
THE STOMPER

The Monthly Winemaking Newsletter of grapestompers.com
July, 2004 Issue #48
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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 it. Instructions to cancel are at the end of this newsletter.

Feel welcome 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: A Case of Wine to Go With the Surf
By Brant Burgiss, Editor

Vacations and deadlines do not mix... witness the late arrival of this month's Stomper! Perhaps it had something to do with that case of wine we took to the beach. At any rate, I hope everyone is having a great July and your fruit and grapes are doing well. As Bonnie reminds us below, harvest time isn't far away at all.

Now to some news...

This month, RJ Spagnols is releasing two new Cellar Classic Harvest Wines.

- Italian Barolo Bianco
- California Cabernet Syrah Zinfandel

We have ordered a bunch and will let you know when they arrive... so keep an eye on our online product list. These wines join the others in the CC Harvest collection:

- German Riesling Auslese
- Italian Pinot Grigio
- Italian Sangiovese Merlot
- Spanish Tempranillo

If you've not tried any of these international favorites

yet, please request them soon because only a limited stock is available. I think the Pinot Grigio goes great with fresh seafood from the coast!

Read more about these new Cellar Classic Harvest wines:
http://www.rjspannols.com/wine_ccHarvest.asp

We hope everyone in the Tar Heel State had a chance to go to the NC Wine Festival, which was held on June 12th at Tanglewood (near Clemmons, North Carolina). Tom and the gang at Thistle Meadow Winery had a great time meeting everyone and pouring samples! Over 20,000 people attended the show, which featured over 24 wineries from across the state, as well as food and craft vendors.

As before, Monty Combs captured the event on his digital camera. See some photos he took during the festival:

http://www.thistlemeadowwinery.com/2004_NC_Wine_Festival.asp

That wraps it up for this month. Here's to you... and Happy Winemaking!

You can write to Brant at webmaster@grapestompers.com

BONNIE'S BIN: Plan for Harvest Time Now
By Bonnie Brown, Manager

Start thinking now of the harvest and the winemaking that will follow. As much as possible, plan ahead and order your supplies before you need them. Remember last year or the year before, when you waited until the last minute? A lot of us did! Let's avoid that this year. Double check the contents of the supplies you have on hand to make sure they are still dry, not clumpy. Most additives stay active and usable as long as they are kept cool and dry.

Speaking of dry, have any of you come up with a great way to keep a basement winemaking area dry? We would like to share those ideas with others who are remarking about the problems they are having. Please, we need your help and input. Tips and ideas freely shared help so many, so keep them coming.

When you do make an order, please place your orders from our secure web site order form. There are fewer mistakes this way. Actually the web site is secure and our phones and plain e-mails are not. All of our phones are cordless so the risk is greater that someone can listen in. Help us in keeping errors down. We love to chat with you about wines but we would really like to see the orders in black and white so we can double check before filling the order wrong. This way, the mistakes are ours! Also when placing the orders online you do not have to deal with a busy signal or unanswered calls when we are out to the barn getting supplies or helping a customer load up.

Dare to be different, do some exploring, you may find a great wine ingredient right in your own back yard.

'Til next month... keep your glass upright!

We hope to see you soon.

See you next time...
Bonnie

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

You can write to Bonnie at bonnie@grapestompers.com

TOM'S CELLAR: Short Course on Corks
by Tom Burgiss, Owner

QUESTION: What three countries lead the world in cork production?

ANSWER: Portugal, Spain, and Italy account for 90% of the world's production of corks.

So settle in for a moment so we can discuss corks via the Stomper!

WHAT SIZE CORK SHOULD I USE?

Each month, several folks ask us what size cork they should be using. The general rule on cork size is that #9 sized corks (both 1 1/2" and 1 3/4 inches in length) fit 95% of all wine bottles. You must have a corker to put them in the bottle since the cork's diameter has to be reduced by about 20-30% before they will fit inside the neck. Using a hammer will simply not work, and if you use one, it is very likely you will injure yourself courtesy of a broken bottle.

