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THE STOMPER

The Monthly Winemaking Newsletter of grapestompers.com  
October, 2000 Issue #3  
<http://www.grapestompers.com> 1-800-233-1505

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Welcome to the latest issue of "THE STOMPER", a newsletter of winemaking hints and other wine-related articles.

You are receiving this newsletter because you requested a subscription and have an interest in home winemaking. Unsubscribe instructions are at the end of this newsletter.

Feel free to pass along this newsletter to your winemaking friends; we only ask that it be sent in its entirety.

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\*^\* Hot Tips are sprinkled throughout the newsletter

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FEATURE ARTICLE: Take the grapestompers Survey - and Win!  
By Brant Burgess, Editor

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This month, grapestompers.com would like to hear from you - our winemaking friends - as we strive to improve the looks and useability of our web site.

While our current web site is certainly functional and contains lots of good winemaking hints for home winemakers, we feel certain aspects of it could use a little help - and that's where your opinion counts.

By participating in grapestompers' online survey, you'll have the chance to directly influence how our web site looks AND works.

Upon completion of our online survey, ALL participants will instantly receive a free page of wine tuits\* (retail value \$2.59 per sheet) via e-mail... and as an added incentive, all survey takers will be entered in a drawing for a FREE 28-day Chenin Blanc wine kit from VINO del VIDA.

You can find our survey at:

<http://www.grapestompers.com/survey/index.asp>

We certainly appreciate your participation!

Here's to you... and Happy Winemaking!

\*Wine "tuits" are neat little disposable nametags that fit around the stem of your wine glass. You can tell at a

glance whose wine glass it is. They're sure to come in handy at your next social gathering!

grapestompers recommends printing them on cream or pastel-colored paper (thicker paper is better) for the best appearance.

You can write to Brant at [webmaster@grapestompers.com](mailto:webmaster@grapestompers.com)

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#### NEW PRODUCTS

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Here is a list of products added to our catalog since the last newsletter:

- 4 Types of Lalvin Wine Yeast
- Item # 5100 Pewter Cork Opener, Ltd Edition by Champion
- Item # 5104 Bronze Cork Opener, Estate Opener
- 7 Additional Sizes of Solid Rubber Stoppers (bungs)

And a few products not yet added to our web site:

- Wine filtering systems and replacement filters
- Stackable plastic wine crates (stores bottles on sides)
- Another kind of floor corker
- Individual parts of fermenter buckets (lids, etc.)

Please call for price and order info on these items...

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#### RESULTS OF THE 3rd ANNUAL WINE COMPETITION ANNOUNCED By Bonnie Brown, Manager

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grapestompers held its 3rd annual wine festival on Sunday, October 1 in Laurel Springs, North Carolina.

Over 250 people attended in all, and dozens of bottles were entered in the winemaking competition.

Here is the list of winners in each category:

+ White wine from kit

First prize: Bob Edwards from Sparta, NC for his 1999 White Bordeaux

Second prize: Kevin & Michelle Greene from North Wilkesboro, NC for their Johannisberg Reisling

Third prize: Cindy & Gary Hoback from Charlotte, NC for their French Colombard

+ Fruit wine from scratch

First prize: Dr. Dan Strickland from Lansing, NC for his 1999 Blueberry

Second prize: Spiced Apple wine by James Taylor of Sparta, NC.

Third prize: Red Raspberry by Joe Jones of Sparta, NC

+ Red wine from kit

First prize: Bob Edwards from Sparta, NC with a 1999 Cabernet/Shiraz

Second prize: Bob Edwards from Sparta, NC with a 1999 Chianti

Third prize: Ed Killen from Sparta, NC with a Valpolicella

+ Red wine from scratch

First prize: St. Croix Red by Dr. Dan Strickland from Lansing, NC  
Second prize: Black Currant by Rudy Lehle from Roaring Gap, NC  
Third prize: Native Fox Grape wine by Joe Jones of Sparta, NC

grapestompers would like to thank everyone for coming and participating in this year's event. Special thanks go out to our wine judge, Harry Bradley.

You can write to Bonnie at [bonnie@grapestompers.com](mailto:bonnie@grapestompers.com)

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THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL

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grapestompers' specials for the month of October are:

SAVE 10% on a great 45-day wine kit from Cellar Classic

AND

Save 10% on a double-lever hand corkscrew  
Save 10% on Fizz-X Agitator (featured item)

Item #	Description	Regular Price	SPECIAL Price
2262	Portuguese Hand Corker	\$13.75	12.38
2607	Fizz-X Agitator	20.95	18.88
3143	CC Rosso Grande	68.25	61.43

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TOM'S CELLAR: A Little Chemistry Never Hurts  
by Tom Burgess, Owner

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This month, Tom begins his series about the chemistry of winemaking with an article about yeast...

Ah... the magic of that little packet of yeast! Who would have thought that 5 grams of fungi could have such an impact on the winemaking process?

