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MY LITTLE PONY

Season II

"Cider Horse Rules"

Episode 215

Outline by
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TEASER

BANG BANG BANG!! Fluttershy, groggy with sleep, staggers to the door in the gray, pre-dawn hour. It's Rainbow Dash, and she's rarin' to go! This is the first day of cider season at Sweet Apple Acres, and she's determined to avoid the mistakes of the past. "Every year, Pinkie Pie ends up ahead of us in line, and when they run out of cider – and they always run out – we have to listen to her go on and on about how good it was and how terrible it is that we didn't get any. Well not this year! This year I'm gonna get there first and tell her how terrible it is that she didn't get any! It's the perfect plan!"

Rainbow Dash leads the yawning, sleepy Fluttershy through Ponyville as the dawn starts to break. "Just imagine it: Apple family cider and rubbing it in Pinkie Pie's face... this is gonna be the best day ever!"

But then... horror! Sweet Apple Acres looks like Woodstock! A huge line of ponies, camping in tents, waits for cider season to begin. Incredulous, Rainbow Dash drags Fluttershy to the front of the line to find Pinkie Pie, yawning and stretching with a serious case of bed head. "Hey, ladies! Isn't this great? I couldn't sleep last night 'cause I was so excited for cider season and I had this great idea to come down here and camp out and I told a few others about it and they all thought it was a great idea, too! And now it's just a big ol' CIDER PARTY! WOOO!!" Pinkie Pie looks at the humongous line. "Gosh, that's a lot of ponies. I sure hope they don't run out before you get any..."

ACT I

Rainbow Dash sulks next to Fluttershy at the back of the line as we TRACK AHEAD, all the way to the front, where a cider stand has been set up. With Granny Smith, Apple Bloom, and Big McIntosh manning the stand, Applejack officially opens cider season!

As ponies file through, happily drinking their cider, the remaining unserved ponies start to grumble, watching barrel after barrel run dry. Sure enough, with a huge crowd remaining, the Apples run out. Led by the surly Rainbow Dash, the crowd gets restless, but Applejack explains that while they've done their best to improve the supply this year, Apple family cider is made with love and integrity, and only the highest quality apples, and that takes time. If everypony'll just be patient, they'll have more tomorrow. As the grumbling ponies start to disperse, Pinkie Pie sympathizes with Rainbow Dash. "Too bad you missed it. This was the best cider yet..."

Just then, they hear strange, mechanical noises coming from over the hill. Two unicorn twin brothers, FLIM and FLAM, crest the hill riding an enormous, bellowing, Seussian machine. They wear old-timey straw hats, and their glowing unicorn horns are hooked to the machine like jumper cables, powering it. They bring the machine to a stop and introduce themselves with a *Music Man*-esque song and dance sequence. The twins work the crowd like seasoned snake-oil salesmen, singing about the wonders of cider and how awful it is when there's not enough. The charming brothers manage to sweep

everypony else up in the song, and soon the whole town is convinced that this lack of cider must not be allowed to continue.

Luckily, these gentlecolts just happen to have the solution: the magnificent, indispensable, unimpeachable Flim Flam Brothers Super Speedy Cider Squeezy 7000. As the song continues, they hook themselves up to the machine, which bellows to life, and Applejack permits them to use some of her apples to demonstrate how it works. They position a huge bell-shaped vacuum over the top of one of the trees. The machine chugs and spews, sucking the apples right off the branch! This, they sing, is the miraculous creation that will solve all the Apples' problems.

Granny Smith argues there's no way a machine like this could possibly replicate her rigid, high standards of quality. Flim hops off the machine, glad she brought that up. He points to a window in the side of the machine. Inside, apples move down a conveyor belt, passing through a Quality Control area, where a green light indicates a good apple and a red light picks off the rotten ones. Just seconds after the apples are plucked, you've got a full barrel of fresh cider!

When the song ends, Apple Bloom immediately says that the brothers have a deal! But Granny Smith maintains that a machine can't replicate care. Applejack is intrigued, but hesitant. Big McIntosh, as usual, says nothing. So the twins make their best pitch: the Apples supply the apples, the twins supply the machine and the magic to power it, and they split the profits, 75/25. "Deal!" shouts Apple Bloom. But Applejack quickly works out that the brothers intend the 75% for themselves, leaving the Apples only 25%. "Cider sales are what keeps our business afloat through the winter! We'd lose Sweet Apple Acres without cider money!"

"NO DEAL," says Big McIntosh definitively.

The twins, affronted by the Apples' refusal, issue a threat: if the Apples refuse to be partners, then they will have to be competitors! Flim and Flam are gonna drive them out of business!

