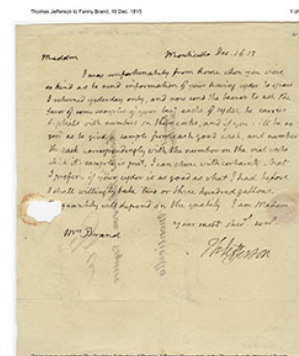


# Featured Letter: Thomas Jefferson Requests a Sampling of Cider

"malt liquors & cyder are my table drinks," (Jefferson to Vine Utely, 21 Mar. 1819)

Apples of many varieties were cultivated in Jefferson's Virginia. The fruit was used to make pies, preserves, and other foodstuffs, of course, but in Jefferson's time apples were especially valued for the making of cider.



Like many of his neighbors, Jefferson drank cider, favoring that made from the Hewes' Crab and Taliaferro apples grown in the orchards at Monticello. Visitors to Monticello remembered the delicious cider served at dinner and wrote later requesting cuttings from Jefferson's trees.

Cider making at Monticello began in Autumn, when the apples were pressed and put into wooden casks. Jefferson gave specific instructions to his overseer Edmund Bacon to ensure that Monticello's enslaved workforce carefully washed and inspected each cider apple before pressing. The resulting cider was then bottled in March, and Jefferson directed his Richmond agent Bernard Peyton to obtain bottles and corks for the purpose. Jefferson's drawing of "an Apple mill and press" is in the Coolidge Collection of Jefferson Manuscripts at the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Even with the hundreds of gallons produced at Monticello and bottled each year, such a large household, frequented by so many visitors, could quickly exhaust the supplies. As the winter months approached and Jefferson's cider stores dwindled, he wrote to two of his neighbors, Charles Massie and, as below, Fanny Brand, both of whom produced cider for resale.

## To Fanny Brand

MADAM

Monticello Dec. 16. 15

I was unfortunately from home when you were so kind as to send information of your

having cyder to spare. I returned yesterday only, and now send the bearer to ask the favor of some samples of your best casks of cyder. he carries 6. phials with numbers on their corks, and if you will be so good as to give a sample from each good cask, and number the cask correspondingly with the number on the vial into which it's sample is put, I can chuse with certainty what I prefer. if your cyder is as good as what I had before I shall willingly take two or three hundred gallons. [the] quantity will depend on the quality I am Madam

Your most obed<sup>t</sup> serv<sup>t</sup>

TH: JEFFERSON

PoC (MHi); on verso of reused address cover to TJ; mutilated at seal; at foot of text: "M<sup>rs</sup> Brand" endorsed by TJ as a letter to "Brand Fanny" and so recorded in SJL.

Fanny (Frances) Whitlock Brand (1755–1832) was born in Hanover County. She married Joseph Brand and lived at Findowrie, between Cismont and Campbell in Albemarle County. At the time of her death Brand owned personal property valued at \$3,650, including nine slaves (Mabel Thacher Rosemary Washburn, *The Virginia Brand-Meriwether Genealogy* [1948], 10–1, 24; Brand family Bible record [photocopy of transcript in TJ Editorial Files]; Marcia Joseph, "Findowrie, Albemarle County" [1994], unpublished research paper in ViU; Brand to TJ, 23 Feb. 1818; DNA: RG 29, CS, Albemarle Co., 1820, 1830; *Richmond Enquirer*, 30 Nov. 1832; Albemarle Co. Will Book, 11:118–20, 334–5, 14:469–70).

On 24 Dec. 1815 TJ sent Brand \$28.50 for CYder. Although the amount purchased in this instance is uncertain, two days earlier Charles Massie sold TJ 143 gallons of cider for \$25 (MB, 2:1317).

(Our thanks to Monticello's former Director of Gardens and Grounds, Peter Hatch, for assistance with this post.)

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