

# Distiller, local orchard team up

By Loyal Baker

DAYTON—There's nothing like the crackling crispness of a Warren Orchards Cameo apple in the fall, just off the tree. Same goes for the sweet juiciness of the Orchards' three varieties of pears, too.

Thanks to a strategic partnership between local craft distiller XO Alambic and Warren Orchards, the essence of those tastes may be enjoyed year-round in what may be the country's best apple brandy.

This week Rusty Figgins, master distiller and founder of XO Alambic, distilled the first batch of Cameo-de-Vie apple brandy, made from Cameo apples harvested in October, 2017, and juiced on site. Oak puncheons containing 500 liters were filled, along with a natural yeast, to allow a natural

in a more pronounced aroma and flavor in apple brandy," he said.

The blend is heavy on Cameo apples, but also includes cider apples and three varieties of Warren Orchard pears: Bosc, D'Anjou and Bartlett.

The distillate goes into a new oak barrel after being filtered through a special activated charcoal. Figgins said. There it will mature for 18 months before be-

ing bottled and released.

"My early estimation is for a very, very exceptional quality," Figgins said. "It's quite remarkable in a lot of ways, aromatically and taste-wise."

The pomace from the juicing is composted in the Verdurous Gardens, the half-acre commercial garden adjacent to Blue Mountain Station, home of XO Alambic's distilling plant.



fermentation to occur.

"This is a momentous time in the evolution of this little business," Figgins said.

"This wild fermentation," Figgins said, "is indigenous to the orchard for a true expression of place

"Bill Warren is a kindred spirit," Figgins said. "We've become fast friends and our goal is to make the very best apple brandy in the United States. We're setting a very high bar."

One of the elements which may set Cameo-de-Vie apart from the rest is the orchard's 1,800-foot elevation. The higher elevation naturally results in a higher level of malic acid in the apples, Figgins said. "The malic acid aid-



The first batch of Cameo-de-Vie apple brandy at XO Alambic was distilled this week. Rusty Figgins, master distiller and founder of XO Alambic, makes a periodic test of the apple brandy, which he and Bill Warren of Warren Orchards, which provided the raw ingredients, hope to be the best in the country

-Chronicle photo