
THE STOMPER

The Monthly Winemaking Newsletter of grapestompers.com
December, 2000 Issue #5
<http://www.grapestompers.com> 1-800-233-1505

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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FEATURE ARTICLE: Online Winemaking Calculators
By Brant Burgess, Editor

Happy Holidays from grapestompers.com! All of us here at the mountaintop bodega in Laurel Springs, NC hope you and yours have a safe and joyous holiday season.

This month, grapestompers.com is introducing a new web page that helps you make some common conversions and calculations used by home winemakers.

We call it our "calculator" page, and as its name implies, it hosts some neat built-in formulas to help you convert between units of volume, temperature, and weight (Metric - US - Imperial) and even helps you determine the alcoholic content of your wine.

You can find our calculator page at:

<http://www.grapestompers.com/calculations.htm>

We think you'll enjoy it! We hope to add more calculators and converters in the future. If you have a request for a specific calculator/converter, please let us know by contacting me at the e-mail address shown below. We'll make our best effort to accommodate all requests. Of course, if you are able to provide the formulas that go along, that would be great.

And finally, a note about ordering/shipping during the holiday season:

Our inventory levels have been increased to ensure we have

enough product on hand to meet the demand during this time of the year.

United Parcel Service is promising no delays so order away! If you like, we can tell you how many days it will take for your package to arrive at its destination; just mention you'd like to know this, and we'll be sure to inform you!

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

You can write to Brant at webmaster@grapestompers.com

NEW PRODUCTS

Here is a list of products recently added to our catalog:

- Item # 2243 Plastic Spoon 18" \$2.41
- Item # 2240 Plastic Paddle 18" \$2.39
- Item # 3200 Complete Winemaking Starter Kit (White)
- Item # 3100 Complete Winemaking Starter Kit (Red)

HOW TO REMOVE STUBBORN WINE LABELS

By Bonnie Brown, Manager

We've all experienced it at one time or another... how in the world do you remove those wine labels that just won't come off?

Believe me, we've tried everything here at grapestompers... from chemicals to razor blades and everything in between! We've found a fool-proof method of removing even the most stubborn wine labels from used bottles, and I'm happy to share our secret with you in this edition of THE STOMPER.

First off, it's good to know why this topic is so important to home winemakers. It's common knowledge that recycling used wine bottles saves our natural resources, but more importantly, it will save you lots of money!

Considering that a case of new bottles (depending where you buy them) can cost anywhere from \$10 to \$20, you can easily see that using "experienced" wine bottles is a great way to stretch your winemaking dollars... the tricky part is to make sure the used wine bottles are clean - both inside and out.

Here at grapestompers we try to remove the "easy" labels first before we worry about the stubborn ones. This makes sense, doesn't it? What I mean is, why waste your precious time removing labels one at a time when we can take care of the majority of them in bulk with less effort?

We remove the "easy" labels by soaking empties in warm water overnight. Of course, be sure to allow the bottles to fill up with water so the labels will remain underwater! We use a huge washing tub to soak our bottles, but your kitchen sink will work just fine.

The next day, you'll find that most labels will come off on their own or perhaps with little amount of elbow grease and a Scotch Brite pad (those green scrubbing pads).

For those labels that refuse to let go after the overnight soak, here's our secret weapon: Use a cleaner called GOO REMOVER and those labels will come off easily. If you can't find Goo Remover in your area, other products to try are GOO GONE and WD-40. Look for these products in your local grocery or hardware store.

A word of caution: These cleaners are pretty powerful, so be sure and wear gloves when using them.

If you have a helpful hint you'd like to share, feel free to drop me a line at the address below.

