



Portland Winemakers Club

June 2026

Bob's Blurb

June is a quiet month for my wine making. Most of my time in May and June is in the garden weeding and hoping my veggies start to grow. Topping barrels and racking a few carboys doesn't consume much of my spare time. I do need to rack my 2025 Rose' and get that into bottles so I can enjoy it during the remainder of the summer.

We had a chance to go down to the Umpqua Valley around Elkton and Roseburg and do some tasting. Elkton has a number of wineries, if you have a chance, travel through there and check them out.

The vineyards in Elkton indicated that they would have grapes available. The wine slump / grape glut is all over the place. Sorry I missed the May meeting.

If you didn't get your orders in yet, send it to Mark Hernandez and Hank Armstrong! I look forward to getting some southern Oregon grapes with the dub this year.

Please plan on attending the summer picnic in July! Mark it on your calendar for Saturday July 18, a little over a month away.

Keep those wines topped up and sulfited. See you at the June meeting.

Regards.....Bob

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. TBD

July - No meeting

July 18th, Annual Picnic, \$10 ea. Fee, 1:00 – 5:00; Jolie & Brian Bowles home.

August 19th

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

September 16th

Speaker: TBD

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.



Upcoming Events / Save the Date

The next meeting of the Portland Winemakers Club is scheduled for Wednesday, June 17th at 7:00 pm in the lower level of the Aloha Grange.

The evening will open with a brief business session, followed by the main program (to be determined).

Members are encouraged to bring a snack for the shared table, their own tasting glasses, and a bottle of homemade 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](https://www.facebook.com), all members are invited to join and share posts.

May Meeting Minutes

Officer Updates

Group Supply Purchases — Brian Bowles:

Recap of the group purchasing discussion from the May meeting:

Members discussed combining orders for common winemaking supplies. With enough participants, the club can meet minimum quantities and lower the per-unit cost.

Members who buy in bulk on their own may also sell surplus to others. Brian Bowles is leading this effort and plans to finalize the order by end of June.

Items under consideration: corks, Bio-Diva Yeast, Tartaric Acid, Fermaid O or K, and Go Ferm Protect Evolution.

After the business portion of the meeting, the club conducted its annual tasting competition for White, Rosé, and Sparkling wines. **Congratulations to Jolie & Brian Bowles, who earned gold for their 2025 Sauvignon Blanc. The full results are shown in the table below.**

May 2026 White, Rose, Sparkling									
	Winemaker	Year & Wine Type	Gold	Silver	Bronze	None	Medal Score	Medal	# of Votes
A1	Jolie & Brian Bowles	2025 Sauvignon Blanc	12	6	0	0	2.67	Gold	18
A2	Mark Hernandes	2024 Sauvignon Blanc	1	4	14	0	1.32	Bronze	19
B1	Steve Fine	2024 Chardonnay	0	3	15	1	1.11	Bronze	19
B2	Rob Marr	2024 Chardonnay	6	10	3	0	2.16	Silver	19
C1	Ted Brunner	2025 Rose' Merlot / Sangiovese	3	12	4	0	1.95	Silver	19
C2	Brian Bowles	2025 Rose' Sangiovese / Malbec	0	14	4	0	1.78	Silver	18
D1	Rufus Knapp	2018 Pinot Gris, Orange Style	1	3	15	0	1.26	Bronze	19
D2	Hank Armstrong	2025 Chardonnay	3	13	2	1	1.95	Silver	19



Determining Grape Maturity and Fruit Sampling

Time of grape harvest is probably the most important and challenging viticultural decision for grape producers due to the difficulty of assessing grape maturity in the vineyard and predicting wine quality. The yearly dilemma is whether to delay harvest until desired quality parameters are reached since, once picked, grapes do not improve in flavor, color or sugar content. On the other hand, if the grapes are left hanging too long on the vine, the berries may shatter, get damaged by wildlife or insects, or break down due to rot; and yields and quality are negatively affected. During the past 15–20 years, we have come a long way from the days of determining time of harvest by simply going out to the vineyard with a refractometer. Today, overall ripeness evaluation involves much more than an analysis of °Brix, titratable acidity and pH; and many winemakers use flavor/aroma assessment in addition to the routine standards.

In this fact sheet, I have highlighted considerations to take into account when deciding on time of harvest and have described objective and subjective methods to determine optimum fruit maturity, which is a balance between the two methods. Sampling methods are also described. The information is especially useful for new growers/vintners and is a refresher for seasoned producers.

Factors Affecting Time of Harvest

First, let's clarify a never-ending misconception by many involved in the grape and wine industry.

