

Objectives

- To promote healthy competition among noted Northeastern cider and perry producers to drive continuing improvement in the quality of all ciders and perrys, and in particular, cideries of New England and New York;
- To raise awareness of New England/New York ciders and perrys in the United States and internationally;
- To introduce The Big E patrons to the outstanding quality and phenomenal values available in today's ciders and perrys from around the Northeast;
- To introduce regional cider/perry aficionados and professionals to the educational and charitable aspects of The Big E;
- To use a system of judging ciders and perrys that is reliable, simple, fair and accurate;
- To become a successful cider and perry competition in New England;
- To provide a show window to present agricultural resources of the Northeast.

Please direct inquiries and correspondence to:

aginfo@thebige.com

Eastern States Exposition Agriculture & Education Department

(413) 205-5015

General Information

The 2026 Big E Northeast Gold Cider and Perry Competition ciders and perrys will be studied thoroughly and separately and are considered on an individual basis on the day of the judging.

Additional Information: Should you have a question not covered in this competition handbook, please send an email to aqinfo@thebige.com

Revisions: The current version of the competition handbook is available on The Big E's Website at <https://www.thebige.com/p/competitions/pre-fair-contests> and may be subject to revisions prior to actual publication and printing. Please check back frequently.

Notification of the Competition: Although every effort is made to reach the roughly 200 cider and perry makers throughout the Northeast, Eastern States Exposition (ESE) is not responsible for failure to notify or contact any one producer. The entry deadline is May 15, 2026.

Integrity of the Competition and of the Results

The integrity, validity and reliability of this competition are paramount for Eastern States Exposition.

- The competition follows generally accepted judging criteria that produce world-class standards of excellence.
- Great care has been taken to select qualified judges who have proven the high caliber of their palates in personal and professional pursuits.
- All judges will be trained in medal standards generally accepted by most major competitions.
- Conflicts of interest have been scrupulously avoided in every aspect of this competition.

All aspects of this cider and perry judging have been, and will be, conducted to ensure that the results have the highest degree of integrity and are fully worthy of Eastern States Exposition.

Eligibility Requirements

- Any cider or perry currently produced in New England and New York is eligible for entry. Type of products include standard, specialty or intensified and distilled.
- An official entry shall consist of two (750ml) bottles of cider/perry or the equivalent in other formats. See Bottle Requirements for more information.
- All entrants must be commercially licensed. Pending commercial licenses are accepted.

Judging

Any placement in or removal from a class will be at the discretion of show management.

Judges will be a combination of cider industry professionals, cider experts, sensory analysis experts, experienced BJCP and non-BJCP judges, and select members of the media.

The following evaluation forms and judge instructions will be used in this year's competition:

- AHA/BJCP Cider Scoresheet
- AHA/BJCP Cover Sheet
- AHA/BJCP Judge Instructions

Medals are awarded based on the score assigned by the Primary judging panel:

- Gold Medal: 45-50 points
- Silver Medal: 38-44 points
- Bronze Medal: 30-37 points

All entries that earn a Gold Medal in the Primary judging are eligible for Best of Show judging. The Best of Show judge panels evaluate these top-scoring entries for Best in Class and Highly Commended honors. If a Best of Show judge panel detects a serious flaw during their evaluation (such as mousiness), that entry will be

referred to a Secondary judging panel. The Secondary panel will thoroughly re-evaluate the entry, complete a new scoresheet, and assign a new score that takes the place of the score assigned by the Primary panel.

- This is a double-blind judging.
- Each entry will be studied thoroughly and separately and are considered on an individual basis on the day of the judging.
- A minimum of three qualified judges will evaluate each entry.

Fees and Deadlines

- **Entries close** on May 15, 2026 at 5 p.m. EST.
- **Deliveries** will be accepted until May 22, 2026 at 5 p.m. EST.
- **Judging:** June 6, 2026.
- **Entry Fee:** \$40 per cider. Entry fees must accompany the entry form(s). Entries are not official until full payment for each entry has been received.
- Entry fees are non-refundable.
- **Payment Methods:**
 - Check made payable to: Eastern States Exposition
 - Cards: Visa, MasterCard and Discover
- A penalty of \$50 per entry will be assessed if a check is returned by the bank.

Entry Limitations

- There is no limit on the number of ciders/perrys or classes an entrant may submit.
- The ciders/perrys should be examples of products currently available to consumers through normal distribution channels throughout the Northeast.

Competition Rules

- ESE is not responsible for correcting errors on entry forms or incorrect information or ciders/perrys supplied and/or created by staff or their designated representatives.
- ESE is not responsible if a cider/perry is later disqualified for being tasted in the wrong class, or for any other reason.
- No exhibitor shall be entitled to an award which has been disallowed because of their own error.
- Show management shall withhold awards for entries found to be ineligible and may recover awards made for ineligible entries revealed during audits of competition records.
- Cider/perry makers with disallowed cider/perry may petition for reinstatement in writing within 30 days of their entry's disallowance.

