
THE STOMPER

The Monthly Winemaking Newsletter of grapestompers.com
March, 2001 Issue #8
<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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*** Hot Tips are sprinkled throughout the newsletter

FEATURE ARTICLE: Using Your Hydrometer
By Brant Burgess, Editor

Greetings from the Tar Heel State! We hope this newsletter finds you in good "spirits" and enjoying YOUR wine.

This month, grapestompers.com has added a new web page that will show you everything you ever wanted to know about using a piece of test equipment known as the hydrometer.

What is a hydrometer? Why do I need one? How do I use it?

If you're not familiar with this piece of equipment, you'll be happy to learn that it's easy to use and is one of the most inexpensive to acquire. In fact, they're on special this month for less than \$4.00!

Knowing how to use a hydrometer is one of the most basic skills of a winemaker; even if you're a newbie it won't take you long to learn the ropes!

You can find the page that explains hydrometer use at:

http://www.grapestompers.com/hydrometer_use.htm

So get your hydrometer, grab a test jar and wine thief, and head on over to the hydrometer page. We think you'll enjoy it!

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 # 6111 Wine Label Software (Windows) \$24.95
- Item # 6112 Wine Label Paper, White \$0.15/sheet
- Item # 6113 Wine Label Paper, Canary \$0.15/sheet
- Item # 6114 Wine Label Paper, Blue \$0.15/sheet

The wine label software is the same software we use to print your free labels, so we certainly endorse it! Create personalized professional quality labels for your homemade wine and beer. This is version 3.2 of the software, for Windows machines running 95/98/NT. Sorry, no MAC version is available.

Likewise, the gummed wine label paper is the same we use on the custom labels we make for your kits. It uses a natural wheat-based glue that dissolves easily when it's time to recycle your bottles. The price shown is for the first 20 sheets of each color; thereafter, the price drops to only \$0.12 per sheet.

Storing Your Wine
by Tom Burgess, Owner

It's always fun to talk about MAKING wine or DRINKING it, but what about STORING it? Here's a little lesson in practicality on wine storage...

In a previous issue of this newsletter, we mentioned that the proper storage temperature for wine was about 55 degrees Fahrenheit, at 50 to 70 percent relative humidity.

Folks have known this for centuries - that's why the old timers put their wine in the basement - the conditions are optimum for storing wine. And the best source of a consistent temperature for wine storage is the earth.

Already I can hear rumblings of, "So you're going to bury it in the earth, yeah?" You are very close to the answer with that comment, so I will NOW share with you HOW I STORE my wines!!

Since the earth's temperature is around 55 degrees F, it follows that concrete poured on the earth (as flooring) would be the same temperature... In our bodega (which sets back into a hillside), we've poured a concrete floor, and on that base we have stacked several joints of 4" diameter terra cotta pipes against the wall. Each joint is about 14" long, so a wine bottle fits inside nicely!

We put the wine in the pipes with the LABELS UP. Give it some time and your wine will arrive at the optimum storage temperature!

"OK," I hear you say, "we don't have a basement, or have a concrete floor; where we live, it is too hot!" To that, all I can say is try the garage (if you have one) or find a buddy who will trade storage space in his cellar for a couple of bottles of wine.

But you see... that's another reason why I live in the mountains of North Carolina - it never gets too hot here! So get in your car and come for a visit so you can see for yourself! We'll be happy to provide directions.

BONNIE'S BIN: ... And the REST of the Story
By Bonnie Brown, Manager

Bonnie picks up the story she began last month about how she got into winemaking...

Tom was having a new building erected for the Bodega. He had outgrown his start up building fast! My husband, Don, was helping on that building. He called one day to see if I would pick up some insulation and bring it down. Things had gone faster than expected that morning!

I delivered the insulation, unloaded it, and saw that things needed picking up - so as long as I was there, I dug in. Tom was in the attached office, saw what was going on, and came out. He asked if I could use a computer and Don piped in and said, "That is all she does!". Tom took me by the elbow and led me to his office, sat me in front of the computer and started showing me how to do invoicing, inventory, etc. I was there for a couple of hours, TOTALLY ENGROSSED! Don came to get me as it was quitting time. Tom said "Can you come back tomorrow?" It was interesting, and so was Tom, so I said "Sure!"

I have been at the Bodega for 1 1/2 years and to this day Tom has NOT asked me if I wanted to stay at the Bodega a few days a week and learn with him! Well folks, I am still at the Bodega and still learning! Every day is interesting and challenging. A true learning experience.

