

Liquid gold: Local cidery and coffee roaster garner national awards



The Harrison apple, an heirloom variety once thought to be extinct, was reintroduced by Tom Burford of Albemarle CiderWorks—and used to make an award-winning cider. Photo: Courtesy Albemarle CiderWorks

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On Friday, January 17, **Albemarle CiderWorks** and **Mudhouse Coffee Roasters** scored top honors in the 2020 Good Food Awards in San Francisco. Among more than 2,000 entrants, the cidery and coffee producer were regional (South) winners in their respective categories—ACW for its Harrison cider, and Mudhouse for its Geisha Moras Negras roast. Bestowed annually by the creators of Slow Food Nations, the awards recognize “players in the food system who are driving towards tasty, authentic, and responsible food in order to humanize and reform our American food culture.”

As the name suggests, the ACW cider is made from the Harrison apple, an 18th-century variety that fell out of use and was thought to be extinct until its rediscovery in the late 1970s. Years later, ACW’s Thomas Burford became the first contemporary orchardist to cultivate the yellow, black-speckled Harrison, and today it is widely grown and popular among cider makers (but too ugly for supermarket sales).

Albemarle CiderWorks’ Harrison cider took top regional (South) honors at the annual Good Foods Awards in San Francisco. Photo: Courtesy Albemarle CiderWorks

The story of Mudhouse’s award winner begins in 1960, when the Geisha coffee variety was introduced in Panama. Mudhouse sources its beans from a third-generation family farm there. Grown at an altitude of about 5,400 feet, the fruit is hand-picked by migrant laborers from the Ngäbe-Buglé indigenous region, and it is quite precious. Eight ounces of Mudhouse’s Moras Negras will set you back \$75. That’s more than most of us would be willing to pay. But at the 2006 Best of Panama event, an executive from Vermont’s Green Mountain Coffee remarked, “I am the least religious person here and when I tasted this coffee I saw the face of God in a cup.”

If you’re into that sort of thing, you can buy the stuff at mudhouse.com.