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THE STOMPER

The Monthly Winemaking Newsletter of grapestompers.com  
February, 2001 Issue #7  
<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: Blending For Success  
By Brant Burgiss, Editor

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Greetings from the cold mountains of North Carolina! We hope this month finds you enjoying your favorite hobby of winemaking. Sipping a glass of wine by the glow of a fire will help ward off the chill of a cold winter day.

This month, grapestompers.com has added a new web page that will show you how to dazzle your taste buds... without spending an extra penny!

How can you do that? By blending, of course!

Let us show you how to create a NEW taste by blending different types of wine from your existing wine collection.

Blending is a great way to create that elusive taste, body and nose you've been yearning for - but couldn't find - in a single wine kit. It's fun to experiment mixing two or more wines together!

You can find the page that explains wine blending at:

[http://www.grapestompers.com/blending\\_wine.htm](http://www.grapestompers.com/blending_wine.htm)

So pick up a couple bottles of wine, grab a glass, and head on over to the wine blending page. We think you'll enjoy it!

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

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 recently added to our catalog:

- Item # 2110 12-750 ml. Bottles, Grape Embossed \$9.50
- Item # 2218 Fast Flow Bottle Filler, 1/2" \$2.95
- Item # 2726 Ascorbic Acid, 2 oz. \$2.95
- Item # 2278 Gum Stopper, #11.5 Solid \$1.65
- Item # 2279 Gum Stopper, #10 Solid \$1.15
- Item # 2599 Thermometer (sticks on carboy) \$1.89
- Item # 2743 TM Wine Conditioner, 180 ml. \$2.29

and some 10-liter wine kits made by RJ Spagnol's:

- Item # 3271 Grand Cru Pinot Grigio \$50.00
- Item # 3273 Grand Cru Pinot Chardonnay \$58.00
- Item # 3275 Grand Cru Gewurtztraminer \$50.00

Each of these Grand Cru kits make 6 US gallons of wine, or approximately 30 bottles worth (750 ml size).

Call us in mid-February about the new Ice Wines from Wine-Art... we should get them in by then.

- Item # 3150 Wine-Art Ice Gewurtztraminer \$50.75
- Item # 3152 Wine-Art Ice Gordo \$50.75
- Item # 3154 Wine-Art Ice Riesling \$50.75

Ice Wine kits make 3 US Gallons each (about 16 bottles)

Lastly, we will begin carrying a Port Wine Kit from RJ Spagnol's... a full-strength 12 liter kit to make 12 liters of finished wine. These will cost \$34.95, and you'll need a 3-gallon carboy to make it.

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BONNIE'S BIN: Enjoying My Wine  
By Bonnie Brown, Manager

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Before dinner the other night, after having worked at the Bodega all day, my husband and I were enjoying a nice big glass of Valpolicella. I relaxed and we discussed our day.

Of course, the conversation came back to our wine (OUR wine! Mighty fine words!). We didn't use to enjoy wine on a regular basis because we were too tight (my husband says cheap) to buy a bottle of wine that cost anywhere from \$10.00 to \$15.00, OR MORE... especially if you didn't know the wine!

Now we make 30 bottles of wine (one kit's worth) for about the same cost as buying 2 bottles off the shelf in the store. We've made several kinds of wine, and we get the enjoyment of making it! I have to admit, ready made wine is no fun... what other hobby allows you to drip a little bit on the floor to add character and aroma to your abode?

Oh, and the best is when you have friends over for dinner. You share a bottle, show off the label and tell them that you made it. This is exactly what your friends will say:

"YOU MADE THIS?"

You just beam and keep on sipping! By the way, when you order a wine concentrate kit, grapestompers.com includes FREE labels to confirm that you did indeed make it!

Before I got into making wine (which leads to another story for next month!), I would only order a glass once in a

while when out for dinner. Since it only costs 33 to 75 cents a glass to make it ourselves (plus bottles, so be sure to RECYCLE!) we drink all we want, any time we want!

My husband and I are enjoying it a lot more too! We are not into spending money no matter how much we have. As retired (??) folks we also needed another hobby. This one has been exceptionally wonderful and rewarding.

First of all, it has gotten me out of the house and out of my husband's way! It has also given us another avenue to meeting people. You mention "winemaking" and you get all kinds of conversations going. Chances are, either your uncle, grandfather or GRANDMOTHER made wine! Or else your friends or neighbors have grapevines.