PROPER CORKING KEEPS THREE ENEMIES OF WINE AT BAY

Of course, all of us know that the 3 main enemies in the production of wine are oxygen, bacteria, and mold. Proper corking - from the selection of corks, timing of bottling, and corking equipment and technique - plays a huge role in keeping these enemies at bay. By maintaining a tight fit in the neck of the bottle, the cork helps minimize the amount of oxygen coming into the bottle or wine seeping out!

As far as the bacteria are concerned consider these facts:

- Cork is a natural product that is "punched" out of the bark of a cork oak tree.
- It takes 9 years or more to replace the bark on a cork tree. That's a lot of time between harvests.
- The thickness and quality of the cork largely depends upon the growing conditions (weather) of the cork tree. Annual rainfall, average temperature and humidity, amount of sunlight, etc. all have an effect on the final product.

The corks we sell at grapestompers.com come to us from Portugal. Many of the corks you see in our online catalog are of the agglomerate type; that is to say, they are made from chips of natural cork. These chips are microwaved to kill bacteria, pressed together, then microwaved again for bacteria. The corks are then coated with silicone and sent to us under a sulfite gas seal in a thick plastic bag. We place the bags of corks in a room built so we can store them at the proper temperature and humidity. Due to the production method, the agglomerated corks are also uniform in size, thereby allowing for no gaps in the cork itself to allow seepage.

Ironically, these agglomerated corks are less likely than punched corks to leave floating chips of cork in your wine when you remove the cork from the bottle. They hold up well and at the present time, the manufacturers are saying these corks will hold for 4-5 years (a time limit is placed due to the fact that the new type of agglomerated cork we stock have only been in use that long and they have to wait another year to observe before adding another year to the product's warranty).

SHOULD I SOAK MY CORKS?

Lots of people have asked us whether we soak our corks when we make our own wine...

We do not soak them in sulfite solution, or anything else for that matter. Some folks have done it for years and still swear by it. I think the practice of soaking corks prior to bottling might have been valid in the olden days, back when home winemakers had to suffer through poorer quality natural corks, inconsistent quality control and harmful storage environments.

Nowadays, the corks available for purchase by the home winemaker are of better quality, are less likely to have sat on a hot dry shelf for an extended period of time, and are coated for protection and ease of insertion.

But I realize that old habits die hard, so if you insist on soaking your corks I would recommend that you soak them in a solution of Potassium Metabisulfite, Item #2732.

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

Here's another tip from down under - fill an aerosol bottle with potassium metabisulfite solution and spray whenever you need to sanitize something.

This method saves a lot of soaking and leaves more time for drinking.

Our thanks to Tony Baker from New Zealand for providing this tip.

Hidden special:

#5119 Cooper Cooler, Rapid Beverage Chiller
Reg. \$99.04, this month only \$86.17

That's a 13 percent savings for a product that will chill a bottle of wine from room temperature to freezing cold in 3 minutes.

BE SURE to mention this hidden special when ordering, or you will not get the right price.

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

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

WHAT ABOUT PLASTIC CLOSURES?

I do not personally like plastic closures (never refer to them as "plastic corks" because they are not made of cork), because I've found they do not always provide the tight seal to which I am accustomed. I have noticed that in a lot of cases, the closure actually spins in the neck of the bottle as you try to insert a corkscrew. Recently I have run across commercial wineries that have problems with seepage around the closures... have you seen this too? If you notice this, please call it to their attention so they can guard against it in the future.

DOES IT MATTER WHICH CORKER I USE?

As long as your corker properly seats the cork in the neck of the bottle, either type of corker (hand or floor corker) will give you good results when matched with the proper cork. See our recommendations below.

Your choice of corker will also depend upon your budget, the amount of wine you bottle per year, as well as your proclivity to physical exertion (bottling with a hand corker takes a lot of balance, strength, and stamina).