You can write to Bonnie at bonnie@grapestompers.com

THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL

grapestompers' specials for the month of December are:

Save over \$60 on the purchase of a RED or WHITE Complete Winemaking Starter Kit

AND

Save 10% on the Bronze Estate Lever-action wine opener

Item #	Description	Regular Price	SPECIAL Price
5104	Estate Wine Opener-Bronze	\$ 99.95	89.96
3200	Complete White Kit	228.80	164.61
3100	Complete Red Kit	240.72	176.11

Here's what you get with the COMPLETE Starter Kit:

If choosing a WHITE wine, your choice of either:
Fume Blanc, Pinot Noir, or Chenin Blanc VDV concentrate

If choosing a RED wine, your choice of either:
Valpolicella, Shiraz, or Cabernet/Merlot VDV concentrate

PLUS ALL THESE GOODIES:

Tom's Winemaking Video	Bottle Rinsers
Fermenter Bucket with Lid	Three-Piece Airlock
6-Gallon Glass Carboy	Carboy Brush
Bung (stopper)	Bottle Filler
Five feet of vinyl tubing	B-Brite Sanitizer
Portuguese Hand Corker	FermTech AutoSiphon
2 Cases of 750-ml Bottles	Spoon or Paddle (our choice)
Bottle Washer Adapter	Brass Bottle Washer
Bottle Drainer, 45 station	

AND GET THE FOLLOWING ITEMS FREE (\$15.59 value):

- Free Wine Labels (text of your choice)
- Free \$5 coupon towards your next concentrate purchase
- Free Corks (30 corks, enough for one batch)

Just think: This complete kit offers EVERYTHING a brand-new hobbyist would need to begin making his own wine. All you need to decide is which wine kit you want!

Even if you're an experienced winemaker, you can appreciate the value we're offering. So if you've ever considered getting a second equipment kit, now is a great time to do it.

Compare this to buying wine in the store... For instance, if you buy the RED kit (the more expensive of the two), the cost per bottle is less than six dollars, which is less than a median-priced bottle of wine found in any grocery or wine store. Imagine... a hobby that pays for itself with your very first batch. Needless to say, the next time you make wine, you'll only have to buy more

corks (less than \$4.00) and another wine concentrate... and your cost per bottle will be between \$1.00 and \$3.00!

A note from Tom: Remember, you can always return your winemaking video and receive a credit for \$19.95 on your next purchase... that's like getting the video for free! All we ask is that you return it in good condition.

This is the best deal we've ever offered on a complete kit, so don't miss out... order one for yourself or a friend today. Ask for RED Complete Kit # 3100 or WHITE Kit # 3200 and be sure to let us know which wine concentrate you want.

TOM'S CELLAR: Conditioning Your Wine
by Tom Burgess, Owner

This month, Tom continues his series about the chemistry of winemaking with an article about conditioning your wine...

One word describes the best way to condition your wine: ...TIME... Do I hear any arguments? Show me any wine and a little time and I'll show you a miracle to curing any common wine ailment. Of course, there is no bad wine if you work with it.

But occasionally, winemakers get in a bind for time - it always seems to happen to us around the holiday season, when we're trying to cork a few bottles for our friends (or we're simply impatient!) - Luckily, we can get a little help from modern chemistry...

If you're one of those who always seems to be in a hurry, you may want to try a product called Wine Conditioner.

Used correctly (in SMALL quantities, AFTER your wine is stabilized) it can help take the "bite" out of wine and add a sweeter taste. Many customers swear by it since they use it to "swing" the wine to suit their taste buds. Since it is your wine, you can certainly do what you want; after all, isn't that one of the reasons you started making wine in the first place? Just go slow and easy... stir thoroughly after each addition and taste often as you go, so as not to overdo it.

-----HOT TIP-----

A regular bottle opener will open the wine concentrate container really well. You know the one, the cheap one with a can opener on one end and a pop bottle opener on the other. It really works well.

Thank you to Mark Henderson for this tip.

Have a tip you'd like to submit?
Send it to tips@grapestompers.com

-----HOT TIP-----

If you add wine conditioner too soon (before the wine is stabilized), you'll run the risk of starting another round of fermentation. This is because of the sugars contained in the conditioner... so be careful!

Whatever you do, be sure to make notes as you go, so you can refer to them again in the future. Soon, you will be consistently producing a wine to your taste. Of course, storage and temperature, along with TIME (there's that word again!) will certainly help produce a great wine.

Let's briefly describe the steps again:

1. Wine is stabilized (at the 28th day of a 28-day kit, or at the 45th day of a 45-day kit).
2. Due to time constraints, you are not able to bulk age your wine properly (normally, 2-3 months in a carboy) before bottling.
3. You sample the wine and decide it has too much of a bite or tastes a little young.
4. Rack the wine to a fermenter bucket.
5. Slowly add Wine Conditioner (1/2 oz to 1 oz at a time), stirring thoroughly and sampling after each addition, until the desired taste is achieved.
6. Bottle the wine.

