

# AUTUMN IN NEW ENGLAND



## WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

There are times when cocktails showcase interesting and unexpected combinations—one wonders at the temerity of the bartender who first dropped a pickled onion into a glass of hard liquor (page 48)—and then there are ingredients that, when combined, taste like they were always meant to be together. Apple and sage are one such pairing: The piney, slightly astringent notes of the sage are mellowed and made whole by the bright sweetness of apples. Whereas a decent  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of leaves was generally required for cocktails using milder herbs such as mint or basil, that much sage entirely overwhelmed this cocktail. We gently muddled just a couple of sage leaves in maple syrup to infuse our sweetener with herbal flavor. Then we shook this up with some apple cider (whose sweet, slightly fermented flavor added even more depth) and smoky, caramel-y bourbon. As is, this was too sweet, and so we sought something acidic to balance things out. First we turned to lemon, as it has a relatively neutral flavor that allows other components to shine. But then we struck upon using a little cider vinegar instead, in keeping with the apple theme. Its clean, bracing acidity worked perfectly, adding another touch of savoriness to this round, juicy cocktail. Garnish with sage and, if you like, a slice of apple. If your sage leaves are longer than 2 inches, use the lesser amount.

makes 1 cocktail

**2-4 fresh sage leaves, plus small sage sprig for garnishing**

**$\frac{1}{4}$  ounce maple syrup**

**2 ounces bourbon**

**1 ounce apple cider**

**$\frac{1}{4}$  ounce cider vinegar**

Add sage leaves and syrup to base of cocktail shaker and muddle until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add bourbon, apple cider, and vinegar, then fill shaker with ice. Shake mixture until just combined and chilled, about 5 seconds. Double-strain cocktail into chilled old-fashioned glass half-filled with ice or containing single large ice cube. Garnish with sage sprig and serve.