

# RAISE A GLASS OF CIDER TO THE CORBERRIE FLYNNNS

BY SANDRA PHINNEY

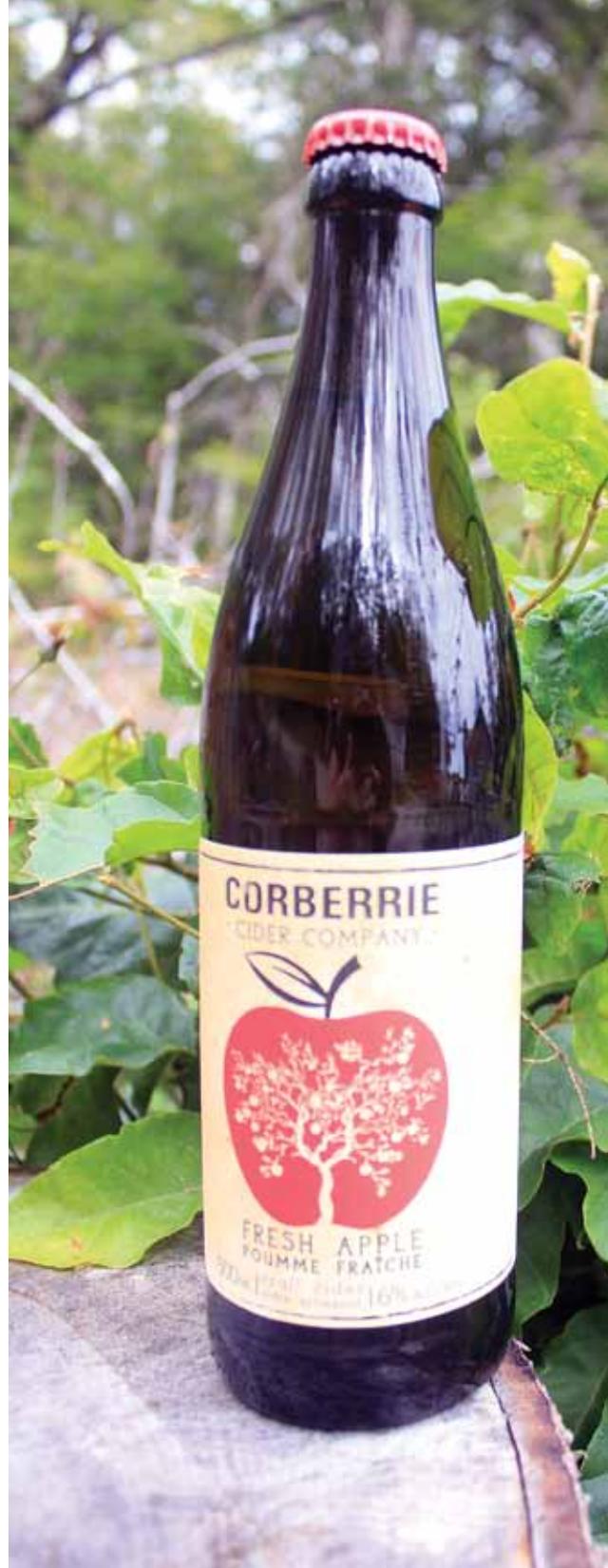
In 2003, Denise and Derek Flynn bought a run down orchard that consisted of 1,000 trees on five acres, along with 100 acres of sugar maple trees. They hired Bill Craig, a fruit tree specialist from Perennia Food and Agriculture Inc., who taught them how to care for the orchard. "It took us three years to bring it back into production," says Denise.

Fast forward to 2016: Denise did a wine tour with several friends in the Annapolis Valley, and she had an epiphany. "Why can't I do this sort of thing with our apple orchard?" From then on," she said, "it was a dream that wouldn't go away," and that was the inspiration to start Corberrie Cider Company.

The first time Denise made a batch of cider, she used a Breville juicer. "It took hours and hours to fill a 23-litre carboy." In spite of the time it took, she then bottle-conditioned the cider – adding sugar after fermentation to make it fizzy – and was pleased with the results. The cider-maker has been forging ahead ever since.