I remember reading somewhere that 90% of winemaking is directly related to the yeast used to make wine; the other 10% is technique (what to do when and how to do it). I'm not sure I would go that far, but certainly choosing the right yeast is THE major factor in making a great wine.

Why? In simple chemical terms, yeast is the "magic" that turns sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide (CO2). It does not matter what the source of the sugar is - whether it's from grapes, blackberries, plums, or whatever - the yeast knows what to do as long as it is used under correct conditions.

\*-----HOT TIP-----\*

If you and your spouse or friends have different tastes in wine (sweet vs. dry) why not split the batch and create both types of wine from a single wine kit? When it's time to bottle, simply bottle the dry wine first, then add sweetener to taste, stir, and bottle the rest!  
CALL TOM for his secret sweetener recipe.

\*-----HOT TIP-----\*

A long time ago, winemakers relied upon the wild yeasts that were naturally present on the skins of the grapes to commence fermentation; sometimes the wines turned out great

and sometimes they didn't... Nowadays, scientists have isolated the best yeasts for making wine, and these cultured yeasts allow for more consistent fermentation.

When you purchase yeast, check out the expiration date (usually located at the top of the packet) and only use yeast that is in date. Store yeast in a cool dark place, away from sources of heat or sunlight. At grapestompers, we keep ours in a cool warehouse.

Add your yeast to the must (this is called "pitching" your yeast) when the temperature is between 60 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit, and primary fermentation should commence nicely within a day or two. If the wine gets too hot (say, in the 90's), it can kill your yeast, so take care!

Our customers commonly ask, "Which yeast should I use?" When you buy a wine kit from grapestompers, the guesswork is eliminated, because the proper yeast is included as part of your kit. No worries!

For winemakers who make wine from scratch, let me offer a couple of links so you can explore a little:

Lalvin Wine Yeasts home page:  
[http://www.lallemmand.com/lalvin/wine\\_yst.html](http://www.lallemmand.com/lalvin/wine_yst.html)

Hints about Red Star and Lalvin Wine Yeasts:  
<http://www.geocities.com/winemaking/strains.html>  
(thanks, Jack!)

These links should give you some hints about which wine yeast is best for your type of wine.

You can write to Tom at [tom@grapestompers.com](mailto:tom@grapestompers.com)

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#### PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT: Fizz-X Agitator

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If you make several batches of wine each year, you may have experienced a phenomenon known to home winemakers as "winemaker's forearm" - that achy soreness that accompanies the physical act of stirring... Lots of stirring!

You know...

stirring to mix in additives...  
stirring to add in bentonite...  
stirring to blend in chemicals...  
stirring to de-gas your wine...  
and on and on!

It's fairly straightforward to stir wine in a wide-mouthed container like a fermenter bucket - you simply grab a spoon or paddle and stir until your arm gets numb - but have you ever tried to stir your wine while it was still in the carboy? Yeeesch! With its narrow neck, even someone with the forearms of Popeye would have trouble doing a good job...

Thank goodness someone has discovered an easier way to stir things up - literally - and the design is so simple, when you see one of these gizmos you'll scratch your head and say, "Now why didn't I think of that?"

With the Fizz-X Mixer, stirring and mixing - whether in a carboy or a bucket - is effective and simple. Just attach the metal rod to your portable drill and squeeze the trigger. The centrifugal force caused by the rotation of the shaft throws out the stirring paddles... and before you know it, your agitation is done!

Item # 2607  
Manufacturer: Fizz-X  
Regular Price: \$20.95  
This Month: \$18.88

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#### SHIPPING UPDATE

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As your winemaking kit and equipment supplier, we do our best to shop the best shipping rate for your order. As of this moment, United Parcel Service (UPS) and the U.S. Postal Service's Priority Mail (and sometimes a combination) represent our best bets for getting packages to you. As a general rule, we have found that shipments weighing under 5 or 6 pounds are more economically sent via Priority Mail; UPS is a better deal for heavier packages.

If you've received a package from us lately, you may have noticed that we have started lining the heavier boxes with an extra layer of shock-absorbent styrofoam in the hope that our shipments will survive the rigors of shipping. Unfortunately, we have identified 4 areas where UPS seems to take great pride in dropping everybody's package from the greatest height - Chicago, Boston, New York, and Tallahassee. Other merchants are experiencing similar difficulties when packages are routed through these distribution centers, so it appears what's happening is not unique. We have personally talked with our UPS representative and have relayed our problems to him; if shipping damage continues to occur, we will take the proper course of action.

In the meantime, should your package arrive damaged, we ask you help us by:

1. Calling UPS at 800-742-5877 and let them know what happened - a tracking number is very useful
2. Calling us at 800-233-1505 and let us know so we can discuss a solution
3. Saving the package, as well as the packing material so the UPS inspectors can see what happened

If you can do this, it will give us a clearer shot of collecting from their insurance and speed up the replacement process. Thanks!