Floor corks are great to have if you are pressed for time

(they're quicker to use than hand corks), have back pain or are otherwise limited in mobility (you can cork with one hand while standing), or have a lot of wine to bottle.

With a hand corker I recommend our signature "grapestompers" cork, which is Item #2322, and if you have a floor corker we recommend Item #2320. Our policy regarding corks is simply this: When you get tired or if you are dissatisfied with your hand corker, then you may return the one you purchased from us and get full credit applied towards the purchase of a floor corker.

We always try to keep you in mind... we're here to help and assist you in any way we can at grapestompers.com.

Tom

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:

Aloha Tom!

It's funny how we were talking on the telephone this morning about my order, and sure enough, it did arrive today in the afternoon mail.

The order arrived complete and in "good shape!"

I would like to thank you and your staff with the true "Aloha" that you all extend to your customers. It's not just the sales but the personal attention that you give each of us that makes it feel more than just a transaction. Much appreciated!

-- Joe Alatalo
Maui, HI

Hi Tom and Bonnie:

You have been an invaluable resource for the beginning winemaker. Living in the state of Washington I am almost obligated to learn how to make the "mystery red stuff".

The crops were great this past year. At peak brix 23 the flavor was intoxicating. The Pinot Noir crush was a perfect balance. Yakima Valley's Cabernet and Merlot crop was outstanding. Some of the Oak Barrels are available for \$40.00 each.

You'll have to sterilize them and scrub them extremely well but they are the French Oak.

They were beautiful - The winery hopes to produce a superlative wine from these grapes; we'll see in 3 to 5 years.

Again, thank you for your site and keep up the great work. I always thought doing what you loved was FUN.

-- Lena Stevens

Hi,
Just read the [latest Stomper]. Thanks for all the info -

I copy it and read it over again. I look forward to the emails. Keep them coming, I can use all the info I can get as I am new with this wine making. But [I am] getting better!

-- Bob Stewart

Brant/Bonnie,

Thank you very much for the quick response and follow through on the broken carboy. In an industry that's competing to sell similar products, it's the consulting, service & support provided by Grapestompers that separates you from the rest of the crowd! Once again, many thanks!

Both the UPS and Grapestompers cartons appear to be in perfect condition suggesting that the damage did not occur during handling by Grapestompers nor during handling by UPS.

So, as a friendly suggestion, you may want to revisit handling procedures with your carboy manufacturer and/or supplier... especially if damaged carboys are a regular occurrence. Just a suggestion... whatever course of action you decide (if any) is fine by me.

I'm a delighted customer. Once again thanks for the great support!

Thanks,

-- Jerry Gura

UPCOMING EVENTS

By Tom Burgiss, Owner

Take a look at the upcoming events for grapestompers.com, the Burgiss Barn, and Thistle Meadow Winery:

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Each Sunday through mid-October, the Burgiss Barn offers a lip-smacking lunch buffet from 11:30 AM to 2:00 PM.

You'll love the food prepared by Chef Jimmy and the gang at JIFF Catering. We'll even throw a hot yeast roll to you when you sit down... so bring your catcher's mitt. Lunch costs \$8.00 for adults, which includes everything... meats, veggies, rolls, dessert, drink, and the tip.

See the Burgiss Barn's web site for information on live bluegrass and mountain music, with dances held on several Saturday nights this season:

<http://www.burgissbarn.com>

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Make your plans to attend grapestompers' 7th Annual Wine Festival on Sunday, October 3rd at our location in Laurel Springs, NC. Please call or e-mail to register for this event 800-233-1505. Admission is only \$5.00 per person, and includes wine tasting, heavy hors d'oeuvres, live music, and local artisans showing off their handmade crafts.

Customers of grapestompers.com are invited to come and show off the wines they've made during the previous year. If this interests you, please call Tom at the number above.

Other local wineries from the Yadkin Valley have been invited to participate, so be sure and mark your calendar.