Why not write those wonderful stories down and share them with your family and the rest of us?

Have I shared some of my excitement? Got you hyped yet? Have I told you how EASY it is to make? What wonderful gifts the wine makes, or what wonderful gifts the supplies make? We also have gift certificates!

If not, e-mail me! I have more to tell you.

Until next month!

Life is too short... to drink bad wine... SO MAKE SOME!

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 February are:

Save 10% off all Cellar Classic kits when you order 2

AND

Save 12% on our best-selling hand corker

AND

Save over 16% on our most popular corks

AND

Save over \$60 on the purchase of a  
Complete Winemaking Starter Kit  
which includes a RED or WHITE Concentrate  
(see wine kit selection below)

Item #	Description	Regular Price	SPECIAL Price
3200	Complete White Kit	237.21	173.27
3100	Complete Red Kit	249.13	184.77
2262	Portuguese Hand Corker	13.75	11.99
2310	Agglomerate Cork (each)	.12	.10

or buy a whole bag of corks (1000 corks) and get them for only \$0.08 apiece. Get your friends together and buy in bulk and save!

This is not a typo... we've extended last month's special for another month. Please take advantage of this great Valentine's Day bargain before Tom changes his mind!

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

If choosing the Complete WHITE Kit, your choice of either:  
Fume Blanc, Piesporter, or Chenin Blanc VDV concentrate

If choosing the Complete RED Kit, 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, 81 station	Corkscrew

AND YOU 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!

And don't forget... 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.

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TOM'S CELLAR: Corks - It Was A Good Year  
by Tom Burgess, Owner

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This month, Tom talks about corks and their origin...

Here at grapestompers.com we are constantly searching for better cork quality at the best price for our customers. We shop for corks all over the world, and because we buy in large quantities, we are able to pass along our savings to you. We even order the plastic corks from Chile (which we do not particularly recommend, but some folks request)!

This past year was an excellent growing season for corks in both Portugal and Spain, with the proper amount of warm days and rain... So the quality of corks this year will be to your advantage!

Remember, when you order corks, you order "each". Any amount, we'll ship to your door from 1 to 1,000!

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

Another way to identify bottled wine in a wine rack is to write the wine type (or its abbreviation) vertically on the cork's side with a permanent marker, large enough so it can be read through the neck of the bottle. This works well, especially if you don't use capsules.

Thanks to Buck of Hamadryad for this tip.

Have a tip you'd like to submit?  
Send it to [tips@grapestompers.com](mailto:tips@grapestompers.com)  
\*-----HOT TIP-----\*

An interesting fact to pass along to you is the make-up of the bark of the cork oak tree (which they peel to obtain the corks). Corks have tiny cells (14 sided polyhedron) with the intercell space filled with air. In a single cubic centimeter, there are over 40 million cells. So I guess you might say, "You get a lot for little, especially if you had to make 'em up yourself.."

Want to learn more about where corks come from? Just go to:

<http://www.corksupplyusa.com/ce-intro.htm>

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

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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,  
Many thanks. Your company is outstanding to deal with and your video is indispensable!!

-- Steve Kerchner

Tom,  
I have given away two cases of wine this Christmas. Everyone seems to love it and it is something that I made that I can give away. I just love wine making.

I have made a Riesling and a White Zinfandel; what do you recommend next?

Take care,

-- Mark Henderson  
Elk City, OK

Tom,  
The Piesporter sounds like the pick. The kit is a gift for my brother-in-law and his wife...how about [putting] "Winsor Estate Wine" [on the free labels]; that way we can keep it in the family (smile).

Thanks for the follow-up.

-- Rita Winsor

Hello Tom:  
This is Joe Dekleva again. I wanted to thank you for sending out the new box of concentrate that I had ordered.

The box arrived on Friday evening before Xmas at 5:00 PM. It got here just in time.

-- Joe Dekleva

Among the many advantages of being a professional wine critic is that one gets to travel the planet in search of the world's best wines. This past December, for example, I spent three nights in Barcelona's luxurious Ritz hotel in order to take part in a vertical tastings of the wines of Vega Sicilia (1953 - 1990) and then traveled on to Bordeaux for a sampling of the wines of Chateau Margaux (1900 - 1998). Such tastings offer incalculable pleasure. If the truth be told, however, they are also hard work, for such tastings require intense concentration and effort.