Folks, this is what winemaking is all about - the blending, the tasting just like you want it. As a retired pharmacist (who actually can mix drugs into capsules, elixers, and suppositories), I love it! Stumped about your wine? Bring me some of your bad wine and let's see what can happen. Shucks, I can always cook with it!!!

You can order Wine Conditioner by asking for Item # 2739. It's a great bargain at only \$6.60 per bottle.

You can write to Tom at tom@grapestompers.com

PRODUCT ANNOUNCEMENT: New Names for Old Wines

grapestompers.com has recently been made aware of name changes for selected wines whose original names are now protected by law.

Many of you already know that the Bergamais wine kit we've stocked for years is essentially the same thing as Beaujolais... This is because the wine named "Beaujolais" is protected by trademarks and copyrights. So even though the Bergamais wine kit is made from the same grape variety... well, you get the picture.

The same thing has now happened to other wine names...

Bordeaux wine kits are now known as "Bordailles".
Burgundy kits are now known as "Bourgeron", and the
Chablis wine kits are now known as "Chamblaise".

We apologize if this causes any confusion, but we want to be a good "Wine Citizen" and comply with the legal requirements set forth by the industry. If you forget these new names, you can always ask us the old name and we will know what you want.

FROM OUR CUSTOMERS

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:

I just wanted to thank you for your excellent communication and customer service. We really feel like you went above and beyond for us, and we just wanted to take a moment to thank you. Your service was truly professional and

confirmed our choice to order through grapestompers.com.

Although we are giving the items we purchased as a gift, we will definitely recommend that they order their supplies through your company. You can count on a positive recommendation from us for anyone looking to make their own wine.

Thanks again,

-- David Crane
Amy Fruth

Bonnie, the wine was mmmmmmm, great! I was so pleased at the way it turned out!

Now that Christmas is near, we will be able to give out a few bottles to family and friends. Can't wait until we make the next batch. You are right..it is addicting!

And we couldn't have done it without the confidence that you gave us. Thanks again and I hope to send a few more customers your way!

-- Laura Bonkowski
Garden City, MI

GUEST COLUMN - Topping Up
by Lum Eisenman

Air contains about 21 percent oxygen, and oxygen in the air reacts readily with wine. Oxidized wines have darker, browner colors, "Sherry" character and bitter, off odors and tastes. Wine oxidation is not always so apparent, but even small amounts of oxidation can strip wine of its fruity character.

Unfortunately, oxidation is one of the most common defects in homemade wines. Much of this oxidation comes from excessive head space in wine storage containers, so keeping all wine storage containers full is important. Winemakers use the term "topping up" to describe the process of minimizing air contact by keeping wine storage containers full. Everyone agrees topping up is very important to wine quality. However, beginning winemakers often have trouble finding ways to keep their storage containers full, so here are a few suggestions.

-----HOT TIP-----

If you ever open a bottle of wine but only drink a glass or two, prevent oxidation of the remaining wine by using the Vacuum Wine Saver (item # 2908) to remove the excess air from the bottle. By increasing the life of your partially-full wine bottles, you'll save money.

-----HOT TIP-----

-Top up with the same wine.

Some wine is lost each time wine is racked, so 10 to 15 percent of extra wine should be made specifically for topping up containers. Store the extra wine in 5-gallon, 1-gallon or 1.5-liter containers, and use the wine from the smaller containers first.

-Add any available wine to fill the headspace.

Most red wines are not significantly affected by small

additions of other wines. Even white wine can be used, and sometimes a small white wine addition will actually improve the red color. Of course, red wines cannot be used to top up white wines, so keep the Cabernet out of the Chardonnay.

-Top up with a commercial wine of the same type.

A bottle or two will often eliminate the headspace, and small additions of commercial wine often improves homemade wine. The major disadvantage here is the cost of the commercial wine.

-Use inert gases such as nitrogen or argon to fill the headspace.

