COUNTRY-STYLE WINE MAKING by an old female wine maker. 5-1-2012

PART 1

EQUIPMENT

Fruit or juice A gallon glass jug or other fermentation vessel, or 4 liter wine jug. An air (fermentation) lock for each container Drilled rubber stopper with hole for the air lock Plastic tubing for siphoning Wine yeast Yeast nutrient Potassium Sorbate for sanitizing

Cleanliness:::

Clean and sterilize all equipment, using a sterilizing agent such as Campden Tablets, or Potassium Sorbate, both are yeast killers. Avoid using soap since any residue could have an adverse effect on the finished product. Incidentally, your wine will only be as good as your drinking water.

Extracting your juice

Wash your fruit. Put into a cooking container with just enough water to start cooking. Bring to a boil to kill the wild and unwanted yeast (such as vinegar yeast.) Crush the fruit --- I use a potato masher. Strain the fruit to get the juice, just as you would to make jelly.

Basic Recipe:

Approx. 18 oz. frozen grape juice OR 1 qt. 32 OZ. pasteurized juice from berries or grapes native to your area.

2 to 3.5 cups of sugar

1/4 teaspoon wine yeast per gallon.

Pour juice into fermentation vessel. Dissolve approximately 2 cups sugar in hot water. Add to juice. Add water to make one gallon, leaving 3 to 5 in. of headspace for adding additional sugar later. Add wine yeast to warm mixture (called a Must.) If the Must is too hot it will kill the yeast. (Test on your wrist like testing for baby milk.) Swirl jug gently to mix into solution.

Plug the rubber stopper firmly into the top of jar, tight enough so no gases can escape around it. Put water in the fermentation lock to fill one side of the bubble. When held upright you should have some water in each bubble. Firmly push the airlock into the hole in the stopper, placing its loose fitting cap on top to keep insects out. As the gases rise from fermentation they will displace the water from one side of the air lock to the other side, causing an interesting burp. If the stopper or lock is not seated completely it will allow the gases to leak out. If you see action (foaming) taking place, but the water is not being displaced in the air lock you will know there is a leak.

Yeast needs a temperature of 75 to 85 degrees to work. It may be necessary, in the cool months, to provide some heat control. A method to control the warmth can be as simple as a wooden box with a small light bulb, or keeping the wine in a warm spot such as a closet next to a heat duct.

Fermentation could last as short as eight weeks or as long as two years if you keep feeding the yeast with sugar and/or nutrient. You may wish to siphon or pour off the Must from the sediment that is on the bottom. At this point if the Must has cleared, and if you like the fruity taste you may elect to stop the fermentation by refrigerating it. If so, do not forget to refrigerate it each time you remove it from the refrigerator or it will start fermenting again and, if you have capped it, it will explode (this is how you make champagne). If it is too sweet for your taste you must let it continue fermenting a while longer so the yeast can consume more of the sugar. If it is too dry, (the difference between a sweet and a dry wine is the amount of sugar) then dissolve more sugar and add to the Must. This is a good time to add yeast nutrient. Sugar should be added at 2 or 3 month intervals to avoid a stuck fermentation, which sometimes takes place when one overwhelms the yeast with too much sugar. Keep good records of what you add, and when. You may wish to duplicate or change your actions later.

When the water is at the same level in both of the bubbles in the air lock this indicates that (1) the Must is too cool for the yeast to work, or (2) the Must is too hot, having killed the yeast, or (3) Yippee! you have reached your goal and the fermentation is complete.

Enjoy! :-)

Part 2

Now that you have read the more detailed information about making wine at home, the following is the way "I" do it, the way an old 89 year old Mama makes wine. I buy Welch's grape juice from the grocery store. I buy my other supplies from Home Brewery. You can Google them.

For white wine per gallon: 2-11.5 oz. frozen white grape juice

3 & 4th cups (exact) sugar

A quarter of a teaspoon of wine yeast (I use Red Star Premier Cuvee, which is a fast acting yeast)

And a teaspoon of yeast nutrient.

