

Hard Cider

Barbara Stark-Nemon

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In Barbara Stark-Nemon's *Hard Cider*, a midlife desire to pursue a dream comes to literal fruition—but not without persistence, resistance, and research.

Abbie Rose Stone is a wife of thirty years, a mother, and a true lover of the Great Lakes region “at the pinky finger of the Michigan mitt,” where she and her family have a lakeside cottage. Abbie finds herself increasingly intrigued by the process of making hard cider, a fascination that began decades ago in England, where she lived before marriage and family became her focus.

Now approaching her mid-fifties, Abbie is accustomed to putting the needs of others before her own. Abbie's plan to start her own cider press in Michigan is not met with enthusiasm by her husband or her three adult sons. They needle her with questions about finances, time demands, and the viability of such a venture, surprised that she would step beyond her nurturing role into the realm of becoming a small-business owner.

Fortunately, Abbie refuses to have her hopes quashed. She continues to research logistical and horticultural details, learns about the wide variety of apples, travels to New England to visit other cider presses, and seeks out local business allies. Beyond all this is some family drama and a mysterious young woman who will come to play an unexpectedly larger role in Abbie's life.

The novel soars with passages about upper Michigan's unique beauty, as well as through Abbie's instinctive love for nature and her captivating excitement as she steps into a cider house, with its “sweet dank warmth and the powerful smells of a packed earth floor, crushed apples, and hay.” *Hard Cider* is a story about following a dream, but not without the planning and perspective needed to turn passion into reality.

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