This technique works well with large stainless steel tanks, but it is more difficult to apply to some small containers. Carbon dioxide gas must be used with care because it is quickly absorbed into the wine and produces effervescence. A little spritz in white wine may be fine, but it is seldom appreciated in red table wines. The cost of the storage container, regulator and gas is often prohibitive for small producers.

-Add clean, sanitized, glass marbles to the storage container to bring up the wine level.

This method is easy to apply, but it has disadvantages. If the containers are moved, the marbles roll around and dislodge sediment. Sediment becomes trapped under the marbles, and the trapped sediment makes racking more difficult.

-Add water.

The disadvantages here are a small change in acidity and some flavor dilution. However, small additions of water may not be noticeable, and water is always available.

-Add enough food-grade mineral oil to produce a sixteenth inch thick layer on top of the wine.

Oil is not very suitable for long term storage, but it can prevent wine oxidation for several weeks. Olive oil has been used for this purpose for hundreds of years, so it is the traditional material. But, olive oil may leave some residual smell, and it is expensive. Oil should be considered an emergency treatment. It makes a big mess in wine containers, and cleaning up the residue requires much work.

Perfectionists use the first method, and they always make extra wine just for topping up. They acquire a large assortment of different size carboys, jugs and bottles so the right size wine storage container is always available.

Most home winemakers prefer a combination of the first two methods, but in an emergency, any method should be considered because any reasonable way of eliminating headspace is preferable to oxidized wine.

AUTHOR BIO--Lum Eisenmen is an experienced winemaker who is the author of a great online book entitled THE HOME WINEMAKERS MANUAL. You can read his book at <http://home.att.net/~lumeisenman/>

You can contact the author at his e-mail address:
lumeisenman@worldnet.att.net

How To Be A Guest Columnist For STOMPERS Newsletter

If you'd like to be our next guest columnist, simply send your article to 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.

Winemaking Books - A Great Christmas Gift!
by Tom Burgess, Owner

This is the season to be jolly (and well read on a cold winter's night) so we will share with you a great selection of books that every winemaker (or one who dreams of making his/her own wine) would be pleased to see under the Christmas tree.

THE ART OF MAKING WINE
by Stanley F. Anderson with Raymond Hull

THE COMPLETE HANDBOOK OF WINEMAKING
published by the American Wine Society

FROM VINES TO WINES by Jeff Cox

GRAPES INTO WINES by Philip M. Wagoner

HOME WINEMAKING STEP BY STEP by Jon Iverson

WINEMAKING by Stanley F. Anderson and Dorothy Anderson

GROWING WINE GRAPES
published by The American Wine Society

MAKING WILD WINES AND MEADS
by Pattie Vargas and Rich Gulling

WINEMAKER'S RECIPE HANDBOOK (over 100 recipes)
by Raymond Massaccesi

ENJOY HOME WINEMAKING, A GUIDE FOR THE BEGINNER
by Robert and Eileen Frishman

KITCHEN CORDIALS
by Nancy Crosby and Sue Kenny
(While this book does not talk about wine, it does show you how to make cordial liquors in 30 minutes or less - which are great last-minute stocking stuffers).

Last but not least, our very own 25-minute video entitled GRAPESTOMPERS.COM "GUIDE TO WINEMAKING"

I wanted to relate to you a funny/sad story (depending on your point of view) about one of our customers who bought a recipe book from us... Seems his wines never turned out quite right. Then suddenly, his wine was great!

We later found out (from his wife!) that he had been "glossing" over the recipes and had been substituting ingredients and deciding other important factors (such as fermentation temperatures, equipment used to make the wine, etc.) on his own. One wine even had a "plastic" nose!

So the moral of this story is... if you decide to give a book or video as a gift, please stress they should always follow the directions.

CORKY'S WINEMAKING DEFINITION

Stabilization

- The process of preventing further fermentation.
- Wine is usually stabilized by adding potassium sorbate (commonly called "sorbate") to a finished wine.

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

NEXT MONTH'S HIGHLIGHTS

- Tom's Cellar - Stabilizing Your Wine
- Send a Special grapestompers E-mail
- More Specials
- Bonnie's Bin - We Rate the Corks
- Another Guest Column - We'd Love YOUR input!
- Customer Testimonials
- New Products

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