I get to talk with customers like you! We learn a lot from our customers. We certainly enjoy it when you share with us. We get to know your new babies and events in your areas (such as when the cranberry truck tipped over in the middle of town!). You see, you are not just a number or a sale with us. You let us laugh with you and cry with you. You give us ideas and tips. We pass those on to other vintners. Helping other winemakers comes full circle. When we need help you are all there behind us. THANK YOU!

You bear with us during faulty deliveries. Now where did UPS deliver that package? You say you DON'T have a porch and the driver says he put it on your porch??? That does not happen often, but when it does we are all upset by it. We both spend a lot of time trying to resolve the situations that arise.

Let's look at it this way: it makes us embrace our items and gives our winemaking "another story"

Until next month!

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

You can write to Bonnie at bonnie@grapestompers.com

THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL

grapestompers' specials for the month of March are:

Save up to 40% on hydrometers

AND

Save 10% on our wine thief/test jar combo
as well as our adhesive thermometer

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
2604	Green Line Hydrometer	4.95	3.88
2603	Triple Scale Hydrometer	4.83	2.90
2598	Wine Thief/Test Jar Combo	6.08	5.48
2599	Adhesive Thermometer	1.89	1.69

Both hydrometers mentioned above will fit the wine thief / test jar combo, which is designed to release wine back into the carboy after taking the specific gravity reading.

The adhesive thermometer is a stick-on device you can put on your carboy or fermenting bucket. Just stick it on and leave it. We've used one for 8 years and it's still there!

We've had such a huge response from our Complete Wine Kit special, that we've decided to extend this special for another month. Please take advantage of this great St. Patrick'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, Pinot Noir, 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 Rinser
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.

This month, Tom talks about dressing up your bottles...

On special occasions, we all step out dressed up in our Sunday best... so why not dress up your recycled bottles with the very best, especially when you present them as a gift? How do you do this? Use a capsule!

A capsule is nothing more than a protective sheath that covers the cork and the upper neck of a wine bottle. Besides looking pretty, capsules have a practical use as well. Not only do they help prevent the cork from drying out, but they keep dirt and bacteria from accumulating in the crevice where the bottle and cork meet.

Capsules are made of several materials, like foil or plastic, but the most common material used is PVC. PVC capsules are neat, because when heat is applied in the form of a hot air gun, they shrink to fit the contours of the wine bottle. You should know that a hair dryer will not work - they're simply not hot enough. Get a heat gun from your local hardware store; they're inexpensive.

grapestompers offers several different capsules in a number of color combinations:

- #2400 Gold
- #2404 Burgundy with gold grapes
- #2405 Maroon
- #2406 Green
- #2409 Green with gold grapes
- #2410 White with a gold band at the top
- #2411 Black with gold grapes

All of the above capsules fit the small necked bottles with narrow bands.

For the small necked bottles with the broad bands at the top, we recommend the "oversized" capsules:

- #2418 White
- #2420 Black
- #2422 Burgundy

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

Another way to clean the muck out of a recycled wine bottle is to add a handful each of small dried beans and salt, along with a dab of water. Swirl the mixture around... The beans act as a vehicle for the salt to stick to and the salt crystals act like little scrapers, cleaning the sides of the glass. Be sure to remove the beans promptly or they'll swell and may present a problem getting out of the bottle!

Thanks to Starla Byrum for this tip.

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

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

For those wine bottles with flared mouths, you can use bottle sealing wax to "dress up." Wax is available in red, burgundy, green, or gold (just let us know the color when you order). You melt your wax in an old tin can (like an old soup can) double-boiler style. Just invert the corked bottle in the wax for a count of four, then pull it straight out and rotate it slowly on its side until the

wax cools (about 15 seconds). Some folks we know use an old-fashioned sealing wax monogram to mark their bottles! Your cost to dress up using wax? About 5 cents a bottle.

With your free wine labels (you get them free when you purchase a wine concentrate kit) and a nice capsule from grapestompers, you're on your way to give that nice bottle of wine to a friend. It's just like a polished apple; it will taste the same, but it sure is more appealing!

You can write to Tom at tom@grapestompers.com

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,
You have a great site. I think the newsletter is right on time. I make wine as well, as far as the reused wine bottles go, after the old label comes off and in general cleaning goes on. I take the top rack from the dishwasher and place the bottles in the bottom rack and fill the detergent tray with ONE STEP No-Rinse Cleanser. It does a great job. One Step is made by Logic in Greenville NC, in your neck of the woods. Cleans with oxygen. Does not contain chlorine, bisulfites, organic compounds, or phosphates. I have had no trouble with it. That's all for now.

