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Wine Making With Winexpert Wine kits

By Steve Bader

In this handout I will inform you of the basics of wine making when using either the *Selections Estate Series*, *Estate Series Crushendo*, *Selections Series* or *World Vinyard* boxed wine kits from Winexpert. With these basics you should be able to go on your merry way producing the wine of your choice.

Winexpert makes winemaking easy for the hobbyist. Both the Selection and Vintners Reserve kits have had the difficult things done for you by **Winexpert**. They have done the growing, picking, crushing, acid balancing, pasteurizing of the grape juice, added the yeast nutrients, choosing and included the fining agents, stabilizers and even oak flavoring. A few wines also contain a finishing pack of concentrated grape juice of the appropriate grape (F pack) for you to sweeten a wine that has fermented too dry for your tastes. The F pack is included in those wines that are normally sweeter (Like Liebfraumilch and dessert wines). If you do not have an F pack in your kit, and it is too dry, you can add some WinExpert Wine Conditioner to sweeten it before final clearing and bottling.

The difference between *Selections Estate Series*, *Estate Series Crushendo*, *Selections Series*, and *World Vineyard* is simple.

The *Selections Estate Series* is **Winexpert's** newest and highest quality wine kits. These kits have 16 Liters (4.2 gallons) of grape juice and grape juice concentrate, all from the grape-growing region (appellation) listed on the box. These kits have no sugar added, and will produce superior quality wine. The *Selections Estate Series* kits will take 8 weeks till you bottle. Red wines made from Estate Series kits will require 3-6 months bottle aging. The *Estate Series Crushendo* kits also have a 2 liter grape skin pack to add to the wine, which increases all of the flavors of the wine.

The *Selection Series* and *Selections International Series* wine kits are **Winexpert's** next highest quality kits. These kits contain 15 liters (3.9 gallons) of grape juice, grape juice concentrate, and a small amount of sugar. **This makes an excellent 23-liter (6.1 gallons) finished product with full aroma and body.** The Selections Kits take 6 to 8 weeks till you

bottle. Most white wines are ready to drink immediately, and most reds are ready to drink after a few months aging.

The *World Vineyard* kit is *Winexpert's* medium quality kit. It contains 10 liters (2.2 gallons) of juice concentrate, with the majority of the juice the type used to make that style of wine, and some "filler" grape juice and sugar. **This makes a good 23-liter (6.1 gallons) wine.** The World Vineyard takes 4 weeks till you bottle. World Vineyard kits require no aging, and are ready to drink immediately, but do not age for extended time well, and should be consumed within approximately 1 year. **Because of the shorter time period with World Vineyard, stirring the wine after about 3 weeks is an important step to remove the Co2 in suspension.** This step is not as critical with Selections due to longer aging period, which allows the Co2 to dissipate naturally.

Listed below is the suggested list of equipment that you need to make your first batch of wine. The first group of items are included in our Winemaking kit.

Included in Selection Winemaking Equipment Kit

- 1 - 12 Gallon plastic primary fermenter
- 1 - 6 Gallon Glass or Plastic Better Bottle Carboy (secondary fermenter)
- Cylinder Airlock and rubber cork with hole for airlock (bung)
- Fermtech Auto-Siphon, 4 feet siphon hose & shut off clamp
- Hydrometer (to measure sugar content)
- Fermometer (temperature strip-place on plastic primary fermenter)
- Fermtech bottle filler
- Fermtech Wine Thief (for removing samples of wine)
- Plastic corker & 30 wine corks
- 2 oz. Potassium Bisulfite (to sanitize equipment, bottles and corks)
- WinExpert cap removing tool

Additional equipment recommended:

- Home Wine making Step-by-Step book
- 1 additional 6 - gallon glass or plastic carboy
- Wine de-gassing tool (stir stick)
- Wine Bottles (size of your choice - standard 750 ml wine bottle is 5 per gallon)

Lets make wine!