Enforcement of Rules

The entry requirements, as printed in this catalog, will be enforced.

Fundamental Ethics

Any entry found to have submitted deliberately misleading information may result in the producer being disqualified from all awards and, at the sole discretion of the ESE Wine, Cider & Perry Competition management, may bar the producer from entering the judging in succeeding years.

Awards

1. **Best of State** is given to one cider/perry from each of the seven competing states that has the highest ranking. The cider/perry must have been made in the state from which it was entered. Special individual medals and certificates will be provided to the winners.
2. **Best Cider** is selected from those ciders/perrys which receive a Gold Medal in their preliminary judging.
 - Judges may decide to award a Best Ice Cider depending on entries.
3. **Best Mead** is selected from those meads which receive a Gold Medal in their preliminary judging.

Notification of Awards Procedures

1. Once a cider/perry maker receives notification of awards, they may publicly promote this information. If there are specific publications in your area that you would like notified, please send their names and addresses (or email addresses) to aqinfo@thebige.com
2. Gold, Silver, and Bronze Winners will be notified via email that they achieved this status prior to August 1, 2026.
3. ESE reserves the right to print cider/perry names, addresses, phone numbers, and cider/perry personnel in this or any other publication, press release, or correspondence.
4. Medals will be sent as soon as they are available to winning ciders/perrys along with Judges' Comments and Certificates of Award.
5. ESE may contact individual winning cider/perry makers to purchase products for use at events during The Big E or throughout the year.

Promotional Opportunities

1. Winning ciders/perrys will be on display for the duration of The Big E. Brochures or information regarding their cidery is strongly encouraged to be included with their entry. Other opportunities may be made available to cider makers based on interest throughout ESE and its event, The Big E. However, they are not solely controlled by the management of this competition.
2. Due to space limitations, winning cider makers may be limited in the number of medals on display. Every effort will be made to include all ciders & perrys; however, management reserves the right to limit the number of medal-winning entries on display.
3. Cider makers may be invited to submit and/or participate in various events during The Big E. Every effort will be made to communicate and allow ample time prior to the event to allow for planning and delivery.
4. Every effort will be made to notify cider makers when their products are used in promotional events throughout the year.
5. New England/NY cider makers participating in the Wine, Cider & Perry competition by entering a minimum of 2 ciders per maker will be eligible to participate in The Big E Farmers Market. More information and sign-up information will be sent upon receipt of entries.

Advertising

1. Each cider/perry maker also consents to abide by the following rules that govern the use of results of The Big E Wine, Cider & Perry Competition in advertising by cider maker:
 - a. The producer agrees to refrain from any misleading advertising or labeling with reference to any award which may be granted for this cider/perry.
 - b. The producer agrees that it will not represent any cider/perry as being identical to the award-winning cider/perry unless this is the case.
 - c. In the event of misleading advertising by an award-winning entrant relative to a particular award or awards, The Big E, at its discretion, reserves the right to disqualify both the offending cider/perry and the responsible producer from this and future competitions. Furthermore, such a disqualification will be publicized widely, since it affects the good name of The Big E and its myriad benefactors, volunteers, and beneficiaries.

Entry Procedures

1. Identify the cider/perry(s) you want to submit for judging.
2. Entrants are allowed to enter via mail, fax, email or online using online entry. Please do not send credit card information via email. Requests for entry forms should be sent by email to aginfo@thebige.com or via phone at (413) 205-5015. Online entry: <https://thebigewc.fairwire.com>
3. Review all the information in this handbook, carefully noting all entry deadlines, delivery dates, directions, and rules.
4. The handbook is available for preview and downloading at www.thebige.com/p/competitions/pre-fair-contests and may be subject to revision prior to the date of printing. It is the entrants' responsibility to stay abreast of changes that may affect their entries if they decide to enter based on the preview manual.
5. Become thoroughly familiar with the delivery and shipping requirements.
6. Ship or deliver your entry as instructed in the Delivery and Shipping Requirements section of this handbook. **NOTE: Eastern States Exposition claims no responsibility for damaged or lost shipments.**
7. Pay entry fees. Delivered ciders/perrys are not entries until all fees have been paid in full.
8. Questions about rules or entry procedures should be addressed to aginfo@thebige.com or via phone at (413) 205-5015.
9. Please note: Entries in the Standard Class must contain a minimum apple or pear juice content of 85%. The Competition reserves the unrestricted right to submit Standard Class entries for laboratory analysis to verify juice content. Standard Class entries found to be made from less than 85% juice will have their awards rescinded. Entries in the Specialty Class are exempt from testing.
10. Apple juice and pear juice may not be combined in a single entry in the Standard Class. These entries may be entered in Fruit Cider, Specialty Cider and Perry, or Unlimited Cider and Perry as appropriate.

Bottle Requirements

1. **Standard Class and Specialty Class**

For entries in cans or bottles that are 22 ounces (650ml) or larger, please submit two (2) of each can or bottle.