Physiologically, *grape maturity* is reached when seeds are able to germinate, which is immediately after véraison, or initiation of fruit ripening. The man-made maturity (typically referred to as *technological maturity* in Europe) is an arbitrary set of parameters used by the vintner/grower to determine the time of harvest based on the cards they were dealt that season. In other words, unlike physiological maturity which is consistent, technological maturity varies from year to year, which makes determining time of harvest even more challenging. Under our unpredictable environmental conditions, time of harvest is a complex compromise since it is affected by several factors including:

- season
- weather (daily and diurnal temperature, rainfall)
- likelihood of pest, disease and wildlife damage
- vintner preference
- communication and mutual agreement between grower and vintner
- labor availability
- grape composition
- viticultural characteristics: variety (early vs. mid- vs. late season ripening), crop load (heavy vs. light load), sun exposure (exposed vs. shaded fruit), vine health, and vine vigor.

Objective Criteria for Estimating Grape Maturity

At maturity, grape juice is generally composed of the following: water (74%), sugars (25%, primarily fructose and glucose), organic acids (0.8%, primarily tartaric and malic acids), minerals (0.5%, mainly potassium), and phenolic, aromatic and nitrogenous compounds (0.2%). Due to their abundance and ease of measurement, it is no wonder that the primary fruit maturity indicators and "industry standards" are sugar and acid contents, and pH. Flavor and aroma compounds are laborious and expensive to quantify and thus are not commonly measured and winemakers assess them subjectively instead.

Sugar Content: A large proportion of the soluble solids in grape juice are sugars. Glucose and fructose are the main sugars in the juice. At ripening, glucose and fructose are usually present in equal amounts. Both fructose and glucose are fermentable sugars and during fermentation, yeast converts these sugars to alcohol and carbon dioxide. Generally, sugar levels are expressed in degree Brix (a scale to measure total soluble solids) which represents grams of sugars per 100 grams of juice. Levels between 18 and 24 °Brix are desirable, depending on variety and wine style.

Sugar level is measured with a refractometer. Juice is placed on a refractometer glass and light travels through the juice to register on a degree scale. The thicker the juice, the sweeter it is, the more it bends the light, and the higher the °Brix that registers on the scale.

Acid Content: Next to sugars, organic acids are the most abundant solids present in grape juice. They are responsible for the tart (sour) taste of juice and wine and have noticeable influence on wine stability, color, and pH. The predominant acids found in grapes are tartaric, malic and citric acids. Malic and tartaric acids account for more than 90% of the total acids present. During the early period of berry growth, the concentrations of both acids increase in the fruit. At véraison, the soluble solids accumulate in the fruit and the acid concentration decreases. Total acidity (TA, also referred to as titratable acidity) is the actual amount of acid reserve in the wine. Acid levels generally fall between 0.6 and 0.8 grams of titratable acids/100 mL (%TA) at harvest. TA is measured by titrating sodium hydroxide into a sample of grape juice to neutralize the acid in the juice. This amount of sodium hydroxide is then used in a formula to determine how much total acid is in the juice.

Level of pH: Acids upon dissociation in a juice solution liberate H⁺ ions, which are measured and expressed in terms of pH. The pH is a measure of active acidity in the juice and wine, and thus acidity and pH are related. The pH level influences a wide range of factors in the wine including microbial stability (spoilage), physical stability (protein, tartrate), oxidation level, SO₂ activity, color and flavor. Generally, white grapes are harvested at a pH of 3.1 to 3.3 and red grapes at a pH of 3.3 to 3.5. A pH meter is used to measure pH and assesses the strength of H⁺ ions in solution and registers the number on a scale of 1 (acid H⁺) to 7 (neutral) and up to 14 (basic OH⁻).

Subjective Criteria for Estimating Grape Maturity

It is a good practice for growers and vintners to periodically check berry skins and seeds and taste the juice collected to measure °Brix, pH and TA. It is a subjective way to monitor the development of color, flavor and aromas of a given variety. Research and experience have shown that optimum °Brix don't always match optimum flavors and aromas in white or red varieties. For example, grapes may measure 18 °Brix and flavor and aroma are fully developed in one year. In another season, sugars may be at 22 °Brix and the grapes have not fully developed the typical varietal character. The same is true for acid and pH levels. Since this is subjective, it is difficult to have "hard numbers" to make proper decisions. A scorecard was developed to aid with this process using a check list for subjective criteria for assessing grape maturity as follows:

Attribute	Level of attribute	Points Awarded
Color	Green (lack of color)	0
	Color change; translucent	1
	Fully matured color	2
	Over-mature color	1
Ease of removal of berries from pedicels	High resistance	0
	Moderate resistance	1
	Little/no resistance	2
Texture upon touch	Firm	0
	Soft/elastic	1
	Shriveled; loss of shape	0

Texture—initial bite		
<i>Ease of skin collapse</i>	High resistance	0
	Moderate resistance	1
	Low resistance	2
<i>Mechanical features of the pulp</i>	Thin; watery	0
	Viscous	2
	Jelly-like	1
Aroma	None	0
	Recognizable varietal aroma	2
Flavor upon chewing		
<i>Initial character (upon chewing)</i>	Unripe; green; bland	0
	Some varietal character	1
	High varietal character	2
<i>Release from skin</i>	None	0
	Typical varietal character	1
<i>After taste</i>	None	0
	Bitter; astringent	0
	Typical varietal character	1
Maximum total		15

Considerations for fruit sampling

In order to determine harvest date, grapes are sampled periodically before harvest to see how the levels of sugar, pH, acids and flavor compounds are progressing through the season. The determination to pick grapes is based on a small sample. Therefore, it is important that a sample is collected properly so that it will reflect the level of maturity of the entire crop. It is also important that sample preparation and juice extraction mimic the juice obtained from an actual winery crush. The goal is to have vineyard samples accurately reflect must composition at the winery. There are two types of grape sampling: cluster sampling or berry sampling. With either method, it is critical to collect a "representative" sample with a minimum number of berries or clusters from a large number of vines.