Sanitation is very important. **All equipment used in making wine should be sanitized before using it.** I suggest sanitizing with Potassium (meta)bisulfite (or commonly called "sulfites") Sulfites are uses in 2 different dilution ratios when winemaking. For sanitizing equipment you make a strong solution, by dissolving the potassium bisulfite in water at a rate of **4_ teaspoons bisulfite per 1/2 gallon** of cool water. For stabilizing your wine prior to bottling, you use far less sulfites, only $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dry measure for 6 gallons of wine. To sanitize your glass and plastic fermenters, I would fill the fermenter with about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ gallon of your sulfite solution, then swirl the liquid to contact the entire inside of the fermenter and lid, and then let drip dry for 10 minutes. Any left over residue on your fermenters will be harmless to your wine. Sulfite solution has a fairly strong smell to it, and is an anti-oxidant, so be careful not to breath much of

the aroma from the solution. You may re-use the solution as long as the solution is clear and it has not lost its aroma. I would suggest making your solution and storing it in a 1 gallon jug for use at a moments notice. You should also use this solution to sanitize airlock, corks, etc.

It is assumed in these directions that all of the equipment that you will use will be sanitized before you put it in contact with your wine.

1) Sanitize your 12-gallon plastic fermenter. We have marked the outside of your fermenter with a black felt marker where we estimate the (23 Liter) 6.1 - gallon mark is. Attach the temperature strip to the outside of the fermenter about 3 inches below the mark. Dump the sanitizer into your sink or a bucket, and let the fermenter drip-dry. Add about $\frac{1}{2}$ gallon of warm water to the fermenter. Add the Bentonite (package #1) to the water and stir well to dissolve.

2) Then fill the fermenter with the wine (grape) juice. It is easiest with your auto-siphon.

3) If your kit includes oak powder, open the package, and add the oak chips to the wine. ***Some kits do not have oak powder.***

4) Top the fermenter off to the 6.1-gallon mark with good quality (filtered is best) cold or warm water. You would like your wine to be between 75° and 80°. ***(If you are making a Crushendo wine you would carefully add the grape skin pack now. With the Crushendo wines your starting volume will be larger than the other wines)*** Then vigorously stir the wine to mix well. Then add the yeast by cutting one corner of the package and sprinkling the yeast on top of the wine. Do not stir the yeast into the wine. I would suggest removing a sample of the wine at this time and taking a hydrometer reading. This is your original gravity reading. Record your reading for later use. For most wines you should have a reading between approximately 1.080 and 1.090. Snap the plastic lid on the fermenter to keep out undesirables! The lid fits loosely to allow carbon dioxide to escape out of the sides, yet covers the fermenter well. **Original Gravity reading_____.**

5) Fermentation should start in 24 to 48 hours. You can tell that the fermentation is started by looking for foam production on top of the wine, or you can also take another hydrometer reading, and if it has dropped, you know fermentation is started. If your fermentation has not started within 72 hours, please call us at the store.

6) Let the wine ferment for about 7-10 days. Then siphon the wine into your sanitized glass carboy using your auto-siphon. This separates the sediment (oak chips and grape sediment) from the wine. ***(If you have a Crushendo wine, use the enclosed plastic screen from the wine kit to put on the racking cane to filter out the grape skins)*** **The purpose of this racking (transferring the wine into a different container is called racking) and all other racking is to separate the sediment from the wine.**

7) Let the wine ferment for about another 10 - 15 days. The fermentation should slow during this time to a near stop, and begin to clear. At the end of this time period your wine should be fully fermented. (If your temperature was lower than 65°, it may take longer---but no worries)

8) Remove a sample of wine using your wine thief, and take a hydrometer reading. When the hydrometer reading is 1.000 or below, and fermentation activity has ceased, (*don't worry, time is your friend. If it takes a few weeks longer to finish fermenting, that is O.K.*) You then add the Potassium Metabisulfite (package #2), Potassium Sorbate (package #3) and package #4 (Chitosan or Isinglass) The **Potassium Bisulfite** is added at this time as an anti-oxidant, to minimize browning, promote clarity and as a preservative. The **Potassium Sorbate** is added to prevent any additional fermentation in the bottle that would cause carbonation or to push the cork out of the bottle. Package #4 is a fining agent to promote clarity. Stir the wine to mix package #4 with sediment on the bottom of your fermenter. This mixing of sediment and package #4 will actually help the wine clear. We sell an attachment you can use with an electric drill that works wonders for this task.

