

WINEMAKERS A-Z

Every year, more and more novices are tempted into trying their hand at winemaking – and every one of us has been a novice at some time. This hobby is as full of jargon as any other specialised skill, so here is the Winemakers A to Z. Refer to any of the standard texts, such as 'First Steps in Winemaking' for more detailed information.

ACIDITY Correct acidity in a wine must be essential to help the yeast, discourage bacteria, and give a balanced wine.

AIRLOCK (FERMENTATION TRAP) Used to allow the carbon dioxide to escape from the fermentation vessel, and exclude wild yeasts, bacteria etc.

Should be half-filled with water or Campden tablet solution.

ALCOHOLS There are many alcohols in wine. The commonest is Ethyl alcohol, which is what we wish to produce. Most of the others tend to give hangovers or worse, and are obtained by using unsuitable ingredients like old potatoes..

ALCOHOL CONTENT Unfortified wines normally contain between 8% and 16% alcohol by volume. The modern liqueur and spirit wine kits produce about 20% alcohol.

AROMA The smell of fruit etc found in a young wine.

BODY The degree of fullness or thickness of a wine.

BOUQUET The smell of a mature wine, derived from the production of esters during storage.

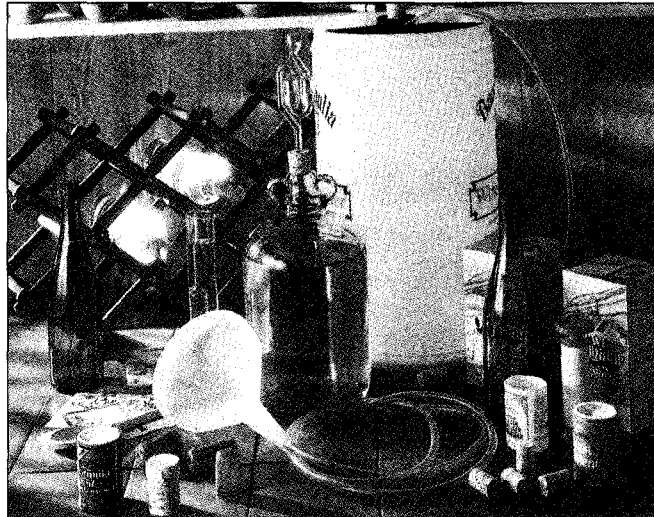
CONCENTRATE The vacuum-reduced juice of grapes or other fruits, usually sold in tins or Tetrapaks. The latter are mainly used for fresh or reconstituted juices.

COUNTRY WINES Wines made from fruit, flowers, or ingredients other than fresh grapes, grape concentrate, or grape juice.

DEMIJOHNS An 'eared' glass fermenting jar, which holds just over a gallon to allow for loss on racking.

DRY A wine which has fermented until the yeast has used all the fermentable sugar.

ENZYMES Used in winemaking and brewing to promote structural breakdown in the ingredients. Pectin-destroying enzymes prevent pectin hazes in fruit and some root vegetable wines. Diastase breaks down starch and prevents another type of haze. Rohament P destroys cell walls



FERMENTING The process of yeast acting on sugars, producing ethyl alcohol and carbon dioxide gas.

FILTRATION This is the mechanical means of removing suspended particles, yeast etc. in the wine, by means of filter papers or more complex filters based on various earths or pulps such as cellulose.

FINING Removing solids or hazes from wine by adding substances (such as isinglass, gelatin, chitin, Bentonite, or several others) that react with the suspended particles and cause them to sink to the bottom of the demijohn.

FLABBINESS Generally used to describe a wine that is low in tannins and/or acids.

FORTIFICATION Increasing the strength of a wine by adding commercial spirit, or, in competition rules, may mean blending in commercial wines. Usually prohibited in shows but perfectly acceptable for home use.

GERANIUM The unpleasant result of lacto-bacilli attacking Potassium sorbate, if Campden tablets are not used when the wine is finally racked. Irreversible, making the wine undrinkable. Can occur without Pot. sorbate, but rarely.