The Flynn orchard features Gravenstein, Cortland, Jonagold, McIntosh, Northern Spy, and some crabapples. They've also grafted Honeycrisp as well as Geneva Crab. The latter is a tart apple that provides a rosé colour to the cider. Denise tucks in, "We also have old fashioned apples called Wolf River, and they can weigh up to a pound per apple!"

In the early years, they sold apples (U-pick and directly to customers) from their barns in Corberrie. "We also sold apples for fundraisers at local schools, and to a local grocery store that likes to support local farmers," says Denise. This year, however, the Flynn's lost several trees and grafts during hurricane Dorian. After the first day of U-pick, they decided to close the orchard,



Sandra Phinney photos

and keep all the apples for cider production.

Although Denise is the cidemaker, Derek helps with grinding and pressing the apples as well as filtering and bottling the cider. "It's a good thing I helped him with picking, marketing, and selling his apples all these years!"

Understandably, there have been challenges, including the high cost associated with start-up. "CBDC (Community Business Development Corporation) helped me with loans, but I put in

as much, if not more, of my own and my husband's money. We've sacrificed a lot to get this business going. Without the support of my husband, this dream would have been impossible."

One of the most satisfying aspects of her business is seeing people's reaction after they've tasted her cider. "I love watching the look of pleasant surprise on their faces. When you work so hard to make something, you want people to enjoy it, and



to like it. I like my cider, but for it to be a successful business, other people have to like, too."

Since starting Corberrie Cider, Denise took a course at Brock University titled "Cider and Perry Production, a Foundation" from the Cider Institute of North America. The course was developed by Peter Mitchell, one of the world's leading authorities in cider production. Brendan Enright (Casa Nova Fine Beverages) also taught her a thing or two about making cider on a commercial scale. As well, she's visited colleagues in numerous breweries and appreciates the camaraderie and willingness of producers to share information. "Learning has been fun in this industry."

## LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

Closer to home, one of the people that welcomed Denise and Derek in Corberrie when they bought the orchard was long-time resident, Benoit Blinn. "People called him the Mayor of Corberrie. He was a tiny man with a big personality and lots of stories to tell. He helped us every fall, picking up drops in exchange for a few apples. He died last year; we really miss him." Blinn was 91 years old.

Although Denise has been running her cider business less than a year, she's quickly earned a reputation. Simone Robicheau, owner of Seashore Restaurant and Blue Rock Lounge in Meteghan, says "Thankfully, we were able to start selling her cider immediately, just in time for tourist season. Customers are raving about it; they say that it's crisp, light, and refreshing."

Robicheau has noticed that today, people are more apt to ask for ciders and craft beer over other alcoholic beverages. "It seems that people want to support small cideries and breweries, rather than large corporations. There's also a certain novelty to being able to offer a beverages that is made locally – it creates opportunities for excellent conversation!"

Reflecting on how Denise chose the name for her company, the 45-year-old says, "The Acadian village of Corberrie was named because of a priest that came from near Corbery, France. The people around here think that Corberrie sounds like "Corbeau" or crow, and "Rit" (meaning laugh, and pronounced ree), so I thought it would be fun to have a laughing crow on my business logo. Also, she explains that Acadians don't say "pomme" for apple; they say "poumme," so she felt it was the right word to use on her label.

At the moment, the entrepreneur is getting used to a new 640-litre Brite Tank and a four-head pressure-bottling machine. Life is not only hectic getting the business on track, Denise also works part time at a dental office in Yarmouth, and she has a new puppy, named Reese, who keeps her hopping.

Down the road, there will be a tasting room. Denise adds, "When this is completed, people will be able to enjoy a breathtaking view of Wentworth Lake, or take a walk in the orchard to see the blossoms, apples, the birds and wildlife. I feel grateful to be able to live and work here, and look forward to sharing some of this with cider lovers from near and far."

Oh yes. What about their 100 acres of sugar maples? "Someday ..."