



Portland Winemakers Club

August 2026

Bob's Blurp



2026 Monthly Agendas

January 17th

Gala – Parrett Mountain Cellars 5:30 – 8:30 pm, clean up 8:30 – 9:00, \$15 per person

January 21st

#1-Tasting & judging member's other reds, no Bordeaux varietals or Pinot Noir

February 18th

Speaker: Winemaker, Ken Wright

March 18th

Tasting & judging, member's Bordeaux varietals

April 15th

Barrel Tasting, judging & discussion / problem solving

May 20th – Tasting &

judging, member's White, Rose' & Sparkling

June 17th Discussion,

techniques & products

July - No meeting

July 18th, Annual Picnic,

\$10 ea. Fee, 1:00 – 5:00; Jolie & Brian Bowles home.

August 19th

Speaker: Winemaker Greg Meyer from Columbia Ridge Winery

September 16th

#2-Tasting & judging member's other reds, no Bordeaux varietals or Pinot Noir

October 21st

Tasting & judging, member's Pinot Noir

November 18th

Crush Talk, Tips & Tricks

December 9th

Elections, Planning for 2027

Wine-related tours may be scheduled on non-meeting days.

I am on Sagemoor's vineyard distribution list, Here is what it said: Véraison is now happening across all six of our estate vineyards - Bacchus, Dionysus, Gamache, Sagemoor, Southwind, and Weinbau. Harvest is estimated to be 7-10 days ahead of schedule.

I am guessing this can be taken as a general assessment for the Columbia Valley and Benton city area vineyards as well.

If I remember correctly last year was also earlier than average. Jim Jamison delivered Gewurztraminer on Aug. 31 last year. and my grenache from Knox Road came in Sept. 4 at almost 23 brix.

I have not heard anything about wildfire effects on WA vineyards yet, but the smoke has moved into the Willamette valley as I write this.

As for my 60L of unfinished Rose' I have been talking about for several months; it is not completely dry, so I added a little citric acid (1g/L) and also pushed it through a 0.5 micron filter to prevent any further fermentation when bottled. It should be bottled in about a week. I thought the wine was clear before filtering, but it does indeed seem more sparkling clear now. My filter equipment is available if you need to borrow it. Expect to lose about half a liter of wine per 6 gallon carboy during the process.

Bill Brown let me know that he will have grapes available this year. These are high quality grapes. I have made Pinot Noir and Cab Franc from his vineyard before and will be getting some again this year.

See you at the August meeting for our guest speaker, Greg Meyer! --- Bob



Barb Thomson plans to travel up to Puyallup, Washington to transport wine for the **Washington State Fair Amateur Competition** sometime between August 10 and 13. Please contact her (bt.grapevine@frontier.com) if you would like her to take your wine entries up there.

Complete information is at: <https://www.thefair.com/washington-state-fair/wsf-participate/enter-a-competition-at-the-washington-state-fair> (click on Amateur Wine, Beer and Specialty Beverages)

Some basic information:

Online registration is open now, and must be completed by 10pm on August 11. Each entry is one 750 ml bottle, \$3.50 fee per entry. You can enter multiple wines.

Wine must be delivered to Jon's Homebrew and Wine Supply in Puyallup before 12 noon on August 14.

Make sure you read the information sheet at the link above for details on labels needed, schedule, paperwork, etc.



Upcoming Events / Save the Date

The next meeting of the Portland Winemakers Club is scheduled for Wednesday, August 19th at 7:00 pm in the lower level of the Aloha Grange. This will be a speaker, Winemaker Greg Meyer from Columbia Ridge Winery.

Members are encouraged to bring a snack for the shared table, a tasting glass, and a bottle of your wine for the exchange table.

- Visit the club website at portlandwinemakersclub.com to access archived newsletters dating back to 2007.

- The club maintains a public Facebook group under “Portland Winemakers Club” at facebook.com, all members are invited to join and share posts.

Meeting Minutes

There was no meeting in July.



On July 10th, a few members of the PWC toured a very interesting sparkling wine facility in McMinnville. **Radiant Sparkling Wine Company** is a custom winemaker specializing in equipment and services for efficient sparkling wine production. Winemaker Thomas Houseman demonstrated all the process steps necessary for finished *méthode champenoise* wine. Thanks go out to **Paul Natale** for finding this interesting tour.



The 2026 Wine Club picnic took place on a picture-perfect day in late July. Jolie and Brian Bowles hosted the event on their beautiful property close to the Tualatin river. We had a good mix of attendees - newer members and those who have been with the club for years. As always, the great food took center stage, followed closely by great wines made by members.



