

# Traitorous past, but true to cider's present

## Couple turn apple orchard into brand named after Benedict Arnold

BY RYAN GIBBS

The owners of a farm on Fort Getty Road are using their property's orchard — and its somewhat questionable history — to create a brand of hard apple cider.

Jeffrey and Abby Boal have introduced TurnCoat Cidery, a brand that produces three different flavors using apples grown on Fox Hill Farm. They produced 500 cases of the cider in 2022.

"We really consider it an honor to be able to continue the legacy of this farm as a working farm," Jeffrey Boal said.

Along with continuing that legacy, the Boals decided to grow apples so they could produce a tangible product at the farm. They had purchased the farm in 2014, and the property dates to 1657 when it was owned by Benedict Arnold, a former governor of Rhode Island during the Colonial era.

Arnold's great-grandson, the infamous Revolutionary War traitor with the same name, is not known to have any connection to the farm. That did not stop the Boals, however, from naming the business after the family's most notorious member.

Boals said Gov. Arnold grew apples on the land and probably produced cider since the water was not potable. Prior to starting TurnCoat Cidery, he had been making cider in his basement for eight years.

Apples are Fox Hill Farm's principal crop, but the farm also grows blueberries, comprises a vegetable garden and has 10 beehives that produce about a thousand pounds of honey a year. There also is a flock of sheep on the farm, and 20 acres have hay.

The primary apple that had been grown at the farm is the Rhode Island greening, of which nine trees on the property predate the Boals' ownership. Boal said those apples are culinary eating apples, and have more sugar and less tannin than apples used for cider.

"We want to promote fruit that has higher tannins and a little bit lower in sugar, because the sugar just converts over to alcohol and doesn't add anything in terms of flavor profile to the final cider," Boal said.

The Boals planted a 1,100-tree orchard separate from those trees four years ago. This year was the



first time that those new trees were mature enough to produce cider. Among the 16 varieties of apples grown at the orchard that are used for the farm's three TurnCoat ciders are Arkansas black, Roxbury russet, Harrison, Dolgo crab and Whitney. Boal said his favorite aspect of operating TurnCoat Cidery is the growing aspect and the development of the orchard.

"I love the idea of taking something that wasn't there, and the creation process," he said. "The ability to have an idea and see it through from beginning to end. It's super fun to share it with people, too. That's a blast. I love that."

According to Boal, one of the benefits of having a cidery based at an orchard is that the fruit is grown there as opposed to buying fruit juice. The trees they selected for the orchard were chosen for their polyphenols, a chemical in apples that are part of the taste of cider.

"We're reliant on the trees that we selected and the fruit that we grow to produce really dynamite cider," he said. "These are all fruits that are well-regarded because of their cider making qualities."

Boal described polyphenolic qualities as "nuances" to the flavor, which may add a taste of banana, pineapple, lemon or other fruit into the cider.

"Those do come out in the cider, if you pay attention and use your nose," Boal said. "It's really one of the most interesting and pleas-



ing parts of being in the cider business."

In addition to their taste, the apple trees were also chosen for their hardiness because the farm does not use chemical intervention apart from biodynamic products. Other than a bit of yeast, Boal said they do not add anything to the cider mix during production. He said making cider is a "low-intervention process," and freshly squashed cider juice will naturally ferment on its own.

Several varieties of apples grown at the farm's orchard are blended to create three different ciders. The apples are hauled from the orchard, separated, crushed, macerated and finally pressed into juice with a hydraulic press. The ciders are stored in stainless steel tanks to ferment to convert the sugar into alcohol, and

are then put into casks to mature before being bottled, pasteurized and labeled.

TurnCoat Cidery offers three different sparkling ciders. The Madeira Cask dry cider, which is aged in Madeira wine casks, is a tribute to Boal's ancestors who made wine on the Portuguese island. The American Heritage semi-dry cider is made from Roxbury russet, golden russet and Arkansas black apples, and the English Tradition semi-sweet cider made from four varieties of crab apple.

"They span a spectrum of flavors," Boal said.

The Madeira is the driest of the ciders, and the American Heritage is the sweetest. Boal said the Madeira Cask cider is his own invention and he has not heard of another cider that uses those types of casks.

**ABOVE LEFT:** Jeffrey Boal with a piece of his cider-making equipment at Fox Hill Farm on Fort Getty Road. The brand of his hard cider is called TurnCoat Cidery.

**ABOVE:** Fox Hill Farm with the setting sun as the backdrop.

**LEFT:** Boal and his wife, Abby.

The ciders are available in town at Jamestown Wine and Spirits, Grapes & Gourmet and Curiosity and Co. They also are on the menu at Tallulah's Taqueria and Beech in Jamestown, Zelda's, TSK, Guisto, the New York Yacht Club and the Midtown Oyster Bar in Newport, and Bayberry Garden in Providence.

Boal said the introduction of the cider to liquor stores and restaurants occurred a few weeks ago and they worked with a distributor to bring it to those locations.

"That process can be a challenging one for a small producer like myself," he said. "You're not big enough to warrant the attention of a distributor. It's a matter of finding the right fit, and we think we found a really great fit with our distributor."