For entries in cans or bottles that are less than 22 ounces (650ml), please submit three (3) of each can or bottle.

2. **Intensified and Distilled Class**

For Ice Cider and Pommeau entries in bottles that are 375ml or larger, please submit two (2) of each bottle.

For Ice Cider and Pommeau entries in bottles that are less than 375ml, please submit three (3) of each bottle.

For Eau de vie and Brandy entries, the total volume submitted must be at least 375ml. One (1) bottle is sufficient if it is at least 375ml.

3. **Mead**

For Mead entries in bottles that are 375ml or larger, please submit two (2) of each bottle.

For Mead entries in bottles that are less than 375ml, please submit three (3) of each bottle.

Entry Form

1. Please complete a separate entry for each cider/perry entered.
2. **Please send a high-resolution .pdf or .jpeg or .tif (via email, cd or thumb drive) of the actual label for each cider/perry that you enter along with Entry Payment. You can submit your labels via the online entry system.** This is so that, if your cider/perry is selected Gold, Double Gold, Best of Show or Best of State, we may include the label in promotional opportunities.
3. Please provide the telephone number and email address of the person designated to serve as the cidery contact in case of questions and/or in case of an award notification.
4. **An entry form for each cider submitted must be enclosed with the ciders being sent.**
5. Entry forms, ciders, and payment can be sent to:

Mallary Complex, Eastern States Exposition
1305 Memorial Ave
West Springfield, MA 01089

6. Incomplete entry forms may be disqualified, and the entry fee forfeited at the sole discretion of ESE Wine, Cider & Perry Competition management.

Delivery and Shipping Requirements

1. Be sure you have filled out the entry form completely. **Remember:**
 - Keep copies of the completed entry forms.
 - Enclose a copy of the entry form in each shipment to match the specific cider/perry(s) in each box. Make sure that the cider/perry on the entry matches those you are shipping.
 - If you have not included a .pdf or .jpeg or .tif of each label, be sure you submit an exact label with each entry (even if it is done on a copier).
 - The entry fee is \$40 per entry.
 - Entries shipped in error will not be returned.
 - Be sure a copy of the entry forms along with payment has been sent to
Mallary Complex, Eastern States Exposition
1305 Memorial Avenue
West Springfield, MA 01089
This can be sent in the same packaging as your cider/perry shipment.
2. Deliveries are to arrive through May 30, and must be delivered or shipped FREIGHT PREPAID (Fed Ex is eligible to send cider/perry to Massachusetts) to:
Eastern States Exposition
Mallary Complex
1305 Memorial Avenue
West Springfield, MA 01089
3. All bills of lading should clearly state: **“Free Domicile”** and **“Samples, Not For Resale”** to ensure they arrive fully paid.
Please mark multiple box shipments with box numbers and total boxes shipped (i.e., “Box 1 of 4,” “Box 2 of 4,” etc.) **Make certain to enclose a copy of the entry form for each box!**

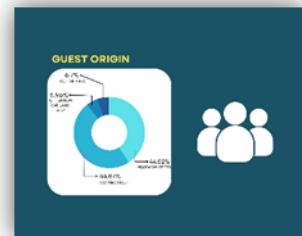
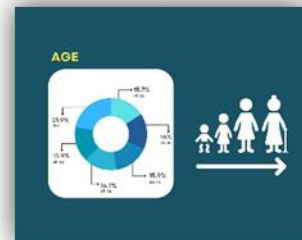
WHAT IS THE BIG E?



The Big E is the largest Fair in the Northeast produced by Eastern States Exposition. Eastern States Exposition is a not-for-profit corporation committed to excellence in providing year-round opportunities for the development and promotion of agriculture, education, industry, and family entertainment while preserving our New England heritage. Over 4,000 entries and 8,000 agriculture participants come to the Fair each September. Drawing a crowd of more than one million fairgoers each year, The Big E has an economic impact of \$479 million to Hampden County during its 17-day run.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF OUR VISITORS

AGE:	18 – 24	15.7 %
	25 – 34	16.0 %
	35 – 44	15.9 %
	45 – 54	14.7 %
	55 – 64	15.9 %
	65+	21.9 %
INCOME:	Under \$25,000	21.6 %
	\$25,000 - \$49,999	20.7 %
	\$50,000 - \$99,999	29.8 %
	\$100,000 +	27.9 %
GUEST ORIGIN:	Connecticut	44.87 %
	Massachusetts	44.02 %
	Other New England & NY	6.96 %
	Out of Area	6.70 %



Learn more at: [The Big E \(adobe.com\)](https://www.thebige.com)

Gillette Stadium has 2 million visitors in 7 months. The 2023 Big E's 17-day attendance is 70% of Gillette Stadium's 7-month total attendance.

OUR SOCIAL MEDIA REACH IS FAR AND WIDE!

- 254,600 LIKES
- 61,800 FOLLOWERS
- 25,400 FOLLOWERS
- 12,500 FOLLOWERS
- 215,600 SUBSCRIBERS