
THE STOMPER

The Monthly Winemaking Newsletter of [grapestompers.com](http://www.grapestompers.com)
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<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: [grapestompers.com](http://www.grapestompers.com) Move Complete
By Brant Burgess, Editor

Last month, we shared with you that we were working on moving [grapestompers.com](http://www.grapestompers.com) to a new server.

We're happy to report that the move is now complete and the switchover took place without a hitch.

In the midst of moving to a new server, we also updated some of our scripts, most notably the online order form.

First of all, we've added some validation routines (both browser side and server side) to ensure the order form is filled in correctly before the order is submitted.

But best of all, after you place an online order, you are shown an "order results" page, which lists the items you requested, as well as the billing and shipping address. We think this will come in handy! We recommend you print this page when it appears, because it will serve as a record of your order; you can easily use it to verify the contents of the package when it arrives at your home.

And, since most home winemakers are good record keepers, retaining a copy of your purchases will also help you plan similar seasonal purchases of supplies year after year.

You can see our improved secure order form here:
<https://www.grapestompers.com/secure/order.htm>

We hope you'll like the increased performance of our web site as a result of our recent move. We appreciate your comments concerning the web site - good or bad - so please let us know how we're doing.

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 # 2228A #10 Drilled Rubber Bung \$1.32
- Item # 2725 Tittrettor (holder for tittrettes) \$6.22

BONNIE'S BIN: Can I Please Start My Blackberry Merlot?
By Bonnie Brown, Manager

I am happy to be back. There's lots going on but we are getting back to normal... somewhat! I do have to laugh because there is NO normal at the Bodega!

The wines we've been aging for our tasting room samples are looking great, even though we ignored them somewhat during Tom's recent illness (he's feeling much better now, by the way... thank you for your kind words and phone messages). Maybe it is the bit of neglect that is making them look so good!

Our aging shelves are full of carboys at the moment. In a way, that is sad... but only because there are some wines I want to get started and I'm completely out of room! Summer will soon be over and I will still be wanting to start that Blackberry Merlot!

I am dreaming of a warm, DRY, evening with friends out on the deck, sipping a good summer wine while waiting for the steaks to come off the grill. Sounds perfect to me! Those of you who have made the Blackberry Merlot PLEASE let me know how it is!

We are starting to get calls like: "Quick - send [insert item here!] because my fruit/grapes are getting ready to harvest!"

We try really hard to get things out quickly, but it's not quick enough when you are in need! Check your stock and supplies now so you are not caught in the rush! It's a good time to clean all your equipment and be ready for that rush. B-Brite? Chemicals? Oak? How did the hydrometer winter over? Make sure all the equipment, yeast, chemicals, and other items are ready when the fruits are!

Are you checking the temperatures in your wine storage area? We don't want it to get too warm, or too cold, because either extreme will affect your wine. Some of our winemakers are having to stop making wine because of the air conditioning being turned on. Gets a bit cool to ferment the wine!

The gardens, vineyards, and orchards are taking a toll on our time too. All of those things need to be tended so we can make wine later this summer and into fall. I for one am looking for some green tomatoes to make a wine! Can't wait to start what my cousin says is the best wine ever! I am not going to wait until the end of the season for that one!

We are adding new winemakers every day. The word gets out that you can make wine from practically anything so they try. I have one gentleman who needs help making blueberry

wine. One year it was good, another year it wasn't so good!
Any ideas out there other than mother nature? I will pass
tips on!

Or if you want to really share, write an article for ALL
of us on your tips! The "newbies" need all of your great
suggestions. Let's help them on the road to great wines
and great stories to pass down.

I sure appreciate all of the patience you have shown me
during Tom's down time. THANK YOU ALL!

'Tis a wonderful day in the mountains. . . .

Life is too short... to drink bad wine... so make your own!

You can write to Bonnie at bonnie@grapestompers.com

THIS MONTH'S SPECIALS

grapestompers' specials for the month of July 2001 are:

Save over 10% on Cellar Classic Chablis

AND

Save over 12% on our Electric Transfer Pump

AND

Save 13.5% on our special Bottle Rinsing/Washing package
(see description below)

AND

Save over \$70 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 |
|--------|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| 3230 | Cellar Classic Chablis | 58.85 | 52.88 |
| 2620 | Electric Transfer Pump | 79.95 | 69.88 |
| 2071 | Bottle Rinsing/Washing Pkg | 44.96 | 38.88 |
| 3200 | Complete White Starter Kit | 246.68 | 175.00 |
| 3100 | Complete Red Starter Kit | 259.79 | 185.00 |

Here's what comes with the Bottle Rinsing/Washing Package:

- 1 - Bottle Rinsers (Item #2253)
- 1 - Brass Bottle Washer (Item #2251)
- 1 - Bottle Draining Tree, 45-station (Item #2254A)

Priced separately, these items would cost \$44.96 - but this
month, we're combining them into a rinsing/washing bundle
for only \$38.88 - a savings of over \$6.00!