GUEST COLUMN - Wine Label Removal Hint
By John Mulhern, Schaumburg IL

Are you still making wine? Are you bottling in used wine bottles - like I am? I learned something interesting over the weekend. I was scrubbing, scraping, and generally wrestling with stubborn old commercial labels. I was bottling six (6) gallons of wine, so I had to get 50 bottles ready. I had 30 previously employed "Wooden Shoe" bottles, from which the labels literally float off - I glue them on with glue sticks. The twenty "new" bottles were giving me fits. As usual, I was running hot water and soaking the labels, then scraping them with a knife blade, then scrubbing them with ScotchBrite pads. For the truly stubborn glues - where do these guys get this stuff? - I use Goo Gone, which leaves a greasy, oily residue, and takes yet another cleaning step.

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

If you're stomping grapes by using your bare feet, don't forget to wash and sanitize your toes, feet, ankles, and lower legs before the squishing begins.

It may seem ironic to clean what may be smelly feet, only to make them stink again with a sulfite solution - but the folks who will drink your wine will thank you!

Oh... and never use iodine-based sanitizers (like Iodophor) to clean your feet - that stuff stains something awful.

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

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

Then inspiration struck. I turned off the hot water and turned on the cold. Holding the bottle under the trickle of cold water I again started scraping with the knife. Instead of becoming soft & sticky, the glue became brittle and readily flaked off the bottle. A little application of the ScotchBrite pad and I had pristine bottles!

And they say you can't teach an old dog new tricks.

You can contact John at Bluewinke@aol.com

Like To Be A Guest Columnist For The Stomper 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??

COOKING WITH WINE: Grilled Swordfish with Charmoula

Editor's Note: In May, we asked for your input regarding your favorite recipes made with wine. We've had some great responses so far, and Chef Jimmy can't wait to see more!

The following is our second installment of customers' recipes made with wine. If you would like to submit your favorite recipe, send them to jimmy@grapestompers.com.

Grilled Swordfish with Charmoula

Source: Quick from Scratch - Fish

Serves 4

Charmoula is a flavorful Moroccan tomato sauce flavored with cumin, lemon, and plenty of cilantro or parsley, and it couldn't be easier to make. Just throw the ingredients in a blender or food processor and puree.

WINE RECOMMENDATION:

Choose a Pinot Blanc from Alsace in France or a Pinot Gris from Oregon; both are delightful, easy-drinking white wines that will have enough body and the requisite moderate acidity to pair with the spicy tomato sauce.

Ingredients

3/4 cup canned crushed tomatoes in thick puree
5 tablespoons olive oil
3 1/2 teaspoons lemon juice
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
1 1/2 teaspoons paprika
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon fresh-ground black pepper
1/3 cup chopped flat-leaf parsley
4 swordfish steaks, about 1 inch thick (about 2 lbs in all)

Method

Light the grill or heat the broiler. Put the tomatoes in a blender or food processor and add 4 tablespoons of the oil, the lemon juice, cumin, paprika, oregano, ginger, 3/4 tsp of the salt, 1/8 teaspoon of the pepper, and the parsley. Blend just until the mixture becomes a coarse puree.

Coat the swordfish with the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and sprinkle with the remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/8 tsp pepper. Grill or broil the fish for 4 minutes. Turn and cook until golden brown and just done, about 4 minutes longer. Serve the sauce alongside.

FISH ALTERNATIVES

Cod, halibut, tilefish, mahi-mahi, mako shark, sturgeon, or tuna - just about any fish steaks can stand in for the swordfish.

If you would like to submit a recipe that includes wine, please send it to Jimmy Bengé at jimmy@grapestompers.com

Thanks for your input!

CORKY'S WINEMAKING DEFINITION

Malolactic Fermentation

- A secondary fermentation that occurs in most wines and converts malic acid into softer lactic acid and carbon dioxide, which reduces the wine's acidity. MLF can soften red wines (like Cabernet or Merlot), and adds complexity to hearty whites (such as Chardonnay).