-- Rick & Nancy

Tom,
We did a first racking of an Italian prune wine. I discarded the fruit out into the snow, but before the deer came to eat it, I ran out and gathered up a good portion of it. I put it on the wood stove and brought it to a boil, then pulverized it. I added sugar, walnuts, cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg. It made a jam that was like mincemeat. I later added rum and brandy to it. You could add other things that usually go into mincemeat like raisins, currants, oranges, lemons apples or venison. (I like to add the walnuts just before I serve it.)

I guess you have to be a bit English to really like this. I was thrilled that it turned out so much to our liking. I would guess that centuries ago this might have been done as there was so little and nothing was thrown out if there was any chance of using it for something.

Cheers,

-- Courtney Bell
Hamadryad

Hi Tom!
Hope all is well down there in North Carolina. I read in one of your back issues of the Stomper that you're a retired pharmacist. Well, I'm also a pharmacist (with many, many years to go until retirement!). I used to help my Italian grandfather make wine every Autumn from scratch - he grew Concord and Niagra grapes.

I always enjoyed turning the crusher. He would make three big barrels every year! I remember he used to "sterilize" them with burning sulfur sticks. Even as a kid he would pour me a little glass of wine to drink with dinner

(usually pasta) - much to the chagrin of my mother. But that glass of wine was always my reward for "helping to make the wine!" After he passed away, the winemaking went on for a few years - but nobody tended to the grape arbors and finally the winemaking stopped.

Needless to say, I am thrilled to be making wine again! (albeit the "easy way"). My 4 year old (Nick) and my 7 year old (Ryan) are just fascinated with the primary fermentation. They are my helpers. I'll give them a little nip when it's done. So for me, winemaking is not just a hobby - it's a connection with my past.

The boys and I very much enjoyed your video. It is very well done and extremely helpful.

By the way, your web site is outstanding! Thank You!

See - you're still training younger pharmacists! So long from the cold climes of Pittsburgh!

-- Mike Donovan, R. Ph.
Duquesne University 1984

Bonnie,
Just want you to know that the order arrived safe and sound yesterday.

Thanks much again for your help. It was a real thrill opening up all those boxes and viewing the video which was very well done.

I'm hoping to start the process tonight...

Best,

-- John

GUEST COLUMN - The Wine Tasting
by W. Bruce Cameron, Colorado

Get this: My friend Walter gets paid to go to restaurants, eat their best meals, and then write about them in the paper the next day. He calls this "journalism". Uh-huh. Can you imagine what life would be like if you were PAID to eat?

You: "I'll have the filet mignon, lobster tail, a bottle of your best Merlot, and chocolate cheesecake for dessert."

Waiter: "Very well, sir, here's seven hundred dollars."

Anyway, Walter found himself in a real bind one day, and called to ask me to substitute for him at a wine festival so he could fly with his girlfriend to Aspen for the opening of a restaurant by Ted Turner or Tina Turner or Bachman Turner Overdrive or somebody. All I had to do was pretend to be Walter and give my impression of a few glasses of wine. How hard could that be?

My fellow judge at this festival thing looked like Abe Lincoln, only short and without a beard. He seemed very impressed to be meeting someone as famous as Walter the Guy Who Eats For a Living. We sat at a table with a white linen cloth, and a crowd of maybe 20 very wealthy-looking people gathered around while an old guy in a tuxedo struggled with a bottle of wine, maybe as unfamiliar with a corkscrew as I would be. When he finally got the stopper out he handed it to me. "Good job," I told him encouragingly.

Old Abe grabbed the cork out of my hand, pushed it into his considerable nose and sniffed it, which I thought was pretty funny. None of the snobs in the audience laughed, though.

When our glasses were poured Abe took a thoughtful sip, so I did the same. I thought it was pretty good, but he must have hated it, because he immediately spat it out in a bowl and then took a swish of water, which he also expectorated, like it was a dentist's office or something! Some people are so rude, you wonder if they were raised by wolves.

"Sensational," Abe declared. "A mild hint of raspberry. Young oak. A fruity, lively character, spirited and carefree."

Everyone turned and looked at me. I froze. Raspberry? Oak trees? Was the guy insane? All I could taste was wine. "Uh, like he said," I finally agreed. The audience didn't seem satisfied.

The old guy in the tuxedo snatched Abe's glass before he could finish it, so I made sure I swallowed the rest of mine before he got to me.

The next entry came from a different bottle. Abe did the same tired trick with the cork, but you have to know when to quit and even when the old guy in the tux gave me a shot at Cork Humor I ignored it. Abe repeated his boorish behavior, spitting out every drop. How can you get to be a wine judge if you don't even like wine?