No wise man or woman has ever said that all wines have to be great, and keeping in mind that the honest critic is a person who adores wines, no matter their origins), tastings of wines made by hobbyists also offer great pleasure. Happily, over the years I have been invited to such tastings, sometimes by good friends, at other times by mere acquaintances and at yet other times by total strangers, to taste the wines they have made in their homes. I have tasted the wines of hobbyists on six continents, those including North America (from the East to the West Coasts of Canada and the United States); Europe (especially in Italy, France, Greece, Turkey and England); Asia (Israel, Lebanon and Palestine); South America (Chile, Brazil and Argentina); Australia and New Zealand; and Africa (Morocco, Algeria and Egypt). I have never tasted wine made in Antarctica, but considering that no one has ever made a wine on that frigid continent I feel no need for apologies.

\*-----HOT TIP-----\*  
Be comfortable with how you like your wine. It is a personal thing. Be it sweet or dry, chilled or room temp, whites or reds.  
  
Have a tip you'd like to submit?  
Send it to [tips@grapestompers.com](mailto:tips@grapestompers.com)  
\*-----HOT TIP-----\*

Let me make it perfectly clear that tastings with hobbyists can be unadulterated pleasures, for in addition to sampling whatever wines are being offered, one shares the joy and pride of the person who made them, enjoys their invariably warm company (wine lovers tend to be a warm & open group), and invariably of sampling at least some of whatever culinary fare they are offering. As much social events as they are wine-tastings, sampling the wines of hobbyists can be, for lack of a better term, great fun. There are, however, certain lessons that I have learned over the years about such tastings. First of all, for example, in Greece and Turkey, no matter how terrible the wine you have sampled may be, you will be wise to compliment your host and restrict your comments to neutral observations such as "mmm... interesting". Greek and Turkish hobbyists tend to be very insulted and sometimes become out-and-out aggressive if told that their wines are not the equivalent of those of Cheval Blanc or La Romanee Conti. Another lesson I have learned is that it is not wise so say that you have never heard of the Angenino or Triblisi Nero grapes that have been used in a certain wine. Not all at-home winemakers have access to the great and noble grapes of the world and sometimes use fruit that no commercial producer would dream of using. That is not necessarily a drawback to the simple pleasures that a wine can offer, but it is often insulting to the winemaker to hear that you do not value his or her grapes (in my own case, when I encounter grapes previously unknown to me, I

do my research quietly after the tastings).

I have been asked if I use the same set of criterion when evaluating wines produced by commercial wineries and those made by hobbyists. Simply enough – I do not, for the major factor in evaluating the wine of a hobbyist is the pleasure that it offers. Thus, even the simplest wine can be appreciated if it offers pleasant aromas, flavors that are rewarding and a texture and depth that makes it rewarding to drink. It is true that even the wines of hobbyists should reflect good balance but it is not always important that they reflect the supposedly traditional aromas, flavors and texture that one has come to expect from wines made commercially. Nor, considering the small amounts made by most hobbyists, is the aging potential of their wines a major factor in its evaluation. At the risk of being repetitive, what I do look for in the wines of hobbyists is primarily pleasure, and that pleasure can range from the simple to the complex. To anticipate another question – no, I do not assign scores to the wines of hobbyists. In the case of those hobbyists who have made wine for many years, I most definitely look for a consistency in style over the years, feeling strongly that winemakers at any level who take themselves and their wines seriously strive not only for a level of consistency, but a style that reflects their own tastes and personalities.

The only time I have a "problem" with hobbyists is when they decide (rightly or wrongly) that their wines are good enough to sell on the open market, for then I have to switch hats and can no longer be the friend or acquaintance who is invited over to join the winemaker for a friendly afternoon or evening but to be the critic, and as a critic I have to evaluate their wines against other, equivalent wines also on the market. The clients of critics are their readers and once a wine is on the market, those readers are entitled to know in some detail the plusses and minuses of the wines that are being offered to them. From time to time, I have written very favorably indeed about the wines of some hobbyists who have declared themselves to be boutique or mini-boutique wineries (the cases, for example of Beyers Truter in South Africa or Eli Ben Zaken in Israel). On the other hand, I have also written in highly critical terms about hobby-level wines that, while a joy to share with the winemaker, simply have no place on the shelves of prestigious wine stores when they are priced at anywhere from \$15 - \$150.

