

Guide for Red Wine

The following guide shows you how to make approximately 100L of red wine.

Ingredients:

- ◆ 140kgs of red wine grapes
- ◆ Wine yeast and nutrient
- ◆ Campden tablets
- ◆ Tartaric Acid
- ◆ Oak chips

Method:

1. Place whole grape bunches in large clean container. Crush 25 Campden tablets and sprinkle over the grapes. Crush the grapes by stomping with your feet wearing clean rubber boots. If using a mechanical crusher then add the tablets after crushing.
2. Destem the grapes either by hand or using a mechanical destemmer. You do not need to remove every last stem.
3. Place the crushed grapes (now called the must) into your primary fermentation vessel. This can be any vessel with a large opening at the top and loose fitting lid. Fill only to around 70% capacity as the skins will float to the top and it may overflow.
4. Check the titratable acidity (not the pH) following the instructions with the test kit and adjust with tartaric acid if required. Aim for around 6 to 8g/L.
5. Measure the specific gravity to determine your approximate final alcohol content. To make it easier, I recommend purchasing a hydrometer with both specific gravity and final alcohol content graduations.
6. If the final alcohol content is going to be too high (greater than 14%) then the grapes were probably picked too late and you should add clean, cooled boiled water. This won't affect the flavour significantly since as they were picked too late the flavours would be intensified anyway). If the final alcohol content is too low (less than 10%) the grapes were probably picked too early. You can either do nothing, add sugar syrup (which I don't recommend) or red grape concentrate (available from homebrew stores).
7. Add oak chips according to your preference, usually around 2 to 4 g/L. Either place in a straining bag so it can be removed when sufficient oak flavour has been imparted or simply mix it all in and press it out with the skins and seeds (I favour the latter technique).
8. Rehydrate the yeast starter according to instructions on the packet. Pour some of the must into yeast starter and stir gently to equalise the temperature differential and add to the must. Cover with a loose fitting lid.
9. The fermentation will usually commence in around 24hrs. You should ideally keep the temperature of the fermenting must to 15°C to 25°C. I find that covering the demijohn with wetted towels, and locating in a shady and breezy location is a simple technique to control the temperature.

10. Punch down the cap (the floating skins) three to four times per day to keep the skins submerged. This enhances colour and flavour extraction, and inhibits spoilage organisms in the fermenting must.
11. The amount of time to ferment with the skins will depend on your personal preference. I usually allow for around 7 days, but it could be anywhere between 5 to 10 hours for rose wine and 5 to 7 days or more for red wine.
12. After sufficient skin contact time, press the grape must to extract the juice.
13. Pour the pressed juice directly into a demijohn for the fermentation to complete to dryness. As the vigorous part of the fermentation is now complete, the demijohn can be filled almost to the top and should be under air lock.
14. When the air lock stops bubbling, the fermentation should be complete. At this point check the specific gravity to make sure that the fermentation is complete with no or little residual sugar. The specific gravity should be less than 1000, probably around 960.
15. Allow the juice to settle for approximately one week after fermentation is complete to allow the majority of the larger particles to settle.
16. Rack the wine into a clean sterilised demijohn with 25 crushed Campden tablets. Dissolve the crushed tablets in a little of the wine and add to the demijohn before racking the wine into it. This minimises the potential for oxidation.
17. Try to have sufficient demijohns of varying sizes to hold all your wine without an airspace on any of the bottles. Sometimes this is unavoidable and I often top up with a similar styled wine from a previous year. You should always start with more grapes than you think you'll need to make sure this doesn't happen (I don't recommend adding water for obvious reasons).
18. Store the demijohn in a cool place to allow the wine to settle. You will need to rack again in around another month and then another 2 to 3 months again after that. During each racking you will need to add another 12.5 Campden tablets following the same procedure as before.
19. After this time (around 6 months after harvest) the wine should be clear. If the wine looks clean but not brilliantly clear then I recommend filtering the wine. I filter my wine with an inexpensive gravity fed pad filter and it works very well. You could fine the wine but you should find that finings are not required if you're patient enough to allow the wine particles to settle and then "polish" the wine by filtering.
20. Immediately after filtering, bottle the wine in either corked wine bottles or as I prefer, 2L glass Flagons with plastic screw top lids.

The bottled wine is essentially ready to drink after a few weeks in the bottle, but will mature with age. Depending on the wine style it will probably be at its peak between 6 months to 2 years after bottling.