NOTE: Malolactic fermentation should NOT be induced in wines made from kits like the ones sold by grapestompers. This is something you may choose to do when making wine from scratch.

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

NEW PRODUCTS

These are products that were recently added to our catalog:

- Item #5119 Cooper Cooler, Rapid Beverage Chiller, \$99.04
- Item #3166 Grand Cru Merlot, \$55.00
- Item #4740 Jute Showcase Wine Gift Bag, single, \$4.49
- Item #4744 Jute Showcase Wine Gift Bag, double, \$7.24

We've also just received a whole bunch of new wine-themed T-shirts... please phone 800-233-1505 for details.

THIS MONTH'S SPECIALS

grapestompers' specials for the month of July 2004 are:

Item #	Description	Reg. Price	Special
3211	OB Green Apple Gewurztraminer	45.00	35.90
3289	OB Strawberry Riesling	43.45	34.76
3227	VDV White Bordeaux	45.76	36.66
3173	WA Black Currant Merlot	50.36	39.95
3156	GC Cabernet Franc	53.13	42.50
3135	CC Shiraz	88.00	70.40
2719	White Wine Enhancer, 16 oz	3.12	2.49
2742	Potassium Sorbate, 1.5 oz	1.98	1.58
2735	Bentonite, 4 oz	1.32	0.99
2215	1.5 Gallon Ferm Bucket w/Lid	4.13	3.30
2202	Carboy Handle	4.50	3.59
2205	3 Gallon Glass Carboy	13.97	10.99
2203	1 Gallon Clear Glass Jug with cap	3.29	2.63
3200	Complete White Wine Starter Kit	232.29	180.00
3100	Complete Red Wine Starter Kit	241.42	190.00

See below for a description of the Complete Starter Kit.

Did you see this month's hidden special? It's located elsewhere in this newsletter.

The VDV (Vino del Vida) wine kits are designed to make about thirty 750 ml bottles of great wine in as little as 28 days; CC (Cellar Classic) and CSG (Cru Select Gold) kits create wine in as few as 45 days. The Orchard Breezin' and Wine-Art Country Mist wine kits are refreshingly sweet with plenty of fruit flavor, with an alcohol content from 7% to 9%.

Wine and beer kit abbreviations explained:

- BH = Brew House beer kit
- CC = Cellar Classic wine kit
- GC = Grand Cru wine kit
- WA = Wine-Art wine kit
- MM = Mosti Mondiale wine kit
- OB = Orchard Breezin' wine kit
- VDV = Vino del Vida wine kit
- CSP = Cru Select Platinum wine kit
- CSG = Cru Select Gold wine kit

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	Long Handled Spoon
Bottle Washer Adapter	Brass Bottle Washer
Bottle Drainer, 45 station	Adhesive Thermometer
Fast Flow Spigot	

And you get the following items free (\$16.79 value):

- 30 Customized Wine Labels (text of your choice)
- Triple scale hydrometer
- 1.5" Corks (30 corks, enough for one batch)

Just think: This complete kit offers everything a brand-new hobbyist would need to begin making his or her 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 refund of \$19.95 on your credit card... that's like getting the video at no cost! 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, as well as the text you want on your free wine labels.

If you prefer, you can "personalize" your Complete Kit - You can also save on shipping if you can locate your own wine bottles... if you don't need wine bottles, just be sure and let us know when you place your order, and we will adjust the price of the equipment kit accordingly. You can also upgrade your wine kit and get any other type of wine you desire, by paying the difference for the upgrade from the standard concentrate to the upgraded one. Likewise, you can upgrade from the hand corker to either of the floor corks we offer by paying the difference.

NEXT MONTH'S HIGHLIGHTS

- More Winemaking Stories from Tom's Cellar
- Another Surprise from Brant
- More Specials
- The next article from Bonnie's Bin
- More Customer Testimonials
- Another Guest Article - Submit yours today!
- New Winemaking Products

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