9) *You can determine your alcohol content now if you subtract your ending gravity from your original gravity and multiply the difference by .125 (example: original 1.086 - final .996 = 90. Multiply 90 X .125 = 11.25% alcohol by Volume. Ending Specific Gravity_____*

10) If your wine has an E pack or F pack, they are added now. (*Note: The F pack is a concentrated package of grape juice that will sweeten your wine. You can be the judge as to how much you want to sweeten your wine. You don't have to add all of it. Taste a sample of your wine and then decide.*)

11) After about a week, your wine should be clear. Rack your wine to another carboy (*or back into your 12-gallon plastic primary fermenter, clean out your carboy immediately and transfer back into the carboy*). Try to rack your wine with a minimum of splashing from this point on. Remember that oxygen is your enemy from now until you drink your wine. **NOTE: WinExpert kits contain very low levels of sulfite compared to commercial wine. If you want to age your wine longer than 6 months, you must add extra metabisulfite powder to prevent oxidation. To do this, dissolve $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of potassium metabisulfite powder in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cool water and gently stir into your wine. This extra sulfite will not affect flavor or early drinkability. DO NOT add the additional sulfite to Crushendo wines, as they have the additional sulfite already in the grape skin pack.**

12) Let your wine set in a quiet, dark place to clarify. With *Selection* and *Selection International Series* this should take about 2 weeks. (*Estate Series kits need 4 weeks!*) Time is your friend here. Just keep the wine out of direct sunlight, and keep oxygen contact to a minimum. **Winexpert** kits are designed to settle at 68-70°. This is a good time to "top off" your wine with additional boiled and cooled (or filtered) water, to where there is only about 2 inches of air space at the top of your glass fermenter from the wine to the bung.

13) Wait another week or two to let the carbon dioxide (Co2) leave the wine. *For 4-week kits (World Vineyard), it is important that you stir the wine to remove the Co2 if you are trying to bottle in 4 weeks.*

14) Once your wine is properly sweetened, de-gassed, and clarified, you can bottle it. *If you are in no hurry, you can simply let your wine sit in the carboy with the airlock on it for a few more weeks till you have time to bottle, (but no more than 6 weeks).* Sanitize your wine bottles with a potassium bisulfite and water solution, (4 teaspoons potassium bisulfite and $\frac{1}{2}$ gallon of water) and soak your corks in the same solution about 3 minutes to sanitize them and make them easier to insert into the bottle.

Corks come in 3 sizes. Number 7, 8 and 9. The smaller the number the smaller the diameter of the cork. A new synthetic cork called "Noma" corks also work well, and are a bit less expensive, but need a floor corker to insert in the bottle. The general rule is larger corks for longer aging. We have included #8 corks in your kit. Transfer your wine quietly, with a minimum of aeration. Fill to about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch below where the cork will go in. Immediately put the cork in, and stand upright for about 3 days to let the cork dry out, the compressed air to escape, and form a seal. Then set the bottle on its side or upside down to keep the cork moist and sealed. (no need to do this with the NOMA cork)

Age your wine as you wish and drink when you want!! It's your wine, so drink it when you want, but try to save some for at least a year or more to see how flavors improve with age. Most wines will improve with age, but many factors are involved here. In general, wines with higher alcohol levels, higher acid levels, and higher tannin levels require more aging, and taste better older.

Store your wine about 45° to 50° if possible. Most importantly store the wine at a constant temperature. Avoid rooms that fluctuate in temperature. Also higher humidity is better since the cork is more likely to hold its' seal.

You should label your wine so that a year from now you remember what it is!! You can also put a metal foil shrink seal on to enhance the appearance of your wine. We have a number of labeling and foil options, and can custom print on your wine labels for free. We also rent floor corkers and wine filters if you need them. Enjoy!!

Every November WinExpert announces 5 new "Limited Edition" wines that are available via pre-order. These are often cutting edge exiting wines that are fun to experience. Check with us in late November or visit our web site to see what these wines are. Also be sure to sign up for our free monthly E-Mail newsletter at BaderBrewing.com.

Cheers!