

WINE

Equipment

You don't need too much in the way of equipment to get started on winemaking. The main things required are a food grade bucket with lid, a demijohn (with airlock), a hydrometer to measure specific gravity and a siphon tube. If you plan to bottle, then you may need a corker unless you can lay your hands on some screw cap bottles. Don't rush to spend your money on demijohns; you may be able to pick some up for free or cheaply from eBay or other online sources.

Ingredients/Method

The best way to start is with a kit and you can often buy a starter pack consisting of a kit and basic equipment. The table below takes you through from this stage to more ambitious efforts.

Ingredients	Considerations	Useful Links
Kit	Generally available in 1 or 5 gallon sizes. Probably a good idea to start with 1 gallon and then work up. Kits vary widely in price. You get what you may for normally – personally I find Beaverdale a good mid-range buy in terms of value for money. See https://www.petespintpot.co.uk/ for kit reviews and modification ideas.	https://www.almostoffgrid.co.uk/beginners-guide-to-making-wine-from-a-kit/ is a straightforward guide to the process. There is a Youtube video from Wineworks in 4 parts that is quite good if you prefer something visual https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5PlaJMwRpA .
Fruit Juice	Making wine from fruit juices is almost as simple as kits – you just need to purchase some of the additional ingredients separately, such as yeast, nutrient, pectic enzyme, stabiliser, finings and acid. Getting hold of suitable grape juice is quite difficult these days – the supermarkets seem to have stopped stocking the higher sugar grape juice you need so you may need to purchase online.	See Wurzel's orange wine in 2 parts (from Homebrew forum) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpkXCowv2Ys . Note – don't overfill the demijohn to much initially like he did!
Grapes	If you wish to progress to the real thing, note that eating grapes are not suitable. If you can't find a ready source of grapes, then you can buy imported grapes from Italy or Spain during September. You need about 10 kg of grapes to make a gallon of wine. If using English grapes you are likely to need to add a bit of sugar.	https://www.winegrapeclub.co.uk/ is a source of grapes in the South East – there are others around the country. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zglgFHAPg7E –by Gift of Wine covers the process for red wine – I use a primary fermenting bucket with a tap and run off most of the wine before straining – it's much easier to handle.
Fruit (Country Wines)	The great think about this is that some of the ingredients can be picked from the hedgerows – elderberries, blackberries, sloes etc. Some grape content usually enhances any fruit wine however. This could be in the form of grape concentrate, grape juice or dried fruit (sultanas or raisins).	Difficult to find good videos for this, but https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xybr3iQ439Y takes you through the process of making an elderberry wine.
Vegetables	Somewhat surprisingly, vegetables such as parsnips, carrots and beetroot make a rather good wine. Here you boil the vegetables, use the water in the wine and can still eat the veg. Incidentally, rhubarb is technically a vegetable.	A video on beetroot wine with sound advice is https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Npz4F53IRyQ .

FAQs

What chemicals will I need for making country wines?

Steriliser and/or Campden tablets for sterilising equipment and ingredients and in the latter case preserving the finished wine. You can use Campden tablets/sodium metabisulphite for sterilisation as well.

Yeast to convert sugar into alcohol and yeast nutrient to feed the yeast.

Pectic enzyme to destroy the pectins in some fruit that will lead to a hazy wine. Particularly important for white wines and soft fruits such as plums, peaches and apricots.

Acid if your ingredients do not contain enough themselves. This is needed for vegetable and flower wines for example. As well as improving the flavour, this will help the fermentation process. It can be purchased as citric, tartaric or malic acid, or you will find a lot of old recipes suggest lemon juice.

Stabiliser. This should not be needed if the wine is fermented to complete dryness, but for a sweeter wine you need to make sure that fermentation does not take place in the bottle as this can result in blown corks or worse! This comes in the form of potassium sorbate. When using this, add a Campden tablet or sodium metabisulphite as well. Otherwise you may end up with a geranium smell and taste.

Finings may be needed to clear the wine if it is a bit hazy. There are a few products on the market – the 2 part finings usually work quite well. Don't use them until you are sure the wine is no longer fermenting and it has been treated with a Campden tablet and left for a few days.

What yeast should I use?

Dried wine yeast can be bought in packets to ferment 5 gallons or in larger quantities in some cases. Although hydration is often recommended, they usually work perfectly well if just sprinkled on the must and shaken. Gervin is a reliable make. There are various yeasts to produce different styles of wine. Don't use Baker's yeast and don't rely on wild yeasts that may exist on the fruit skins (these should be killed off, by treatment with Campden tablet or freezing the fruit first).

How long should I ferment fruit on the pulp for?

Not too long and it depends on the wine style and fruit used. The lighter and more delicate the wine the shorter the period required. In general, not more than 3-4 days for a table wine and a maximum of 7 days for a strong wine.

What do I do if my wine stops fermenting but is still too sweet?

If it's in a cool place, try moving it somewhere warmer.

It may be short of nutrients – try adding a B1 tablet which often does the trick.

Try adding more yeast – either a restart or higher alcohol tolerant yeast.

If all else fails, take a sample of the wine, dilute with water and add fresh yeast. Once this gets going, add some more wine in stages until the fermentation is sufficiently vigorous to be added back into the remaining wine.

What can I do if my wine is too sharp and acidic?

If it's a grape wine, try putting it somewhere cold. Tartaric acid crystals should precipitate and then you can rack the wine off them.

Potassium or sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) or calcium carbonate (precipitated chalk) can be used to reduce acidity, but use a little at a time and taste the result. If you overdo it, this can spoil the wine.

If the wine is full bodied and fruity you could dilute with a bit of water or treat with some sugar to make a sweet wine (after stabilisation). The sweetness will mask the acidity. Another option is to blend with a wine that is low in acidity.

What can I do if my wine tastes bland?

It may be a lost cause, but I find that adding a bit of acid can often transform a wine, particularly white wines. Similarly you can sometimes pep up a red wine with a bit of tannin (a drop of cold tea will suffice).

Otherwise blending or adding some grape concentrate and re=fermenting may help if the problem is low alcohol.

How should I store my wine?

Somewhere reasonably cool and dark with not too much fluctuation in temperature. If you have corked the bottles they should be resting on their sides. If you have reused screwcap bottles, then best to store them upright in case of leakage. To ensure air does not get into screwcap bottles, wrap cling film and a rubber band round the cap. Red and strong wines may be stored in bulk in demijohns for several months if air is excluded and the demijohn is full.

How long will my wine keep?

This varies according to style. The more alcohol, acid or tannin present the longer the wine will keep. It is surprising how long some of our wines can keep. I am drinking wines over 10 years old that are still quite acceptable, but not many people manage to keep them that long.

Other Links/Recipes

Pete's Pint Pot <https://www.petespintpot.co.uk/> contains good advice on winemaking and some fairly simple recipes to follow.

[Prize Winning wines by James Smith](#) gives a straightforward guide to winemaking and a wide range of good recipes indexed by style and ingredient.

http://www.wine-making-guides.com/wine_recipes.html has a comprehensive set of recipes by ingredient.