Crafting Bold, Blockbuster Red Wines

By Daniel Pambianchi

For many home winemakers, crafting a big, bold red wine is the ultimate goal. There's something deeply satisfying about producing a wine with intense color, rich flavors, firm structure, and the ability to age gracefully. These are the wines that fill the glass — and the room — with presence.

But making a powerful red wine isn't simply about pushing everything to the maximum. Bigger isn't always better. The real objective is to create a wine that is concentrated yet balanced, structured yet drinkable.



In this article, we'll walk through the key decisions and techniques from fruit selection through maturation that you can adapt into your red winemaking protocol to consistently produce deeply colored, full-bodied wines with polished tannins and long aging potential.

Start With the Right Fruit

Great wine always begins with the best fruit — and this is especially true for bold reds. The most important factors that directly impact boldness in the resulting wine are variety, ripeness, yield, and concentration.

Some grape varieties are naturally better suited to producing big wines. If you're buying grapes or processed must, accessible classic *Vitis vinifera* varieties include Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah (Shiraz), Petit Verdot, Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, and Merlot from warmer climates. These varieties tend to have thicker skins, higher tannin potential, and greater color intensity. If you're working with non-*vinifera* grapes, Maréchal Foch, Marquette, Norton, and Frontenac can also produce impressively bold wines.

A common mistake is chasing high sugar (and therefore high alcohol) at the expense of balance. Overripe fruit may deliver sugar and body, but often sacrifices acidity and aromatic precision. What you really want is phenolic ripeness: Fully developed tannins, soft and deeply colored skins, brown (not green) and nutty seeds, and ripe (not vegetal) fruit flavors. Underripe fruit, particularly with Cabernet-related varieties, can result in excessive pyrazines — compounds responsible for green bell pepper aromas that can overshadow fruit character.

If you're working with your own grapes, harvest timing is critical for phenolic ripeness. Aim for lower yields for higher concentration, and smaller berries for greater skin contact and greater phenolic extraction. Berries that are larger than normal may indicate a rainy vintage or over-irrigation and therefore diluted grape composition.

An excellent alternative is to source pails of frozen must (crushed grapes and juice). The freezing and thawing process helps break down grape cell walls and release more color pigments (anthocyanins).

As for grape and juice chemistry, target total acidity (TA) in the range of 4–7 g/L and a balanced pH of 3.3–3.6. Higher pH compromises color extraction and stability, whereas lower pH can jeopardize malolactic fermentation (MLF). And there should be absolutely no damaged or rotten fruit, which could otherwise compromise quality.

Ideal sugar density should be in the range of 24–27 °Brix, translating to approximately 13.5–15.5% ABV. But don't rely on sugar alone — taste the fruit. If the tannins are harsh or green, the wine will be too.

Pre-Fermentation: Setting Up for Extraction

At the crusher, thorough destemming is important. Stems can add structure, but unless they are fully lignified (brown and woody), they tend to contribute green, bitter tannins. You can also opt to double-crush (passing the grapes through the crusher a second time) to hasten color extraction.

To further concentrate color, tannins, aromas, and flavors, you can run off a small portion of juice 4

— say 10–15% — and process it as a white or saignée rosé, depending on how much color has already been extracted.

Add a moderate dose of SO₂ at crush, typically 30–50 ppm, to control spoilage organisms and protect color and aromatics. Avoid exceeding 50 ppm, as this can stress lactic acid bacteria and stall MLF. Bold red fermentations are often warm — even hot — and long, so microbial control is essential. With high-pH grapes, vigilance and strict sanitation are critical with low SO₂ doses. Add “sacrificial tannins” to protect the juice against enzymatic oxidation and to bind and precipitate naturally occurring proteins that could otherwise cause haze. Use a fermentation tannin product recommended for this purpose, or granular oak, which contains strong protein-binding ellagitannins.

Use pectinase or macerating enzymes to break down grape skin pectin. Be sure to mix in thoroughly as these are usually added in small amounts.

You can start impacting mouthfeel and tannin structure right from crush and during fermentation using specific inactivated yeast products such as Opti-Red, Noblesse, REDStyle, or PowerLees Rouge. These contribute polysaccharides and peptides that enhance body, mouthfeel, perceived sweetness, tannin smoothness, and color stability.

