

CHERTOK

MIDRASH 2021

Our core wine, a 50/50 co-ferment of long-macerated apples and grapes aged 8-9 months in polypropylene eggs, bottled without added sulfite.

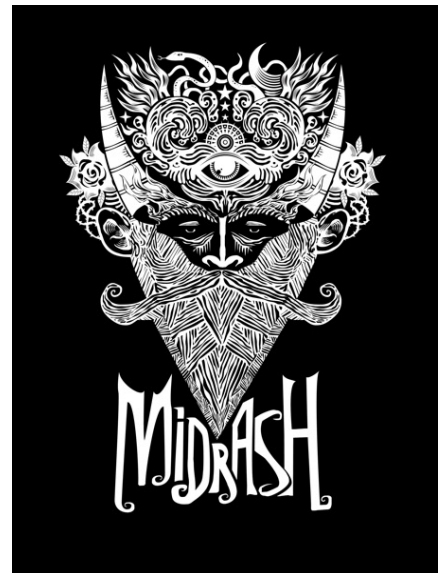
what's the name? Midrash is a Hebrew concept, a story we tell to explain the inexplicable and incongruous found in the text. Basically, it's biblical fan fiction, but I've always liked the idea of using creative writing as a vehicle for exploration. For us, Midrash is the label we have on hand to describe our one-off, vintage specific wines that reveal a distinct narrative from a particular harvest. In this case, it's a wine made like our flirty Wine(ish) but with extremely high quality, late picked fruit from a vineyard we won't have access to again. It was a treat and we think the wine is sicknastyexcellent!

the farms?

The grapes come from the old Boyden Valley vineyards in Cambridge, Vermont at the edge of the rugged, mountainous Northeast Kingdom. Since 2020, the vines have been under the care of David Keck (Stella 14) but an unfortunate scenario regarding his winery space kept him from producing any wine in '21, so we scooped up as much as we could afford.

Our own winery's construction (which was nowhere near complete) necessitated a late harvest. Two thirds of the winery space was barely framed, and the area we were obliged to work in was designed for aging and didn't have doors yet so much as pieces of plywood nailed on... anyways, late pick with a little raisination but the fruit was rock solid. A week later we brought in a little additional Marquette and Frontenac.

The apples are from the full breadth of the season, meaning this wine includes the first apples we brought in and the last. Our apples all come from Champlain Valley, a region defined by the influence of Lake Champlain and its prevalent calcareous clay soils. While New York has long been able to outproduce us here, the Champlain Valley apples and ciders have always been prized for quality, first and foremost.



Belmont Orchard, our family farm, lies primarily along an East facing hillside overlooking a tiny valley with abutting woods on the southern edge. The town of Shoreham was once an area devoted to Merino sheep for wool production, but in the mid nineteenth century the area shifted towards orcharding and to this day there are apple trees absolutely everywhere. In the 1970's the old, taller, standard apple rootstocks were ripped up and replaced with densely planted, semi-dwarf trees grafted to culinary varieties. Over the coming years we plan to start grafting about half of our parcel to heirloom cider varieties, but for now we have Empires, Macintosh, Macoun and a few scattered Red Delicious trees.

Windfall Orchard is our source for cider apples and we are so thrilled to be working together! Brad is a chef-educator turned orchardist that dotes over his 2 acre orchard with extreme attention to detail. Located 20 minutes inland from us, he has a crazy array of apocryphal varieties and trees as old as 120 years! I cannot overstate how carefully he manages these trees and the quality of the fruit puts everything around us to shame. We get a grab bag of all sorts of things from him with an emphasis on russeted varieties.

Our apples are mostly cured anywhere from 1 week to two months before processing to further develop flavors and concentrate sugars.

the winemaking?

For 2021's Midrash we applied our tried and true approach to co-fermenting apples and grapes. We started developing this technique in 2018, when we began exploring how to work with the two crops in conjunction, and every year we have refined the method. The process begins with whole-cluster, foot tread grapes treated as gently as we can. We only crush a portion of the fruit to start, slowly breaking more berries as the 3 week, open-topped fermentation progresses.

As the grape ferment starts to wind down, we begin to mill apples into the bins and fold the material into the wine by hand. It takes days to get the vats somewhat homogenized and it's hard work besides. We continued this process every week until December, adding new apples all the while. After a 2+ month fermentation, we press into polyethylene eggs for 8-9 months of aging on gross lees. Finally, we blend the lots a month before bottling without fining or filtration. The final wine ends up being a pretty even ratio of apples to grapes and the two crops are truly co-fermented and integrated with each other to produce a wine that feels unlike either a typical hybrid grape wine or a cider. Sans soufre avec schmutz!