



## Press Aids

Posted by [Brittany Kordick](#)

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[Brittany Kordick](#)

[Press Aids](#)

June 28, 2022 03:30AM

Registered: 4 years ago

Posts: 211

We are in the midst of pressing our first apples of the year, 'Early Harvest' June apples. These soft apples are not ideal pressing apples; they do the bad sauce thing, but it's been a couple of years since we pressed any and we had forgotten just how bad they were. Our notes from the first time we pressed them detail how we could not press above 2.5 bar (36.26 psi) on our Lancman water bladder press without sauce explosions. After a miserable initial pressing experience this past weekend, and a review of those old notes, we decided to experiment with press aids for the first time. For those who don't know, press aids such as rice hulls, cottonseed hulls, or cellulose/wood fiber in the form of sheets or pellets are sometimes used to add air and channels to pomace in the press, increasing yield in theory and mitigating saucy pomace. We were leaning towards trying out rice hulls, but could not procure any before our next pressing. At the same time, we were mildly concerned about introducing flavors to our cider, so came up with an alternative to try.

We have been reserving our largest diameter limb prunings to chip up into applewood smoking chips, but have not had huge success in selling them, much to our dismay (they're gorgeous and the lack of chemicals should be a huge selling point, and we feel our \$5/lb price is very reasonable . . . alas). So we have hundreds of pounds of applewood chips in storage. We decided to try adding them to our pomace at 2lbs (0.9 kg) of chips to a 6 bushel (about 240 lbs or 109 kg) pressing. We would add a bushel of pomace to the press, then sprinkle with chips, add another bushel, sprinkle with chips, etc. We were simply amazed at the results. Over the weekend, the sauciness necessitated giving up early on all the June apple pressings I did; the yield was abominable at 9-10 gallons (about 34-38 liters) per 6 bushels (about 240 lbs or 109 kg). The pomace/applesauce was heavy with juice and it killed me to dump it. With the applewood chip press aid we increased our yield to 16 gallons (about 60.6 liters) per 6 bushels (about 240 lbs or 109 kg), and our cider ran clear, no applesauce outside the press, on the ceilings, walls, or my person. These were the same apples?!?!

The best part was, we have been doing our perennial musing over the holy grail: how to utilize/get rid of all that pomace. We had recently discussed adding woodchips and trying to compost it, hoping the deer will help us out with turning it. So it's great to be able to add wood chips to the pomace relatively easily like this, and not have to resort to shovels or tractor buckets. We also love that we produced our press aid ourselves from the orchard, and we would expect applewood chips to enhance the flavor of our cider if anything (note, we actually did not discern any flavor enhancement upon sampling today's freshly pressed batches).

So what's the catch? Did I mention that we're using a water BLADDER press? In our excitement, we didn't even think about the fact that the bladder could easily pop against a relatively hard or sharp wood chip as it gains in pressure. Giddy with success as we were, I'm not sure we would have thought about it even now, except that we noticed a tear in the bladder after cleaning. Luckily, it's more of a deep scratch and did not actually puncture the bladder, but we're not taking any chances. Our applewood chip press aid bladder has been burst, though, and we're very disappointed. I don't think we would risk using applewood chips in our bladder press again, but we'd use them in a heartbeat in another type of press. Looks like we'll be trying rice hulls after all . . .

[Kordick Family Farm](#)

Westfield, NC

Zone 7a

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 06/28/2022 03:33AM by Brittany Kordick.

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[Brittany Kordick](#)

[Re: Press Aids](#)

July 26, 2022 08:01PM

Registered: 4 years ago

Posts: 211

FYI for anyone else interested in utilizing applewood chips as a press aid in a water bladder press: they do not appear to cause damage to the rubber bladder after all. We called Oesco to inquire about a new bladder, and the man we spoke with thought that the damage we described was normal wear and tear, given that three years (as long as we've had the press and the original bladder) is apparently a solid bladder lifetime, especially given our high usage, and that we just store it in a covered shed. He was quite experienced in the use of various press aids in conjunction with bladder presses and was actually skeptical that the wood chips would damage the rubber bladder in the manner we described. That verdict was enough for us to keep using the wood chips as press aid. We've used them in more than a dozen pressings since, still with that original bladder, and experienced zero issues. We conclude that our noticing of the slit in the bladder was

coincidental and that it is normal wear and tear rather than due to contact with wood shards at high pressure. We continue to be impressed with our yields when using the press aids, and are pleased with the textural results it has on the pomace itself, still hoping it makes for more viable composting.

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Westfield, NC

Zone 7a

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[Todd Parlo](#)

[Re: Press Aids](#)

August 11, 2022 03:54PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 301

If the sharp edges of the material is of issue, shavings may be more helpful. I have a fully stocked wood shop so that's easy for me to say but there may be local material available in many areas. Keep in mind with more surface area you get more leaching which certainly will impart flavors to the cider. This may be where a select amount may actually be a positive amendment. Think oak, yellow birch, etc. to deliver tannin and other flavor components. Things like this can go sideways quickly but may be of benefit. Anyway, the point is that flavor will accompany most things you put in that press. Also, I may have mentioned this in another thread but for those doing smaller batches, a partially frozen apple will be less mushy, but you have to gauge the moment of freeze or thaw well. I do this a lot with early apples that are otherwise too cottony to press well.

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