



Freshly washed and press-ready, apples upon apples wait in crates for their chance to become cider.



It's rich in nostalgia

Autumn: Cider sippin' season

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Ah, autumn! The summer foliage flares phoenix-like, with next summer's promises. The wind blows crisp as a freshly picked apple. Children in knickerbockers suck pencils behind fence-topped decks.

And each weekend droves of Oakland County residents hop in their cars to take part in an October activity threatening to eclipse football in popularity—the trip to the cider mill.

To combine your cider-drinking with a splendid view of fall color, one of your best bets is in the wooded hills surrounding Rochester. Within six miles of the city limits are five mills, each permeated with an atmosphere all its own, and each hawking its wares with a slightly different approach.

Below follows a listing

MIDDLETON CIDER MILL, 4463 Dequindre Shelby Township 729-4660 Here's the perfect spot for those who like a little nourishment with their nostalgia. Bedecked with antiques and turn-of-the-century memorabilia, Middleton features an ice cream fountain, and a hearty menu of Upper Peninsula pasties, submarine sandwiches, pizza, corn dogs and chicken dinners. Also, snacks, including donuts whipped up on an antique donut maker, cherry and apple pies and apple dumplings. Outside picnic tables are available.

Youthful owner Oliver Milton—who, by the way, bears a striking resemblance to presidential hopeful Jimmy Carter—bought the bright red mill about a year ago. Health food devotees, he and his wife Carol are proud of their cider, which they say contains no preservatives. As Sunday visitors queue for a look at the 1900 vintage cider press, Middleton employees pass out free cups of the robust brew.

Middleton's free souvenir menu alone is worth the trip to Shelby. The front cover, researched and written by the owner himself, relates the history of cider and gives details of its production. Inside are unusual recipes using the mill's specialty, including instructions on how to make hard cider.

Middleton is open seven days a week, from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Since it's chiefly a family operation, Milton advises early afternoon visitors to phone first.

YATES CIDER MILL, 190 E. Avon Road, 123 Mile Road at Dequindre, Avon Township, 431-4200 Les Posey seems to be the only mill-owner around reluctant to credit Yates as the most popular mill in the area. In operation since 1963, the mill is commonly believed to be the only one in the state still completely water-powered—including interior lights.

Across the street from Bloomer State Park, Yates is a favorite for picnickers and hikers who'd like to quench their thirst with something more substantial than soda pop. Besides cider, the mill also serves donuts and candied apples. On weekends, a leased concession behind the mill sells fudge, sausage, cheese and other goodies. Since the 1950's, the mill has belonged to

Observer & Eccentric BUSINESS

Thursday, September 30, 1976

(S 16A/F 11B Ro 4C/OJSD)

The Posey family who bought it from the original owners, the Yates. It began as a lumber mill, then a grist mill, and was converted to cider-making with installation of a press in 1967.

Though October's the mill's big month, it's open during all seasons but summer. Through October and November, the mill is open daily at 9 a.m. In October, the mill closes at 7 p.m.; in November, at 5 p.m. December through May, weekends are the only days of operation.

PAINT CREEK CIDER MILL, 4433 Orion Road, Oakland Township, 631-4361 This picturesque mill was built in 1963 on the site of two former mills. One, a lumber mill, was burned down by Indians decades ago. The other was familiar to many of the area's older residents as the grist mill that served the farm families here. Owner Dale Miller Jr. says some of the wood beams from the old grist mill were constructed into the new water wheel and cider press building.

Though the water wheel doesn't power the cider press, Miller says it can generate electrical power. Water that turns the wheel comes from a dam built into the bed of the old electrical Detroit Interurban Railway, which once crossed Paint Creek here.

Set in the middle of the historic village of Goodison, Paint Creek is surrounded by rolling country and hosts of trees. Miller says his family, which also owns Sargeant's Cider Mill about two miles east, entered the cider mill business as a family project, a tribute to its Swiss and German miller forebears.

In addition to cider, Paint Creek sells freshly made donuts, cheese and sausages. Besides the press, the mills offer some of the most fascinating antiques you're likely to find, including an old-time still, corn-cobber, and cast-iron stove.

Paint Creek is open only about 10 weeks annually, with the mill opening the week

end after Labor Day, and closing generally about two weeks after Halloween. Daily hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

SARGEANT'S CIDER MILL, 3215 N. Rochester Road, Oakland Township, 631-3777 Just two miles north of Rochester, this mill is also owned by the Millers, who bought the second mill in the early 1960's from the Sargeant's—an old local farm family. Originally an 80-acre farm with 1,500 apple trees, most of the land was sold for subdivisions.

Only the mills now stands, featuring cider, donuts, cheese and sausages. It's open on weekends from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

GOODISON CIDER MILL, 1450 Hilltop at Orion Road, Oakland Township, 631-6387 Lying in the middle of the old village of Goodison—and just down the street from Paint Creek Mill—this tiny mill doesn't advertise. Elderly owner Lloyd Blankenburg says word-of-mouth yields enough business to keep him busy. The small operation reportedly presses some of the finest cider around—and many local residents have made it a habit to stop here Sunday to get their half-gallon plastic jugs refilled.

"We let you try it before you buy it," is Goodison's slogan, with every guest served a free sample. But apart from the cider, probably the biggest attraction here is owner Lloyd Blankenburg himself and his wife Marion, two genial souls who like nothing better on a brisk afternoon than to chat with visitors around their wood-burning stove in the mill.

Blankenburg's expertise with apples dates back to the 1930s, when he began as a fruit picker. He started his business with a fruit stand, which he expanded in 1963 by installing a cider press.

Though closed during the summer, Goodison is open through the fall and winter, each weekend afternoon.



Dumping apples into the press is an autumn routine for Oliver Milton, owner of Middleton Cider Mill.



Fresh, ripe apples are transformed into new cider, running in rhulets from the apple press.

For those still mourning summer, here's one way to banish fall doldrums. After packing your swimsuit in moth-balls, reward yourself with a combined autumn color and cider-drinking tour in the wooded hills of greater Rochester. Five cider mills, all within six miles of the city limits, are sure to quench your thirst and lighten your spirits.



Neil Braun of Oakland Orchards unloads another cart of apples at Yates Cider Mill.