ACT II

It's Day Two of cider season, and the ponies are all lined up (Pinkie Pie waves excitedly to Rainbow Dash, moping at the back of the line). Applejack and her family man the cider stand as usual, but there's a slight air of tension. Applejack watches nervously as the cider supply dwindles lower and lower, with a huge line of ponies still waiting to be served. Granny Smith tells her to relax. Those shim-sham boys, Flim and Flam, have already moved on to try to hornswoggle another town. But Applejack's not convinced. They seemed pretty serious when they threatened to shut down Sweet Apple Acres...

Then, to Applejack's dismay, Apple Bloom pours the last cup of cider. She nervously shouts to the line of ponies that they'll have to wait until tomorrow, causing all sorts of grumbling and consternation. As the disappointed ponies start to disperse, something

catches their attention and they prick up their ears.

It's the chugging and whistling of Flim and Flam's Super Speedy Cider Squeezy 7000! They set up shop at the far end of the line, right next to Rainbow Dash. "What seems to be the problem here? Out of cider again?!" Flam produces the barrel of cider they made yesterday during their song. "We still have a barrel. And the Super Speedy Cider Squeezy 7000 to make more in an instant!" To the Apples' horror, the thirsty ponies can't wait to buy cider from the brothers!

Just as Rainbow Dash is about to drink a long-awaited cup of cider, Applejack knocks it out of her hoof! Big McIntosh confiscates the twins' cider barrel. It's made from Sweet Apple Acres apples and they have no right to sell it!

But the huckster twins don't care; there are plenty of apples in Equestria! They'll just go find some others and make more cider than the ponies of Ponyville can possibly drink! Apple Bloom jumps forward. "Go for it! We're not scared of you!" Granny Smith gets into the act, too, saying she'll put Apple family cider up against anypony's!

The smooth-talking twins see their opening, and use the Apples' passion against them. "There's a long line of ponies here that seem pretty dissatisfied with how things stand." Applejack digs in, saying Ponyville has always been a Sweet Apple cider town, and always will be! Flim asks if she'd care to put that theory to the test, to which Apple Bloom replies, "Anywhere, anytime."

Flam proclaims that he and his brother can make enough cider to satisfy the whole town in just one hour. "So can we!" shouts Apple Bloom. Granny Smith jumps in, telling her to cool it. After all, Apple family cider isn't about quantity, it's about quality. And quality can't be rushed.

Flim, calmly, silkily, says, "What's the matter, Granny Smith? Chicken?"

She whips around, eyes narrowed. "What'd you call me, sonny?" And just like that, Flim and Flam have managed to sucker the Apples into a bet: whoever produces the most barrels in one hour wins the exclusive right to sell cider in Ponyville. And if the twins lose, they agree to leave town forever. The next morning at dawn, the competition begins. As the crowd disperses, Applejack does her best to ignore the hard reality that if the Apples don't beat the twins tomorrow, they could lose everything.

The next morning, the Apples get loose and ready for action. Big McIntosh stretches, Apple Bloom holds boxing pads so Applejack can limber up her kicking legs, Granny Smith blindfolds herself and practices sniffing apples for quality. Twilight Sparkle, meanwhile, tries to talk a little sense into them. Is this really such a good idea? Applejack herself said they could lose the family farm! But Applejack is 100% confident in their cider-making abilities. "And besides, nopony calls my granny a chicken!"

A cider-loving crowd gathers around the Mayor, who announces the terms of the competition. The teams have one hour to produce as much cider as they can. The barrels will be counted, and the loser must give up the cider business. She starts the countdown, then shouts, “GO!!”

The Apples move like clockwork. Applejack expertly kicks the tree trunks, knocking loose every single apple. Apple Bloom races underneath, catching them in a basket, then zooming over to Granny Smith’s station. Granny inspects them one by one, tossing the bad ones aside, and placing only the finest into a chute, which snakes over to Big McIntosh’s station. Attached to an enormous stone grinder, he pushes with everything he’s got, hooves digging into the dirt, pressed cider pouring out. The whole family gathers around as Applejack puts the lid on the first full barrel. This is going beautifully! With high hopes, they glance over to see how Flim and Flam are faring. But their jaws drop when they see the cocky twins have already produced five full barrels!

ACT III

The Super Speedy Cider Squeezy 7000 churns and billows as it sucks apples out of the trees. The twins’ horns glow as they feed power to the machine, and the Quality Control center hums along with green lights and bells, marred by the occasional red light and buzz. Cider pours into barrels at a steady pace.