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, 45 station | |

AND YOU GET THE FOLLOWING ITEMS FREE (\$16.59 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.

NEW! Now you can "personalize" your Complete Kit - Let's say you don't need or want some of the items that normally come with the Complete Kit... just give us a call at 1-800-233-1505 and let us know which items you don't need, and we will adjust the price of the equipment kit accordingly.

TOM'S CELLAR: The Advantage of Making Your Own Wine
by Tom Burgess, Owner

Lots of folks like to wander into our mountaintop Bodega to see if they can learn how to make their own wine. Practically everyone seeking our advice explains that they know nothing about the process of winemaking, or for that matter, that much about wine itself!

I explain that - whether they realize it or not - they already know the most important thing of all:

"You either like wine, or you don't!"

Your nose, tongue, and palate give you instant feedback about the wine in your mouth... and as long as you can tell us what you like or dislike about a particular wine you've had, we can easily steer you towards a wine that fits your taste buds and is easy to make.

After that, it's simply a matter of following the recipe - and perhaps tweaking it a little to match your preference.

When you try the wines in our tasting room, no doubt you will find some that you really like - and you'll also find some that you don't like. One thing's for sure: You'll never insult us if you tell us the truth. Dry wines are certainly not for everyone, just as sweet wines are not for everyone.

All we ask is that you're honest with us about your tastes.

That way, we can tweak it so it tastes best for you!

Out of every five people who come in and taste our wines, two will like it as is, while the others require some tweaking. The end result is the fun of making your own wine to your particular taste.

All this talk about tasting reminds me... don't forget that grapestompers will host its annual wine tasting in Laurel Springs, North Carolina on the first Sunday in October (that's October 7th, from 2:00-5:00 PM).

We certainly hope you will join us! In the past years, we've sponsored a wine competition, and have flown in an official wine judge where recognition is given to the top wines in different categories. We'll still have the wine competition this year, but this time, we plan to have ballots so you can judge for "people's choice."

It's just something a little different and that way you can have a part in the contest. This way, you can see how your tastes stack up with others. We encourage you now to make plans on coming!

Admission to the wine tasting is free, and all we ask is:

1. Let us know you're coming (# in party) by sending an e-mail to tom@grapestompers.com. We need to make sure we cook enough food and have enough bottles of wine on hand for tasting. Please RSVP by the end of September.
2. You bring your own wine glass (BYOG!)

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

Before attaching tubing to your siphon or spigot, moisten the ends with clear water.

The tubing will slide on much easier, and it'll make removing the tubing less of a hassle when the time comes.

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

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

A question often arises, "Can I use bleach (Chlorine) to sanitize my equipment?"

Simply stated: Chlorine is NOT recommended in winemaking. Using a sodium percarbonate with a mild alkali as a cleaner (like B-Brite, Item #2721) and potassium metabisulfite (Item #2732) as a sanitizer is your best bet.

It is always great to read in a national home winemaking magazine (WineMaker) about one of your friends making the news. Robert Klaus, one of our customers from Texas, comes up with a good question about clarity and the use of oak beans. Robert does an excellent job with his oaked wines. If you've ever been offered a sample of his wine, you should definitely take him up on it! We have had the opportunity to taste his wines, and believe me, there will always be a great oak taste.

Note: Robert and his wife, Pat were flooded in their home with 13 inches of water during the recent Hurricane Allison when it passed through Houston.

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 guys are great--I firmly believe in doing business by referrals and word of mouth. As far as I'm concerned, you guys have an A+ rating from me.

Am referring your website to a couple of my friends who share this interest.

-- Tim Weisheit
Buda, TX

Hi Tom,
We came close to your place today but didn't stop by thinking you would have all the company you would need.

We continue to get good reviews on the wine we make and share with others. We gave our dentist (in Winston-Salem) a bottle of our "Bob's Bergamis" and he took it to his nephew's wedding in Boston. The wedding party gave it 8's, 9's and 10's. I know we love it.

