By providing students with a more accurate understanding of peer behavior, these programs seek to alter perceptions of normative behaviors and encourage less risky drinking activities.

The negative side of peer pressure is often highlighted by drinking games. Drinking games encourage high-risk drinking because they require participants to drink once they have entered the game; social approbation ensures compliance. In addition, many drinking games can encourage fast and hard drinking, and once a participant is intoxicated, sloppy coordination usually ensures greater intake as the player repeatedly loses. Another negative outcome of peer pressure involves modeling high-risk behaviors such as deliberately fast group drinking. Many college students “pregame,” which means they drink to get drunk in a group before attending an event. One popular style of pregame drinking is called a “power hour,” in which peers drink a shot of beer or other alcoholic drink every minute for an hour, thus ensuring that each person is drunk before the hour is finished. Because participants can be teased if they fail to keep up, this kind of peer pressure ensures high-risk drinking for all. (See also Blackouts; College Drinking Culture; Underage Drinking.)

**Further Reading**


Janet Chrzan

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**PERRY**

Perry is an alcoholic drink made by fermenting the juice of pears (*Pyrus communis* L.). More specifically, perry is preferentially made from special pear varieties known as perry pears. These pears are high in tannins and acid, providing the complex flavors associated with perry in addition to serving as a preservative. Early American written accounts of perry state that pears unfit for eating are desirable for perry production. Once the desired pear varieties have been collected, pears are crushed into a pulp and juiced. This juice contains naturally occurring wild yeast that will ferment the juice into perry. However, industrial methods of perry production often call for pasteurization of the juice to kill any wild yeast. Later, a known yeast variety is added to produce a more consistent product from year to year. This juice is then blended with other fermented pear juice to match desired tastes.

There are early American writings that state that ingredients such as cider, brandy, sherry, and lemons were added to perry to create cocktails, punch, and toddies. There is occasional mention of bits of meat being added to the fermenting pear juice. This was thought to add protein to the mixture and give nourishment to the yeast. Perry should not be confused with pear cider, which is an alcoholic beverage made from a combination of fermented apple and pear juice.

Perry enjoys much less popularity than other fermented beverages in the United States. Despite its inclusion in early American texts, the lack of its mention in
early European historical accounts reflects this status. Perry is often made by
orchardists in addition to cider and is seldom produced as a sole product. Perry
and the technologies for its production have their origins alongside cider production.
In some cultures, perry and cider are treated equally and are produced at the same
time, though processed separately. In other cultures, perry has become associated
more as a feminine or children's drink, with cider maintaining a more masculine
quality. To most American consumers, perry is little more than the drink added to
Guinness at their local Irish pub, in lieu of champagne, to make a Black Velvet.

Britain, France, and Portugal are well known as centers of perry production.
England was producing perry before the Norman invasion, and perry production
was scaled up at the encouragement of the conquerors. Elements of this remain in
Britain today, as local knowledge records that farmlands visible from atop May
Hill, in Herefordshire, are the lands best suited for production of high-quality
perry pears. It was largely from these traditions that perry production was
imported to North America.

Perry has benefitted from cultural revival movements and now enjoys a home in
New England and in the Pacific Northwest. Perry production remains rather
limited in most areas of North America. As such, it is most often obtained from
local producers at farm shops or nearby outlets.

Further Reading
Luckwill, L. C., and A. Pollard. Perry Pears. Bristol: National Fruit and Cider Institute,
1963.

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POLITICS

Because of the negative effects that alcohol misuse can have on individual and
public health, most nation-states today have laws that regulate the production,
distribution, sale, and consumption of alcohol. Though alcohol laws vary across
and within national boundaries, some common areas of regulatory concern
include limitations on the age of purchase, possession, and consumption; licensing
of producers, distributors, and sellers; acceptable blood alcohol limits for driving
motor vehicles; and pricing and taxation.

In the United States, alcohol has always been a highly charged subject in political
discourse. In part, this political contention is because alcohol is no ordinary com­
modity; in the American cultural context, alcohol is defined as a legal drug, and as
such, it is highly regulated, commercially significant, and morally contentious.

Contention also stems from the high degree of citizen interest and participation
in the political process that generates, implements, and regulates U.S. alcohol
policy. Historically, whenever citizen interest is high, the resulting policy debates
tend to be framed in terms of morality. Complex issues are presented simply, in
black-and-white terms, so that the greatest possible number of citizens can
participate without having to invest time or effort in learning political nuance.
The consolidation of vast numbers of citizen adherents to one or the other side of
a political debate translates into a great amount of political power while ensuring
that such power is not lost to bureaucratic, industry, or other competing interests.