potential in China. The insightful feedback gathered provides valuable guidance for refining our methodology, approach, and experiential design in upcoming market research trials and interviews.

Raw data and detailed feedback are available in the shared spreadsheet on the drive.

TASTING FEEDBACK REVIEW

The following feedback synthesizes insights from our importer partner, Juliana, and the guests at the Ahi tasting.

Juliana's analysis is informed by her knowledge of the CANZ varietals and her professional experience within the wine industry.

In contrast, the guest feedback was collected with minimal prior information to capture their intuitive, first-impression responses.

This dual approach provides both expert and wider perspectives, offering a well-rounded view of the sampled Ciders.

Āporo Secco | The Cider Factorie

Overall Reception:

Widely praised for its approachability and refreshment. Consistently described as "easy to drink," "fresh," and "crisp" with a well-balanced profile. The gentle, fine bubbles and smooth finish were highlighted as key positive attributes.

Āporo Secco | The Cider Factorie by Juliana

Component	Description
Visual	• Pale lemon-green, bright and clear • Fine, persistent bubbles
Aromas & Flavours	• Aromatic nose of lemon, orange blossom, green apple • Overall an elegant expression, with delicate aromas and flavours. • Good representative of varietal characteristics, relatively low intervention cider-making intended to demonstrate purity of fruit
Palate	• Linear, refreshing acidity, well balanced with the fresh, juicy fruit flavours; • More stonefruit/green melon flavours on the palate • Very clean and vibrant palate, dry with some ripe fruit sweetness coming through. • Light bodied with a short-to-medium, very clean and crisp finish of green apple flavours • Frothy mousse
Commercial	This cider is very elegant and easy to appeal to many mainstream audience who consumes NZ white wine. The purity of fruit is similar to that of a NZ Sauv Blanc or Italian Pinot Grigio. For Chinese audience, this is on the dryer side, suggested for more evolved drinkers (e.g. regular wine drinkers). Channel - Upmarket bistro, high-end grocery, specialty wine/craft beer retail/on-prem
Pairing Suggestions	• This cider is easy to pair, it goes well with most flavours • Can either pair with light dishes such as burrata, seafood (ceviche, raw fish, shellfish), or pair with creamy dishes e.g. seafood chowder, or white sauce based pasta.

Āporo Secco | The Cider Factorie by Ahi Guests

Component	Description
Visual	• Consistently described as having "fine bubbles," "nice and light bubbles," and a "creamy" or "frothy" mousse.
Aromas & Flavours	• Guests strongly confirmed the core profile of green apple, lemon, and lime. Several tasters noted additional complexity, including yellow peach, pineapple, lychee, and honeysuckle, confirming the "delicate" and "complex" aromatic character.
Palate	• Overwhelmingly described as "crisp," "refreshing," "easy to drink," and "clean." The "gentle, lively prickle" and "smooth" sensation were frequently mentioned. The finish was widely noted as "light" and "lingering," with a pleasant, "mellow" sweetness that balances the dryness.
Commercial	• Confirmed as "very easy to drink," "approachable," and a "good alternative for sparkling wine." Specific mentions of being "lady-friendly" and perfect for "bistros, picnics, or beaches." Pricing suggestions from trade buyers ranged from ¥99-128.
Pairing Suggestions	• Strongly supported its food-friendly nature. The successful pairing with the pāua and kingfish dish at the event was a key validation.

AWA | The Cider Factorie

Overall Reception:

Generally perceived as a more complex and bold offering. It was noted for its pronounced acidity and drier profile, appealing to a different segment than the Āporo Secco.