By the way, my cholesterol was down more than 10 points with the bad cholesterol dropping and the good rising. The only thing I could attribute that to was the fact that I was drinking a glass of red wine 4 to 5 days a week. My doctor said that it could very well be the cause. Well, get well soon and we will see you the next time we need wine kits.

-- Brenda & Monty Combs
Wilkesboro, NC

Tom & Bonnie,
Thanks you guys for your help in answering our question about "Day 6." I just can't wait till Day 28 (hahaha). My dad already wants me to check out your website and see what different wine kits you have. Well, we'll see how his first batch turns out huh?

No seriously, you guys were awfully nice and helpful to us. We'll see you again when we come up there next . . . maybe this fall.

-- Janet McClellan
Laurel Hill, NC

Dear grapestompers,
Thanks. It was good to talk with someone who could and would take the time to answer questions.

I look forward to doing business with you in the future.

-- Richard Grant
Conover, NC

GUEST COLUMN - Cork: Hercules of the Wine Bottle
by Don Schiller, Minnesota

The title seems somewhat strange for an article on a simple

thing like a cork. However, like Hercules, the mighty cork has the strength that holds the wine in the bottle and is your final defense against the cruel world that would cause problems for your wine; air and oxidation, bacteria and leakage. But, that same cork that protects the wine can also ruin the wine if a bad cork is used.

WHAT IS CORK?

Keeping a long story short, natural cork comes from the bark of a cork oak tree. Cork comes primarily from Portugal and has been used for thousands of years. Cork trees have a life span of 300-400 years with some that have been harvested for nearly 200 years. The trees must be about fifty years old before they produce quality cork. The bark is harvested every nine to ten years by stripping the bark. By the third harvest, the cork is smooth, clear bark that will make great wine corks.

All cork is boiled twice to make it more pliable and expand the cells. After the second boiling, the corkwood is sorted, and the cork is sliced into narrow strips as wide as a wine cork is long. The cork end may show the growth rings of the tree running vertically through it. Lower grade corks can be punched by automated machines; premium corks are hand punching by skilled craftsmen. After punching, the corks go through a cleaning.

TYPES OF CORK

The standard cork for the 750ml bottle usually comes in a short (typically 1-1/2 inch or less) and long (typically 1-3/4 to 1-7/8 inch) in a #9 size. The increase in demand for quality cork, plus harvesting of cork only at the nine-year cycle is stressing the cork market and availability of corks. If you can't get quality cork, what are your choices?

A composite (or agglomerated) cork may come in several forms. One type uses finely ground cork glued, pressed and formed. Another type uses a thin slice of regular cork material for the top and bottom ends, but the middle of the cork is made up of ground cork pressed and shaped into a finished cork. A third type of cork uses premium cork slices for the ends and lower grade punched cork for the middle, not the ground cork as the second example.

So how do composite corks compare to regular corks? Because many composite corks are pressed or glued cork material, it has fewer veins where wine can leak. Since composite cork is tighter, some people feel it will not allow the natural aging of wine as a regular cork will. Since these corks are denser, a more heavy-duty corker may be needed to insert these into the bottle.

Another alternative is plastic corks. Plastic corks also come in several types. Some have a thin plastic layer over a cheaper quality cork. Another type is full plastic that gives a full seal. The full plastic corks have been used by some commercial wineries. They are difficult to remove, often times the standard corkscrew struggles to get the worm screw in and then remove the cork. These corks work well and may be less expensive. I personally have never tried inserting them, but think it may take a good corker to do the job.

-----HOT TIP-----
When storing bottled wine, keep it out of the sunlight to prevent fading.

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

STORAGE OF CORKS

You have just picked up a bag of corks from the store. What do you do with them? Corks should be stored in a cool and dry place, away from off odors. High temperatures and low moisture can cause the corks to dry out and leak. Too much moisture can encourage the development of microorganisms. The humidity should be around 50-60%. Most of us store corks in the basement but be careful of the odors that can be picked up. Corks should be sealed in plastic bags and treated with SO₂ to prevent mold growth. They should not be stored for more than three months without treating with SO₂ again.