If you’re equipped with the proper refrigeration equipment — or alternatively, using frozen water jugs or dry ice — you can perform a pre-fermentation cold soak by holding crushed grapes down to as close as 40 °F (5 °C) for 3–7 days. This can improve color extraction and enhance fruit character. Perform daily punchdowns or pumpovers (once daily is sufficient) to minimize microbial risk. If using dry ice, add 1.5 lbs. per 25 gallons (700 g per 100 L) of must for every 2 °F (1 °C) drop in temperature, mixing thoroughly and replenishing as needed.

Another practical technique for small batches worth exploring is accentuated cut edges (ACE). It involves fragmenting crushed grape skins (for example, using an immersion blender in small batches), taking care not to damage the seeds or overprocess the must, and then keeping the cap submerged as much as possible through frequent punchdowns during maceration and fermentation. ACE maceration increases skin surface area and has been shown to enhance fruity character and significantly improve phenolic extraction and composition. This technique is best suited to well-ripened fruit with good phenolic potential. It is generally not recommended for underripe fruit, thin-skinned varieties, or batches already high in seed tannins, where the risk of excessive astringency may outweigh the benefits.

Fermentation: Where Structure is Built

Fermentation is where you shape the wine’s body, tannin profile, and color. A key decision is selecting an appropriate yeast strain to match the grape variety and desired style. Online tools and vendor fermentation handbooks can help narrow the options.

Temperature is one of your most powerful tools. Contrary to the idea that cooler fermentations preserve aromas, bold red wines benefit from warmer fermentations in the range of 78–86 °F (26–30 °C) to maximize extraction. As fermentation accelerates, temperature can rise quickly — be prepared with cooling strategies. Avoid exceeding 90 °F (32 °C), which can lead to harshness, hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) production, or a stuck fermentation.

As fermentation begins, skins rise to form a cap. Managing this cap is critical for extraction. Manual punchdowns are the most common approach for small batches. For larger volumes, pumpovers using an impeller pump and adequately sized hoses allow you to recirculate juice over the cap. Perform 2–4 punchdowns or pumpovers during peak fermentation, and down to 1–2 toward the end.

Rack-and-return (délestage) is a more advanced technique that can soften tannins and improve oxygen integration to produce a bold wine



that is more approachable in its youth. It involves draining the fermenting juice completely from a tank or vat into another vessel while removing as many seeds as possible, then returning the juice over the cap. This can be done once or twice daily.

When density drops by about one-third (approximately 5–7 °Brix), add grape tannins and mix thoroughly to start stabilizing color. Toward the end of fermentation, once color extraction peaks, add anthocyanin-binding fermentation tannins (e.g., Tan'Cor Grand Cru or Vinitannin Multi-Extra) to “lock in” color.

With Native American varieties and hybrids, extended maceration and fermentation can lead to off-aromas or loss of fruit character. Monitor closely and press earlier if needed.

Pressing: Some Critical Decisions



Pressing timing has a major impact. Early pressing (before full dryness; Brix above -1.5) produces softer wines, while late pressing increases structure but also risk. Taste daily near dryness — when tannins are firm but not harsh, it's time.

It's best to keep free-run and press fractions separate. Free-run wines are typically softer, more stable in color, lower in pH, richer in glutathione (a naturally occurring antioxidant), and contain fewer dissolved solids. Press fractions tend to be harsher, higher in pH, and lower in color intensity. Elevated pH increases risks of tartrate and microbial instability.

Malolactic Fermentation: Softening Acidity

Reds are almost always put through MLF, converting sharper malic acid into softer lactic acid while adding complexity. A key decision is whether to conduct MLF concurrently with alcoholic fermentation or sequentially afterward. Each approach has pros and cons and practical considerations, although not in the context of making big, bold reds.

Managing Tannins: Power Without Harshness

Tannins define bold reds — but can also detract if mishandled. Skin tannins are generally more desirable than harsher seed tannins.

Avoid crushing seeds and excessive agitation late in fermentation. Over-extraction leads to astringency that aging cannot fully resolve.

At the end of fermentation, you can experiment doing a cold maceration by leaving the wine on the skins 5–10 days, or even up to three weeks, down as close to 40 °F (5 °C) as you can if you are equipped to refrigerate the batch and protect it all from the elements and microbes. Although winemakers have reported mixed results, the theory is that a post-fermentation cold maceration helps polymerize tannins, deepen structure, and improve mouthfeel. If tannins are already strong, extended maceration can be detrimental.

Color Stability: Keeping that Deep Red

Color stability depends on anthocyanin–tannin balance and interactions. Insufficient tannin can cause premature color loss, so ensure adequate extraction or supplement with cellaring tannins if needed.