AWA | The Cider Factorie by Juliana

Component	Description
Visual	• Pale salmon-orange • Very small, fine bubbles
Aromas & Flavours	• Aromatic nose of crunchy, crisp red apple, leading into stonefruit of white nectarine • Hint of yeasty, autolytic aromas of dough
Palate	• Very dry and crisp on the palate, it feels dryer on the palate than on the nose • Zesty, crisp flavours of apple, cherry • A hint of creaminess on the palate suggests some Malolactic fermentation, a bit more 'coating' mouthfeel
Commercial	This cider is an interesting exploration with a red-flesh fruit. It reminds of a Provence-style rose with its very pale colours (trendy!) and simple, crisp flavours.
Pairing Suggestions	• This cider would be great for a cheese platter, charceuterie, sashimi • Could also consider Guizhou or Hunan food with some fermented/spicy flavours such as 擂茄子(加皮蛋版）, smoked ham-hog, dried bamboos etc. • Great for oily foods, deep fried foods

AWA | The Cider Factorie by Ahi Guests

Component	Description
Visual	• The color was frequently cited as "more appealing" and "trendy." Feedback on the mousse was mixed, with some noting a "stronger crisp mousse" and others finding it "grainy" or in need of improvement.
Aromas & Flavours	• Guests detected a more complex and intense profile, noting red berries, dried apricot, cranberry, strawberry, and a distinctive red bell pepper note. Some found it less aromatically complex than the Áporo Secco.
Palate	• Recognized for its "pronounced," "high," and "bright" acidity. The palate was described as "bold," "more sour," and "more structured," with a finish that was often noted as "shorter" than the other SKUs.
Commercial	• Polarizing commercial feedback. It was seen as "more of a men's drink," suitable for "high-end restaurant" wine pairing. However, others noted its "appealing color" would be loved by "female customers." Suggested pricing was higher, with one guest recommending ¥168 SRP.
Pairing Suggestions	• Strong agreement that it is "good with heavy flavoured food."

Blushing Pomme | The Cider Factorie

Overall Reception:

Recognized as the sweetest of the three, making it the most immediately approachable for a broad audience. Feedback suggested it has a distinct, if subtle, aromatic profile.

Blushing Pomme | The Cider Factorie by Juliana

Component	Description
Visual	• Pale salmon pink
Aromas & Flavours	• This cider expresses a much riper style, with a bouquet of juicy stonefruit such as yellow peach, apricot, yellow nectarine, verging into tropical territory (papaya?)
Palate	• Medium-sweet, this cider is the sweetest out of the 6 • Very clean, linear fruit flavours, can be considered quite simple • Generous on the palate with ripe, juicy stonefruit flavours. Despite its colour, this cider tastes closer to white wine grown in a warm climate. • The acidity is relatively low especially against the higher sugars, thsi cider doesn't have the same refreshing mouthfeel and firm structure like the others.
Commercial	This cider is on the sweeter side with simple ripe stonefruit flavours. For the untrained palate, this is very 'easy to love' as it does not require much of a learning curve for first-time drinkers. This could be considered an entry level to the offerings.
Pairing Suggestions	• This cider is a little sweeter, can be considered to pair with cold Shanghainese dishes such as sweet and sour ribs (糖醋排骨凉菜版）, 熏鱼, 素鸡 etc. The sweetness is also appealing for spicy-sweet sichuan dishes such as 蒜泥白肉， 口水鸡，钟水饺。

Blushing Pomme | The Cider Factorie by Ahi Guests

Component	Description
Visual	• Pale salmon pink
Aromas & Flavours	• Guests confirmed the ripe stonefruit character, citing yellow peach and red apple. Some found the aroma "distinctive and unique, with subtle fruit notes," while others simply noted a "dried fruit" character.
Palate	• Consistently identified as the "sweetest of the three." Described as having a "smooth and rounded mouthfeel" with "gentle, soft bubbles." The "low" acidity and "simple" but "easy to love" profile were confirmed.
Commercial	• Universally seen as the "most approachable for a broad audience" and a potential "mass-market entry-level option." A key and repeated recommendation was to "enhance the bubble sensation" to increase sophistication and appeal.
Pairing Suggestions	• Strongly endorsed as "perfect to pair with dessert."