GRAVITY Specific Gravity is shown on a scale (see **HYDROMETER**) that indicates the density of a liquid, based on water being 1000. Used in Winemaking to measure sugar content, eg, 1 lb of sugar dissolved in a gallon of water would show an SG of 1035 approx.

HYDROMETER An instrument that floats in must or wine and shows the Specific Gravity on a scale. This shows the initial sugar content, and the progress of the fermentation to the bottling stage if used regularly.

HYGIENE Hygiene is important in wine and beer-making, but 'hospital standard' sterile conditions are not necessary. Domestic kitchen hygiene should suffice, with liberal use of cleansers and sulphite.

LEES The deposit of fruit pulp etc and yeast that accumulates in the base of the fermenting vessel.

LIQUEUR WINES These are usually made from kits specially designed to produce 20% or more of alcohol by volume. They are normally sweetened after fermentation, and imitate wines such as Amaretto, Peach Schnapps, Cherry Brandy et al.

MALO-LACTIC FERMENTATION Wines such as gooseberry that are high in malic acid may be attacked by bacteria if not sulphited. This reduces the malic acid to lactic acid and carbon dioxide, giving the wine a slight fizz and a softer flavour.

MOUSE Mouse is the name of a dreadful disease of wine, caused by a Lactic acid bacterium, giving the wine an off-nose and a revolting aftertaste. There is no cure, but prevention is simple, by using hygienic methods and Sodium metabisulphite. Oddly, a small percentage of winemakers cannot detect this foulness on their palates.

MUST The juices, liquid extracts, and solutions that are fermented to make wine.

OXIDATION Spoilage of wines (except in sherries and similar) caused by air getting to the wine and giving it a brown tinge and sometimes a bitter flavour.

PÉTILLANT A wine is pétillant if it has a slight fizziness, but not the full condition found in a sparkling wine. Usually due to bottling too soon, or an unstable wine, or a malo-lactic fermentation after bottling.

PROOF An obsolete (in the UK) system of measuring alcohol content. 100% alcohol was gauged as 175° Proof. Thus whisky now sold as 40% alcohol by volume was then sold as 70° proof (40 x 7/4). The strength is unchanged. The USA still uses its own proof measure of 100% alcohol equals 200° proof, and 40% whisky there is labelled as 80° proof.

RACKING Siphoning the must or young wine off the lees to prevent off-flavours developing, and to stabilise the wine.

SACCHAROMETER Another name for an **HYDROMETER**

SPIRIT WINES Similar to **LIQUEUR WINES**, but designed and flavoured to imitate commercial spirits. Most commercial spirits are sold at 37.5% to 40% abv., which makes these wines sound weak. But very few people drink neat spirits, so a spirit wine is like drinking the original with a mixer such as spring water or tonic.

STABLE This describes a wine that has finished fermenting and will not recommence.

STRAINING Removing the solids (fruit pulp etc.) from the must, by pouring it through a muslin, nylon net, or jelly bag.

STUCK FERMENTATION A stuck fermentation is one that has ceased fermenting before sufficient sugar has been used by the yeast. This is most commonly due to lack of nutrient, incorrect temperature, or a poor strain of yeast.

TEST JAR A tall clear glass or plastic jar used with a hydrometer, to hold the sample being tested.

ULLAGE The air space between the cork or bung and the surface of the wine, in a bottle or cask.

VINEGAR FLY An imaginary beast that causes wine to turn to vinegar. Any small creature that carries the Acetobacter bacterium fits this description, especially the fruit fly (*Drosophila melanogaster*) found drifting irritatingly around any fermenting material, from windfalls in the garden to your valuable pulp fermentations. Beware! Spray on sight!

YEAST A minute fungal plant that brings about fermentation. There are many species and strains, but *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* includes the majority of yeasts used in home winemaking.

ZEST The coloured outer layer of the peel of citrus fruits. This contains the aromatic volatile oils of the peel, but not the bitterness found in the white pith beneath. Kitchen shops sell 'Zesters' to remove this layer.