Co-fermentation with flavonol-rich varieties, such as Viognier, by adding up to 5% Viognier to Syrah at crush can enhance color through co-pigmentation — a phenomenon where anthocyanins self-link and interact with colorless compounds too. These colorless compounds include naturally occurring polyphenols called flavonols, and which are found abundantly in Viognier; quercetin is a familiar example of a common flavonol found in grapes.

Small amounts of oxygen early on help stabilize color through polymerization, as it does during barrel aging. But oxygen should be avoided post-fermentation, with the exception being micro-oxygenation in barrels, as it causes oxidation and dulls fruit. Always opt for equipment and

techniques that favor gentle treatment of wine that minimize oxygen absorption.

SO₂ management during maturation is also critical. Excess sulfite will bind with anthocyanins and bleach color. Add potassium metabisulfite (KMS) to maintain an adequate free SO₂ (FSO₂) level based on pH and molecular SO₂ (MSO₂). Since we are dealing with big, bold, tannic reds here, you can go with 0.2 ppm MSO₂ if pH is in normal range, and up to 0.5 ppm for higher pH. You need a higher MSO₂ at higher pH where microbes thrive.

Balance: That's What it's All About

As renowned French enologist Émile Peynaud noted in his authoritative book *The Taste of Wine*, acidity, bitterness, and astringency reinforce one another, and that high-acid wines intensify tannin bitterness and astringency; therefore, highly tannic wines should have lower acidity, and high-acid wines should have lower tannin levels.

High acidity or high bitterness is best balanced by higher alcohol. Avoid combining low acidity and low tannins with high alcohol, or high acidity and high tannins with low alcohol. High alcohol adds body but must be balanced — excess leads to a hot, unbalanced wine.

Monitor TA and pH throughout and adjust as needed. Make larger adjustments pre-fermentation and fine-tune after.

Oak Aging: Building Complexity

Medium-toasted (MT) or MT-plus (MT+) oak is almost essential for bold reds.

Aging and Integration

Big wines need time. During aging, tannins soften, flavors integrate, and aromas evolve toward greater complexity. Don't rush bottling — wait until the wine feels cohesive.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- Over-extracting tannins
- Over-oaking
- High-pH musts
- Excessive alcohol
- Poor temperature control
- Ignoring acid balance
- Bottling too early

Troubleshooting Big, Bold Reds

Even with careful techniques, bold reds can present challenges. Here are a few common issues and how to address them:

Wine is too astringent or harsh:

Likely due to over-extraction, especially from seeds or excessive cap management. In future batches, reduce punchdowns or pumpovers late in fermentation and press earlier. Aging and oak can help soften tannins over time.

Color is lighter than expected:

This can result from low phenolic extraction, high pH, or insufficient tannin. Improve extraction through better cap management, consider cold soaking, and ensure adequate tannin levels for color stabilization.

Wine tastes hot (high alcohol):

Often caused by overripe fruit or excessive sugar. Balance can sometimes be improved with careful acid adjustment and longer aging to help integration.

Wine lacks structure:

Insufficient tannin extraction or low initial phenolics may be the cause. Consider using fermentation tannins, extending maceration (with caution), or incorporating oak earlier in the aging process.

These adjustments, combined with careful observation and tasting throughout the process, will help you refine your approach and consistently produce more structured, balanced wines.

A Practical Protocol for a 6-Gallon (23-L) Batch

To bring all these concepts together, following is a practical protocol you can adapt for crafting a bold red wine at the 6-gallon (23-L) scale.

Target parameters:

Sugar density: 24–27 °Brix

pH: 3.3–3.6

TA: 4–7 g/L

Adjust must chemistry as needed before fermentation, making any significant acid additions at this stage.

At crush:

Destem thoroughly; avoid including unripe stems

Add 30–50 ppm SO₂ and mix well

Add sacrificial tannins or granular oak

Add pectic enzymes

Optional: Add inactivated yeast products (e.g., Opti-Red-type products)

If desired, perform a cold soak at 40 °F (5 °C) for 3–7 days, with one gentle punchdown daily.

Fermentation:

Inoculate with a suitable yeast strain

Maintain temperature between 78–86 °F (26–30 °C)

Perform 2–4 punchdowns daily during peak fermentation.

At approximately one-third sugar depletion (when it has dropped about 5–7 °Brix), add fermentation nutrients and mix thoroughly.