Advice to hobbyists – of course (after all, critics are always full of what we think is good advice):

1. Make the wine you think most suitable to your tastes, your facilities and your budget.
2. Develop a style that reflects what you want your wine to be and within that style, strive for ever-increasing quality.
3. Do not make wines to impress anyone but yourself.
4. Be constantly aware that the wines you make should make a statement about who and what you are.
5. Enjoy your wines, and enjoy sharing them with friends and acquaintances in a civilized fashion for that, after all, is what wine has always been about.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Daniel Rogov is the Wine and Restaurant Critic for the daily Israeli newspaper HaAretz as well as for the The International Herald Tribune. He also contributes regularly to several European newspapers and magazines, including Le Monde and The Guardian. Rogov, whose recommendations are based entirely on his professional opinion and are not influenced by any commercial

considerations and he enjoys letting his readers know that he has "been writing about wine and food for more years than I am willing to admit in public". His wine and gastronomic internet site, Rogov's Ramblings, can be found at <http://www.stratsplace.com/rogov> and he can be reached by email at [drogov@alvistata.net](mailto:drogov@alvistata.net).

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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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## Determining Shipping Costs

by Tom Burgess, Owner

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How much will the shipping cost?

This is a question commonly asked by our customers, so we thought we'd post the answer in our newsletter. After reading this article, we hope you'll gain a better understanding of the steps we undergo to determine an accurate shipping cost.

As alluded to in an previous issue of The Stomper, grapestompers generally ships via UPS Ground unless the weight of an order is under 5 pounds. If this is the case, we can save you money by shipping these smaller packages via the US Postal Service. We ship via UPS ground because it is the least expensive for you, and we believe your packages are handled with better care.

United Parcel Service offers different levels of service, and charges rates accordingly. For instance, did you know you can save \$1.05 on shipping if you can take delivery at a commercial address instead of a residential one?

We also wanted you to be aware that UPS is increasing prices effective February 5th. Ground service rates will go up by an estimated 3.1%, plus an added fuel cost (which has been in effect ever since gas prices rose). Avoid this price increase by ordering before the deadline!

Here's our procedure for obtaining the cost of shipping:

1. Get the order together
2. Determine number of boxes needed to ship order
3. Weigh the order
4. Log into the UPS web site
5. Fill in the destination zip code, the packaging type (we use 275 lb. test boxes to protect your order)
6. Print the label off of the web and get the cost

A lot of steps, huh?

So our best suggestion - if you want to know the shipping charges - is to let us know you would like a shipping quote when you place your order. That way, we can figure the shipping cost, and e-mail the quote to you before your package(s) ship.

Some companies provide "ballpark" shipping prices based upon weight and zip codes, but we don't do that because we have never found them to be accurate... and the rate you end up paying seems higher than the one promised. In our case, we don't mind telling you the exact price, because it's your right to know.

Just in case you're curious:

- A case of bottles weighs about 14-18 pounds
- Starter equipment kits begin to weigh in at 23 pounds
- Wine concentrate kits range in weight from 23-44 pounds

In the meantime, rest assured that we will always keep an eye out for the best shipping deal possible. Luckily, FedEx and the rest of the delivery services are keeping the shipping industry a competitive one. For you and me, that means lower prices!

Some folks have asked if we would consider providing free shipping for our products.

Many Internet companies offer to ship free, but double the retail prices in order to maintain profitability. We just don't believe in those tactics, because in the end, it's in our customers' best interest to keep product prices as low as possible, and only add the lowest the shipping rate that we can find.

Thanks From Tom

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#### CORKY'S WINEMAKING DEFINITION

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##### Blending

- The process of mixing two or more wines in order to achieve one or more of the following:
  - \* Obtaining a certain wine style
  - \* Standardizing a product
  - \* Obtaining the best balance and complexity from different grapes varieties, areas and vineyards
  - \* Improving the total quality of the individual wines.

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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- More Winemaking Tips from Tom's Cellar
- Using Your Hydrometer
- More Specials
- The next article from Bonnie's Bin
- Another Guest Column - We'd Love YOUR input!
- More 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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