Prior to the Shanghai event, a tasting was held at Ahi Auckland with John, Ben, Juliana, and the Ahi team, where a broader range of cider SKUs was sampled. The following is a summary of feedback from Juliana, a certified WSET wine professional with extensive China market experience.

Pure Blush | The Cider Factorie

Component	Description
Visual	• Medium-deep Orange pink • Darkest in the set, made from a red-flesh apple variety
Aromas & Flavours	• This cider is full of red, ripe berry fruit, strawberry, boysenberry, similar to a Pinot Noir. Also some notes of white nectarine.
Palate	• Off-dry, this cider resembles very juicy, delicious ripe red fruit and stonefruit flavours • Acidity is very well balanced with the rest of the cider, works well structurally however not obvious like other examples (rose/aporo secco) • This cider offers more on the palate than on the nose. Crunchy, fleshy fruit flavours, very fresh and fruity • Fine bubbles, generous on the palate, with a lingering clean nectarine finish.
Commercial	This cider is also very entry-level friendly. It is more nuanced and complex compared to Blushing Pomme, with a more balanced (sweet vs sour, fresh vs creamy) structure. Depending on the pricing, this has potential to be a ‘crowd-pleaser’ with wide appeal, the colour is also appealing, especially in the glass.
Pairing Suggestions	• N/A

Apple Blossom | Elemental Cider

Component	Description
Visual	• Slightly cloudy, pale gold • Very fine but full bubbles
Aromas & Flavours	• This cider is beautifully floral, with notes of honeysuckle, pear-drops, lily of the valley, which leads into ripe cantaloupe and juicy soft white nectarines. • The bouquet is delicate and very pretty
Palate	• This cider is bone-dry, however very pleasant as the ripe juicy fruit notes are generous and balancing. • Refreshing, structural acidity (hint of astringency) without tipping into access, with some light coating creaminess and a honeyed syrup-like texture. • Very very clean on the palate, especially given the pat-nat-esque production method. Long lingering finish with beautiful clean crisp flavours of white nectarine.
Commercial	This cider is tastes like an expensive German Mosel riesling or Alsace Pinot Gris. It is very aromatic with layers of appealling aromas and flavours, and a lasting crisp, clean finish. This all speaks to great quality. This cider is very much built for high-end fine dining, bespoke omakase/tasting menus. It would be a very pleasant surprise for those with a refined and educated palate.
Pairing Suggestions	• This cider is quite versatile in pairing. Beautiful by itself, suggest pairing with aromatic savoury dishes such as 龙井虾仁，茶香排骨，茉莉花炒蛋， anything with green-sichuan peppers. Also great with soft cheeses.

Vanilla Blossom | Elemental Cider

Component	Description
Visual	• Medium Lemon • Cloudy
Aromas & Flavours	• This cider is the most complex and nuanced of the selection. Very elegant and restrained use of oak, with some light hints of toast, vanilla and ripe apple, quince, Belgian red pear (比利时红梨)
Palate	• This cider is bone-dry, however very pleasant as the flavours are generous. • Very clean palate considering the also pat-nat-esque production methods. • Acidity is very well balanced with the rest of the cider, elegant in structure, very crisp taste balancing with the rich ripe flavours • A coating, creamy palate with textual complexity, full bodied (compared to all other examples in the set) and layered flavour delivery. Reminds of a very premium vintage champagne (much lighter in flavour than wine obviously) and long, clean finish.
Commercial	• This cider is the most ‘expensive’ tasting of the set, simialr to Apple Blossom, suited for fine-dining, tasting menus and specialty wine retail.
Pairing Suggestions	• This cider would work well with fellow ‘expensive’ ingredients such as caviar, truffle (burgundy and/or white truffle, perigord too earthy), battered oysters, creamy grilled lobsters, Hokkaido scallops, NZ scampi sashimi. Preferably lighter dishes with minimal seasoning that highlights the quality of the produce and the cider. Would work very well with Cantonese cuisine, especially blanched/steamed seafood.



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