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#### FROM OUR CUSTOMERS

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As you might imagine, our office receives quite a bit of correspondence - mostly through e-mail - here are some comments we've recently received:

Tom - thanks a bunch. Got the other concentrates in good shape.

Really think a lot of companies could take a leaf out of your book where customer service is concerned. You guys really are the best.

Thanks again.

-- Brian Page  
Linden, NJ

I just wanted to tell you how much I enjoy your newsletter. My very first batch of wine is sitting in the carboy and I was just wondering what size cork I'm going to need in the very near future. And there was that very topic being

discussed in your newsletter!

Your video was also extremely helpful. It's definitely easier for "first timers" to understand the whole wine-making process while watching someone else do it! I'm so glad I found you all online- If I hadn't been unable to sleep one night and was just playing around on the computer, I never would have discovered you and finally indulged in my dream of one day making my own wine...

Anyway, I just wanted to tell you guys that I think you're terrific- I'll let you know how my first wine comes out- bottling day is September 29th!

-- Leslie Bocker  
Centereach, NY

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GUEST COLUMN - Malolactic Myths  
by Jack Keller, Pleasanton, Texas

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Malolactic bacteria reduce malic acid into lactic acid and produce carbon dioxide and water as byproducts. Lactic acid is approximately half as acidic as malic acid, so total acidity is reduced by about half of the malic acid thus converted. There are several myths, however, associated with malolactic fermentation (MLF).

**Myth:** If you don't sulfite the must, MLF will occur naturally.

**Reality:** A must may or may not contain natural malolactic bacteria (MLB). Two of the three strains of MLB are undesirable, so you could just as easily encourage harmful as beneficial bacteria growth. The size of the natural inoculant colony may not be sufficient to obtain rapid growth, so the timing of a natural MLF is totally unpredictable. If you want a controlled MLF, sulfite grapes at crush, frozen must at thaw or juice before pitching the yeast to at least 30 ppm of free sulfite and inoculate with a pure strain of *Leuconostoc oenos* when the sulfites drop to less than 15 ppm.

\*-----HOT TIP-----\*  
Keep a written log of everything you do  
in the process of making your wine so you  
can repeat a good thing or avoid a mistake.  
\*-----HOT TIP-----\*

**Myth:** All wines benefit from MLF.

**Reality:** Dry red table wines, chardonnay and sauvignon blanc with high acidity and sufficient pH are the most appropriate candidates for MLF. Fruity whites are not. The pH should not be below 3.3 for red wines, 3.1 for whites. MLB like to start around pulp and skins. For reds, this dictates an early inoculation. For whites, it depends on the grape. Chardonnay is usually inoculated for MLF after the vigorous primary fermentation has calmed. In either case, malolactic nutrients such as yeast extract should be added to the must to encourage rapid growth.

**Myth:** Wine is more susceptible to spoilage during MLF than at any other time.

**Reality:** While it is true that the absence of sulfites and the desired MLF temperature range of 75-80° F. render the wine vulnerable to various spoilage bacteria, the vulnerability increases after MLF is completed unless positive steps are taken. During MLF, the thin layer of

carbon dioxide produced by the MLF process protects the wine against oxidation and aerobic bacterial infections. After MLF is completed, this protective layer dissipates. The wine should be sulfited to an aseptic level, fined to remove all micro-pulp and cooled to at least 60° to protect it.

There is no reason to be afraid of MLF if approached knowledgeably and with the right tools. But remember, MLF is itself but a tool, so use it appropriately and without being misled by myths.

\*-\* Moderator note: Jack's tips apply mostly \*-\*  
\* to folks who make wine from scratch. If \*  
\* you make wine from a kit, you needn't be \*  
\*-\* overly concerned about MLF. \*-\*

AUTHOR BIO--Jack is president of the San Antonio Regional Wine Guild and internet author of "The Winemaking Home Page" found at:  
<http://www.geocities.com/winemaking/>

You can contact the author at his e-mail address:  
[winemaking@yahoo.com](mailto:winemaking@yahoo.com)

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#### How To Be A Guest Columnist For STOMPERS Newsletter

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If you'd like to be our next guest columnist, simply send your article to [articles@grapestompers.com](mailto:articles@grapestompers.com). If your article is selected for use in a future newsletter, you'll receive a coupon good for 10% OFF your next grapestompers order.

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#### CORKY'S WINEMAKING DEFINITION

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##### Racking

- The practice of moving wine by hose from one container to another, leaving sediment behind. Racking is done to facilitate aeration or clarification.

Look for other wine-related definitions by clicking on the 'Glossary' button from our home page at <http://www.grapestompers.com>

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#### NEXT MONTH'S HIGHLIGHTS

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- Tom's Cellar - That Crazy Campden Tablet
- Test Your Skills with the grapestompers Winemaking Quiz
- More Specials
- Another Guest Column - We'd Love YOUR input!
- Customer Testimonials
- New Products

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#### LIST MAINTENANCE

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Past issues of the STOMPER can be found at <http://www.grapestompers.com/newsletter/archives>

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