Toward the end of fermentation, once color extraction is maximized, add anthocyanin-binding tannins to help stabilize color.

Pressing:

Monitor closely as dryness approaches

Press when tannins are firm but not harsh (typically near dryness; –1.5 °Brix)

Separate free-run and press fractions

Malolactic fermentation:

Inoculate promptly (sequential or co-inoculation)

Maintain appropriate temperature to ensure completion

Confirm MLF completion

Post-fermentation:

Rack off gross lees

Adjust SO₂ based on pH

Begin oak aging using cubes, staves, or barrels

Aging:

Age for 3–12 months (longer if using barrels)

Taste regularly and adjust oak as needed

Rack periodically to clarify and manage oxygen exposure

Before bottling:

Adjust SO₂ to target levels

Fine or filter if desired

Bottle only when the wine is stable and well-integrated

Final Thoughts

Making a bold red wine at home is both an art and a technical challenge. It requires attention to detail, patience, and a willingness to taste and adjust at every step.

The goal isn't just power — it's controlled power. A great bold red should be intense, but also smooth, balanced, and enjoyable from first sip to last.



Reference Library

(updated 10-15-2025)

Here is a list of hobby winemaking manuals and other materials in the editor's file. They are available for downloading by e-mail or via an internet transfer service. Some are downloadable from the source such as Scott Lab. All are in PDF format. (*Newly added or updated, 15 Sept. 25)

- *Understanding Wine Fining – Andreea Botezatu – 2.2 MB – 11 pages
- Scott Lab 2025-2026 Winemaking Handbook – 26.8 MB – 144 pages
- Scott Lab 2024 - 2025 Cider Making Handbook – 6.2 MB – 96 pages
- Scott Lab 2018-2019 Sparkling Handbook – 8 MB – 58 pages
- Scott Lab 2022 Craft Distilling Handbook – 5.2 MB – 26 pages
- Anchor 2021 – 2022 Enology Harvest Guide 2.6 MB - 104 pages
- *Barrel Care Procedures - The Beverage People - 227 KB - 7 pages
- Barrel Care Techniques - Pambianchi – 42 KB – 3 pages
- *Enartis Winemaking - 2025 Handbook – 8.8 MB – 85 pages
- A Review Of Méthode Champenoise Production - 570 KB – 69 pages
- Sparkling Wine brief instructions - 20 KB - 3 pages
- Sacramento Winemakers Winemaking Manual - 300 KB - 34 pages
- The Home Winemakers Manual - Lum Eisenman - 14 MB – 178 pages
- MoreWine Guide to Red Winemaking - 1 MB - 74 pages
- MoreWine Guide to White Winemaking – 985 KB – 92 pages
- MoreWine Yeast and grape pairing – 258 KB – 9 pages
- Wine Flavors, Faults & Taints – 600 KB, 11 pages
- Daniel Pambianchi wine calculator set – 13.5 MB, 10 calculators



Portland Winemakers Club

Leadership Team – 2026

President: **Bob Hatt**

bobhatt2000@yahoo.com

- Establish the leadership team.
- Assure that objectives for the year are met.
- Set up agenda and run the meetings.

Treasurer: **Barb Thomson**

bt.grapevine@frontier.com

- Collect dues and fees, and update the membership list with the secretary.
- Pay bills.

Secretary: **Bob Thoenen**

pwc_secretary@outlook.com

- Communicate regularly about club activities, amateur competitions & other club issues.
- Keep an updated list of members' email, name tags, and other club information.

Chair of Education / Speakers **Paul Natale**

paulnatale6@gmail.com

- Arrange for speakers & educational content for our meetings.

Chairs for Tastings: **Mike Sicard / Steve Fine**

msicard@willamettehvac.com

- Conduct club tastings.
- Review and improve club tasting procedures.

steve.fine@comcast.net

Chair of Winery / Vineyard Tours: **Paul Natale**

paulnatale6@gmail.com

- Arrange & manage tours.
- Select Wineries, Vineyards, etc. to visit.
- Cover logistics (food and money).

Chairs of Group Grape Purchases: **Mark Hernandez / Hank Armstrong**

Arrange for member group grape purchases. Distribute information to the membership. Manage arrangements to purchase, collect and distribute. Provide written rules.

mark_hernandez14@comcast.net
HANKARM@gmail.com

Chair of Group Supplies Purchases (consumables).

Brian Bowles

- TBD

bowles97229@gmail.com

Chairs for Social Events:

Jolie & Brian Bowles / Barb Thomson

- Gala / Picnic/parties

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