Apples thump to the ground as Apple Bloom distractedly watches the brothers’ machine. Applejack, who just bucked the tree, yells at her to focus. They’ve got to forget about the Flim Flam brothers if they’re going to have a chance to win. Apple Bloom apologizes and scoops up the apples, racing to Granny Smith’s station. Granny Smith, who already has a backlog of buckets, pauses to clean her steamed up glasses. Applejack shouts that there’s no time for that! They don’t have a second to spare! Big McIntosh, meanwhile, stops churning the wheel so he can catch his breath. “Rest when it’s over, Big McIntosh! Grind! Grind!”

Twilight and her friends watch anxiously. Even at top speed, the Apples can only make one barrel to the twins’ three. She asks the Mayor if honorary family members are allowed to help. The Mayor checks with the twins, who are so far out in front that they don’t care if the whole kingdom of Canterlot helps. It’s a lost cause! Twilight goes into organizer mode, assigning Fluttershy to help Applejack shake apple trees. Pinkie Pie gets apple-catching detail, which she turns into a game. Rarity, with her discerning eye, is assigned to help Granny Smith deal with the backlog at the Quality Control station. Twilight uses her horn to levitate the good apples directly to Big McIntosh, bypassing the chute system. And Rainbow Dash relishes the opportunity to use her strength to help turn the heavy grinding wheel.

With the help of the “extended family,” the Apples take back the momentum, producing five barrels to every three Flim and Flam barrels. As their lead slips away, the brothers start cutting corners. The magic glow from their horns intensifies as the machine cranks

up its power. The vacuum starts sucking up apples... and leaves and branches! But the Quality Control center still won't allow anything except good apples to pass through. Flim switches it off, letting everything – bad apples, branches, leaves – pass through into the press! The machine starts shooting out barrel after barrel of murky, chunky "cider."

Rainbow Dash sees what they're doing, and how fast they're shooting out barrels. She shouts that the Apples have to skip Quality Control and grind everything they've got! But Applejack and the Apples refuse. Quality Control isn't something they can just skip; it's the most important part of the cider-making process. They're just gonna have to work harder!

As the clock ticks down the final minutes of the competition, the music gets more intense, the angles get more severe, and the cutting gets faster! Apple fly everywhere... sweat pours down pony brows... cider churns out of the grinding wheel... whole trees are uprooted and pressed into the brothers' cider... barrel after barrel after barrel fills up... it's impossible to tell who's winning!

"TIME'S UP!!" shouts the Mayor. The Apples and friends collapse with exhaustion. Twilight Sparkle, barely able to catch her breath, says she's proud of Applejack for not compromising her principles and cutting corners just to win. Integrity like that will always be rewarded—

"FLIM AND FLAM WIN!!" shouts the Mayor.

The smoothsters head over to the exhausted Apple family, gloating about their big victory, and the demise of Sweet Apple Acres. Rainbow Dash leaps up, ready to pound these jerks into jerk cider, but Applejack stops her. A deal's a deal, and the brothers won fair and square. They've got to honor the bet.

She gracefully congratulates the brothers on their win. The cider business in Ponyville is theirs.

Flim and Flam tell the crowd to come over to their cider stand, where there's more than enough to go around, but they all stand around glumly. "Go ahead, everypony, it's okay," says Applejack. They cheer and gallop over to collect their long-awaited cider, raising the cups for a Flim and Flam victory toast! Down the hatch, everypony!

SHTPPPT!! Cider flies everywhere as they all spit the nasty stuff out! "This cider tastes like bark!" "Mine's got rocks in it!" "Hey, what gives? I wouldn't pay one cent for this dreck!"

The brothers look at each other nervously. "You wouldn't? Not even one cent?"

"NO!!"

The brothers huddle, speaking in whispers. Then: “How about two cups for one cent?”

“NO!!”

Another huddle. “A nickel for the barrel?”

“NO!!”

The brothers exchange a nervous glance, their scheme collapsing around them.

“Next town?” asks Flim.

“Yup,” says Flam.

And just like that, the brothers pack up their operation and shove off in search of new suckers.

The Apples are ecstatic! Sweet Apple Acres is saved! And because of the competition, they’ve got a huge supply of cider, enough for everypony in town! Hurrah! As they take a drink, everypony agrees that Apple family cider is definitely worth waiting for. They’ll never complain about waiting again! Even Rainbow Dash finally gets a cup of cider... but Pinkie Pie accidentally hands her one of the brothers’ cups. GROSS!!

Later, Applejack dictates a letter to the Princess. “Dear Princess Celestia, Twilight asked me if I’d like to write you a letter about what I learned through all this. Well I didn’t learn anything! I was right the whole time! If you take your time and do things the right way, your work will speak for itself. Quality wins over quantity every time, and the best quality things are certainly worth waiting for. Sure, I could tell you I learned something about how my friends are always there to help and I can count on them no matter what. But the truth is, I knew that already, too.” Applejack and her friends and family all laugh at the letter, raising a big glass of cider.