PREPARATION OF CORKS FOR BOTTLING

Cork can be prepared for the wine bottle in several ways. Some people swear by boiling a cork. However, reports say boiled corks may fall apart when being removed. Some believe dry corking is a good way because the cork composition is not changed by liquid. The problem with dry corking is that very few corkers are able to put a dry cork into a bottle. A floor corker that has the compressing jaws (a great corker, I highly recommend one) will allow a dry cork to go into a bottle. However, even these corks will go in better if soaked or at least wetted. I soak the corks in water for about a half-hour to an hour allowing the cork to moisten up enough so that it can be compressed more easily. The soaking will also allow some tea color (tannic acid) to seep out of the corks in the water and not into the wine. Afterwards, I give the corks a rinse in a mild sulfite solution. The sulfites will kill any bacteria.

Once the bottle is corked, leave the bottle upright for a couple days to allow pressure buildup to escape. If the bottle is placed on its side right away, there could be enough pressure to cause the cork to leak. The leaks could be as minor as drips, or with the right conditions, as major as the cork being pushed out. After the bottle has been upright for one or two days, be sure to tip the bottles on their side and store them properly in the wine rack.

After the bottles have been stored for some time, you should inspect the corks for:

- A) leakage
- B) rot, and
- C) dryness

Outside development of mold is not bad, but escape of some wine through the cork is bad.

Corks should not be reused for wine; make a wreath or cork board instead.

OTHER CORKING AND BOTTLING NOTES - Questions and Answers

What does a capsule do for the wine cork?

A capsule provides a finished look to the wine bottle. It does not make any difference to the cork itself.

What does a wax seal do for the wine cork?

Wax will prevent mold from growing on the cork. The wax may provide a greater seal reducing leakage and possibly prevent some oxidation. To use wax, carefully heat the wax, preferably using a double boiler. Dip the corked end of the bottle into the melted wax. Remove the bottle and let the wax harden to seal the cork. Caution: wax is flammable and can flame up when being melted. Also, note that more care is required when opening the bottle keep

the wax from falling into the bottle.

Why can corks leak?

Leakage often results from fill heights that are too high. Leave at least 3/8" of space between the wine and cork. This allows the wine to expand due to temperature variations without affecting the seal of the cork. Use good quality corks and care when you prepare or bottle with them.

Why does one bottle of wine from a carboy taste bad and another doesn't?

This may be a problem described as "being corked". The natural cork is sometimes afflicted by a fungus called 2,4,6-trichloroanisole (TCA), a chemical that flavors wine and ruins it. If you've ever tasted a wine with a moldy aroma that smells of wet cardboard, a damp basement or mushrooms, that's TCA. By some estimates, as many as one in 20 bottles of wine are "corked". This is the reason many wineries use premium corks or are researching alternate corks or closure methods.

What other types of closures are there?

You're dining at a fancy restaurant, and you order a fine, expensive wine. The waiter comes with bottle opener and pops off its beer-bottle-style cap. Or, you buy a nice case of Cabernet to mature in your cellar, and when your fine wine arrives, you open the crate to find bottles closed with metal screw caps. It could happen.

An Australian Winery released a Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Riesling using "crown caps," the same closure used for beer bottles. It has been reported that Gallo winery in California uses screwcaps for its "library" storage; and some wine researchers at the University of California at Davis argue that the screwcap -- widely regarded as the hallmark of cheap, poor "jug wines" -- is actually an ideal way to seal finer wines for long-term storage.

In the future, you may see more composite corks, plastic corks or maybe even the screw tops on commercial wines.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR - Don Schiller is the vice president and newsletter editor for the Purple Foot Wine Club in the Twin Cities in Minnesota. He has been making wine for about 15 years and has been writing articles for the Purple Foot Wine Club newsletter for many of those years.

You can contact Don at vintner@prodigy.net

How To Be A Guest Columnist For STOMPERS Newsletter

If you'd like to be our next guest columnist, simply send your three- or four-paragraph article to articles@grapestompers.com. If your article is selected for use in a future STOMPER newsletter, you'll receive the attention of thousands, a coupon good for a discount on your next grapestompers.com order, as well as our heartfelt thanks. So what are you waiting for??

CORKY'S WINEMAKING DEFINITION

Titratable Acidity (TA)

- Sometimes called total acidity; the total amount of acids in a wine or must that is measured by titration of the wine or juice with a base such as sodium hydroxide. The amount of acid (expressed in grams of acid per liter of

wine) will tell you roughly how acidic the wine will feel in your mouth. Knowing this information will allow you to make any needed adjustments.

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
- Another Surprise from Brant
- More Specials
- The next article from Bonnie's Bin
- Another Guest Column - We'd Love YOUR input!
- More Customer Testimonials
- New Winemaking Products

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