



Bilodeau finally identified as Trail

Posted by [Claude Jolicoeur](#)

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[Claude Jolicoeur](#)

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December 04, 2022 05:14AM

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 226

This fall, we got a genetic match between the "Bilodeau" cider apple and the "Trail" crab. DNA analyses were done by Paul Kron of University of Guelph in Ontario (see [www.husbandlab.ca]). In 2021, Bilodeau was tested but no match was found. However some relationship was noted with an obscure variety by the name of "Tailman" whose DNA signature was in a database in the UK. Seeing this however, I proposed the hypothesis that this Tailman could be in fact "Trailman" (with a transcription error), a Canadian crab that is a descendant of Trail (Trailman is Trail x Osman). Following this idea, I knew a friend in Saskatchewan who had access to a Trail tree. This tree was tested in 2022 to find the genetic match. This also confirms that the variety identified as "Tailman" in the UK database would be "Trailman".

The Trail crab was bred at Ottawa from a cross of Northern Queen x Rideau, it was selected in 1913 and introduced in 1920.

I first grafted this apple in 1986. It came from a friend, and it was supposed to be a known variety. However, when it first fruited in 1990, it was obvious that the variety had been wrongly identified as the fruit didn't correspond to what it was supposed to be. I then named it "Bilodeau" after the name of the friend who gave me the scion wood. It has high sugar content with a SG usually between 1.060 and 1.070, a medium acidity usually in the range of 5.5 to 7 g/L as malic, and medium tannins, with tests yielding a content in the range of 2 to 3 g/L as gallic acid. It makes great cider as a varietal on the years when the acidity is lower, and blends nicely with some early bittersweet varieties.

My friend's original tree came from a nursery, so my reasoning has been that it was probably a named variety, but somehow had lost its tag and got mixed with trees of another variety. The original nursery didn't exist anymore, so we couldn't get information from there. Through the years, I have compared the fruit with different varieties of similar appearance, but never got a match until I got some fruit of Trail in 2018 that were sent to me by this friend in Saskatchewan. The fruits were very similar but not identical, and I couldn't be positive on if the differences were due to different growing conditions or to the fact these would be distinct varieties. So now we know.

To all my friends and acquaintances who have grafted some Bilodeau, and to those who have planted a tree from a nursery, we should now call this apple "Trail (aka Bilodeau)" with Bilodeau as a synonym. In any case, it makes a great bittersharp cider apple for early season cider making in cold regions. It has high sugar content with a SG usually between 1.060 and 1.070, a medium acidity usually in the range of 5.5 to 7 g/L as malic, and medium tannins, with tests yielding a content in the range of 2 to 3 g/L as gallic acid. It makes great cider as a varietal on the years when the acidity is lower, and blends nicely with some early bittersweet varieties.

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Zone 4 in Quebec

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[Craig Bickle](#)

[Re: Bilodeau finally identified as Trail](#)

December 06, 2022 03:52PM

Registered: 2 years ago

Posts: 82

Fascinating account, Claude. Thanks for sharing it!

Just thought I'd chime in because I know from personal experience with the HON Forum that we may be reading every post but not commenting on them. So the impression can be left that no one is paying attention. Of course, that's not true.

Hence, I thought for a change I'd make it known that we growers are still here, reading, learning, and noting information freely shared but not always engaged with.

TTYL!

Craig Bickle

Hap Woods

Zone 6a

East-Central Ohio

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