"Ah. Chocolate and smoke. A hint of a dry and mysterious nut flavor. Perfect with cheese," Abe pronounced.

So the maybe the guy abused LSD when he was in college. I cleared my throat. "Well, I don't taste the smoke," I finally stated. "More like a...wine, some kinda red wine."

This drew a lot of severe looks from the people in the audience, but don't actions speak louder than words? I DRANK my glass, while Mister Smoked Chocolate Nuts couldn't swallow even a sip.

Another bottle. I felt myself beginning to lose interest.

"Ah, elderflowers and peaches, with a hint of honey and spice. A sweet and delicious composition of sun and sparkling air," Abe spouted.

I took a breath. "Chevrolets freshly waxed. Small earlobes. A new television," I announced.

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

About washing labels off bottles... My thought was to add a spigot at the bottom of the garbage can so you can drain it easier! Set it up on 4" blocks, maybe add an interesting "cover" like a wishing well! If this is set near an outside water supply it would be nice too. I dump the labels and water into our compost pile and add it to the garden every year with the lees from the wine (I have a very happy garden).

Thanks to Bill Dewar of Grangeville, Idaho for this tip.

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

Clearly, the audience was far more impressed by my analysis than they were by Abe's. They regarded me with open mouths.

The next bottle glugged into my glass with amazing clarity. I found myself preparing my analysis before I even drank it. "Linoleum basements!" I shouted joyfully. "Uncle Jim's notebooks! The people who never said 'cree!' Sore thumbs!" You could tell everyone judged my proclamation the most original yet.

The guy in the tuxedo seemed reluctant to pour me another glass, but I was empowered. I grabbed the bottle out of his hand and swigged it down. Here was one wine judge who knew how to enjoy the stuff!

"Okay." I stood, feeling abundantly affectionate toward everybody. "First, to my fellow judge, my good buddy, I have to say, I think you should grow the beard back. And I know what everyone says now about how the Civil War wasn't actually fought to free the slaves, and blah blah blah, but really. Really. What matters most is that we are all here tonight to honor you, sir, and to salute the brave men and women who would be alive today except for the sacrifices they made. And, well, also because they'd be really, really old." I wiped my eyes, hoping to keep my emotions in check. "And as I stand here, thinking to myself, 'Bruce, these are your best friends in the world,' except," I added hurriedly, "that my name is Walter, and I wonder, why can't we get along? Is it because of fresh chocolate nuts? Because of elderberries in a newly-waxed Chevrolet? I think not, my bunnies, for the sad truth here is that we need more Americans who are not afraid to stick a cork up their nose and say, 'Hey. I'm ugly and I don't like wine.'" I raised my glass. "Everyone," I commanded, "let's drink a toast to Abraham Lincoln, long may he wave." I looked around and realized that only the judges had been given anything to drink. "Well, just pretend," I instructed.

So ever since that night Walter has been leaving me these really rude messages on my answering machine, like he was up for a Pulitzer and I spoiled his chances or something. For a guy who eats food for a living, Walter can be pretty ungrateful.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

W. Bruce Cameron is the humor writer for the Denver Rocky Mountain News. His book, "The 8 Simple Rules for Dating my Teenage Daughters" is due out from Workman Publishing in June 2001. He loves to hear from his readers; write him at bruce@wbrucecameron.com or visit his web site at: <http://www.wbrucecameron.com/>

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.

Making Your Wedding Wine by Tom Burgess, Owner

March is here and now is the time to start making your OWN wedding wine with your personal label including names and

dates. You can surprise your friends, relatives, and your future "outlaws" with your hidden abilities!

By starting a wine kit now, your timing will be just right for a summertime wedding. You can serve your wine at the rehearsal dinner, present a bottle to the parents, grandparents, or even to the wedding party as a gift. Of course, don't forget to save a couple of bottles for anniversaries!

What are two wines that seem to suit everyone's taste? Well, based upon past experience here at grapestompers.com, we recommend Sauvignon Blanc for the white and Valpolicella for the red. Both are mild wines which don't bite the tongue, so everyone is sure to walk around with a smile on their face, enjoying both the special event and the wine!

Start now so your wine will taste better! Call if you have questions. Remember, it will help to know that wedding date in order to get the timing right for bottling!

CORKY'S WINEMAKING DEFINITION

Herbaceous

- Describes a wine that smells or tastes grassy or green. Often a characteristic of wines made from Sauvignon Blanc and Sémillon grapes. Can also be found in very young wines that will change flavor as they age. Primarily a function of the grape variety, not soil or climate.

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

- More Winemaking Tips from Tom's Cellar
- Take Our NEW Winemaking Quiz
- 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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