

Basic Winemaking Class

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Decision Checklist

The first and most important decision you have to make is decide on the type of wine you are going to produce. You will take a number of different steps depending on the type of wine you are making.

So let us look at the four major categories that I look at

War -- Is it a drink that you are going to pass around at the war where no-one is really caring about taste but wanting to get drunk?

Dinner -- How about a nice drink that you can serve with any dinner whether camping or at home?

Something Nice -- Is this a drink that you will be giving as a House Warming gift, or when you go visiting?

Special -- Or are you giving this drink at a wedding or for a very special occasion?

Next let us look at what variety we will make

Long Mead -- This is a class that is taught elsewhere.

Champagne -- This drink can be used for Something Nice or Special.

Misc.: Herbal, rose petal -- Mostly made for War, Dinner, or Something Special.

Fruit -- Can be used for any of the Four categories...be careful because of the fruit "windows" you could lose out on the longer aged drinks.

Grape -- This is ideal for any of the categories.

Tasting and Additives

You now need to taste the juice and determine what you need to add to it to make it perform in the direction you have decided upon.

Tannin -- Remember that this is a preservative. This will help in the aging process. Do you want your drink to age a bit longer than you need to add tannin. Approx -- 1/4 teaspoon per 5 gals is 2.5 years. Be careful not to add too much as it will affect taste to a degree.

Sugar -- Remember that anything you ferment- 3 pounds of sugar equals a semi fruity drink of about 8-10%. Dry less sugar, sweet more sugar. Also remember that some yeast will quit after a bit others will try to make a dry wine. So calculate sugars with all this in mind.

If you need to add sugar than try to use Corn Syrup as it tends to have the least amount of taste. You can sweeten and not add any flavors.

Acids -- If the juice does not have enough acid the yeast goes slowly.
Malic-If it is too acidic add malic acid till it balances out.
Tartaric-I use this instead of Citric sometimes. It gives the flavor a slight tweak.
Blend-a Blending of all three acids.
Citric-if it is not acidic enough I add Citric.

Nutrient -- This is like a vitamin shot to the Yeast, making them more productive.

Fortified

You need to make this decision before you add the yeast because it will affect your choice. This step can be nice depending on your drink. It would be useful for a War drink. It is also useful for Something Nice. Remember that you don't want to upgrade the alcohol by more than 25% of volume (12% becomes 14.4%, or 16% becomes 20%) so be careful how you add the Brandy. Add it after the fermentation is completed and you are half way through the aging process.

Yeast

This decision is also going to affect your end product in Alcohol levels, sugars levels, even taste. Depending on your yeast you will produce anywhere between 6% to 15% alcohol. This will affect remaining sugars matching low alcohol to high or low sugars or any combination...be careful so as to not match up the wrong type of alcohol to sugar levels.

Also taste is affected. Some yeast adds a crispness and other add a late harvest type taste.

Aging

One thing that adds much to smoothness and flavor is aging. As a general rule age any wine 6 months. Ideally you would age the following drinks some additional time.

Champagne -- 6 months.

Misc. -- Herbal, rose petal -- 6-12 months.

Fruit -- Anywhere between serve now (pear) to as much as 18 months (strawberry).

Grape -- Whites 6-12 months, Rose 12-30 months, reds between 24 to 48 months.

Sulfides

If at all possible do not use sulfides. If you must use them, make sure folks know about it because several people have allergies to them.

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