For Red Wine: I buy a 64 oz. bottle per gallon of red grape juice from the grocery store shelf.

For "Purple" wine, same as for the white wine. Welch does not freeze the red juice. Welch calls the blue-concord-grapes the "purple" juice.

The white wine ferments faster than the other wines. If you want a high alcohol level, you may have to add more yeast and sugar later. Personally, I do not want a lot of alcohol. Following are pictures to enjoy.



This is my original box that I had built many years ago. It is 22 in. square, with a strong lid built to withstand someone sitting on it, and rollers on the bottom for ease in moving. I covered it with Naugahyde to hold in the heat, as well as it looks good. You can store this under your baby grand piano, so that it will be out of the way. (smile)



This shows the jugs with the tags attached listing the amount of sugar, yeast, nutrient, that was used to start, and anything that has been added, and of course, the all -important date.



Shows the capacity of 22 inch square box, with Mylar covering the side walls and the floor for ease in cleaning, plus the thermometer and a 15 watt light bulb for the heat it generates. Wine works better at a steady temperature, around 75 to 85 degrees F. I use a long dowel for stirring.



shows a better view of the angle iron (bought from a hardware store for shelving) from whence hangs the 15 watt bulb. Just run an electric wire to it . Bore a hole in the bottom of the box for the wire.



shows the wine after it has been siphoned off the dregs from the original fermenting. This shows the 3 liter jugs simply because that is what I already have on hand. Jugs can be found at the recycling bins in your city. The easy way to tell the difference without comparison looking, is that the gallon jugs have a little handle on them, whereas the 3 liter bottles do not have that. Since a gallon jug is more than 3 liters, I use the empty plastic 64 oz. containers that grape juice from the grocery store for the over flow. This also shows the fermentation locks, also known as air locks. When the wine has stopped fermenting, the water in the locks will be level on each side.



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This is a close up picture of an air lock. The action from the yeast has pushed the water from one side to the other. In theory, when the water is level on both sides it is suppose to be completed. It is always best to shake or stir the container which will excite the still- alive yeast to start working again. Yeast is an interesting and live substance. Freezing, or temperature less than 70 degrees, will not kill it, but will stop it from working. Too high heat and too much alcohol will kill it. When you think that the yeast has been killed, it is wisest to introduce some Potassium Sorbate into it to kill any still- live yeast. I don't like exploding bottles.

PS: Misc. Pointers:

The green water in the air locks is food coloring --- for ease in reading.

To sanitize the equipment: I use a large mixing bowl filled almost full of hot water from our faucet, drop three (3) Campden tablets into the hot water and let them dissolve. Then I drop all bottle caps for the bottles into this water and let them rest in the mixture until needed. Using a cup to scoop some of the mixture into the clean empty jug, I slosh it around in the container until all sides inside have been covered. Pour the mixture back into the mixing bowl. Then I place the cap on the container to keep it clean inside. That is one day's work.

The next day, I repeat the above and proceed with whatever I was starting out to do. In other words, I sanitize the jugs and equipment twice.

In dissolving the sugar: I use a Tupperware container, put sugar in the container with some water to dissolve it, place it in the microwave for about 15 seconds (that will kill any wild bacteria that is floating around in the air) then it is ready to pour into the sanitized jug.

Our grandparents made wine before a fermentation lock was invented. I have heard many stories about how Granny would cover the container with a bit of cloth, and allow wild yeast to work. The wrong kind of yeast will make vinegar instead of wine. In Granny's day many times this was done in the fall of the year, and when the temperature would be really cool, the yeast would stop working. Granny thought that it had finished. She would bottle it, and many times store it in the top of a cabinet or closet. When the following summer arrived, the yeast would start working again, and eventually blow off the top of the bottle. Whatta mess that would be.

Miss Kathy