Sampling Guidelines:

A PROPER SAMPLING PROCEDURE IS LISTED AS FOLLOWS:

- Begin berry sampling at 15 °Brix or weekly after véraison. Sample daily when close to harvest.
- Sample at least 200 berries per block and per variety. At least 10% of the vines should be sampled. You could use a grid sampling approach; for example, berry samples are collected from every 10th vine in every 10th row.
- If the vineyard has a high degree of variation among the vines, for example, after severe winter injury, disease infestation, or other type of stress, increase the number of berries collected per sample.
- Sample from both sides of the trellis. If the rows run north and south, for example, take half the berries from the east side and half from the west side.
- Pick "random" berries as you walk down the row. There should be an equal chance of a berry being picked anywhere on the bunch or anywhere in the fruiting zone of the vine from both the sun and shade side of clusters. Don't favor colored berries over green. Collect berries from top, middle and bottom of selected clusters.

- Avoid row end plants, outside rows and off-type or otherwise unusual plants.
- Early morning sampling is preferred. If you are tracking the sugars, pH and TA through the season, the samples should be collected at the same time of day if possible.
- Store berries in a sealed plastic bag or container in the refrigerator until processing. If you will be out in the field sampling for a while, store samples in a cooler. Try to process berries within the next 24 hours.

Things to remember and consider when sampling:

- With berry sampling, in order to be within 1.0 °Brix of actual sugars at harvest, you need to collect 2 samples of 100 berries. To further increase the accuracy within 0.5 °Brix, you need to collect 5 samples of 100 berries. With cluster sampling, you need to collect 10 clusters to be within 1.0 °Brix.
- Realize that 90% of the variation in berry sampling is believed to come from variation in the position of the cluster on the vine and the degree of sun exposure.
- Juice sample collected in the morning can be 1 °Brix lower than juice sample collected in the afternoon.
- Rate of °Brix increase is usually 1 °Brix per week.
- Sugars of crushed must at harvest are usually lower than those of the sample juice. Therefore, you need to check harvest sample with crushed must to see how far off it was and take that into account in future sampling.
- Standardize a sampling method and apply it all season and use the same sampler(s) if possible.



Riddling in the Méthode Champenoise

As I set about to run some trials in disgorging and adding dosage to riddled bubbly—two critical steps in the *méthode champenoise* (aka traditional method) production of bottled-fermented sparkling wine—I was reminded of an interesting question asked by an attendee at my seminar at the last *WineMaker Magazine* Conference in Napa Valley: “Why not simply place bottles upside down in carton boxes instead of having to riddle each bottle every day for 21 days?”

Tough question to answer without looking at the physics of what is actually happening during riddling—the process of channeling bottle-fermentation lees down to the neck portion of the upside-down bottle to allow the lees to be expelled by disgorgement and produce a crystal-clear bubbly. A poorly riddled bottle can spell disaster, and turning bottles over to let the lees flocculate without proper riddling simply won’t work.



If bottles are turned over in a case, yes, most of the lees volume will find its way to the neck; but “most” is not good enough. The problem is that some lees particles will cling to the glass—just hold up the bottle against a strong light source and you will see what I mean. These fine lees particles now become *nucleation sites* for the dissolved carbon dioxide gas. Once the bottle is disgorged and the lees are removed, microbubbles will rapidly form and nucleate at these sites, and then quickly rush up to the surface of the wine in the bottle, and cause the wine to gush out uncontrollably. This is further exacerbated when adding the dosage.

Let’s look at this phenomenon a little closer.

Carbon dioxide gas exists in dissolved form in sparkling wine, and the pressure exerted in the closed bottle causes the gas to remain dissolved; however, according to Henry’s law, as soon as the cork is pulled, the higher gas pressure in the wine will slowly work towards equilibrium with

the atmospheric pressure just above the surface of the wine. (This is the same phenomenon as when opening a can of soft drink; after several days, depending on temperature, the drink goes flat. Henry's law more specifically states that, at a constant temperature, the volume of gas dissolved in a given volume of liquid is directly proportional to the partial pressure of that gas in equilibrium with that liquid.) As the gas and atmospheric pressures slowly move towards thermodynamic equilibrium, carbon dioxide gas becomes less soluble and causes *bubble nucleation*, or the formation of microbubbles, in nucleation sites. Any imperfections in the glass, such as scratches or residues, as well as microscopic colloids still in suspension in the wine will hasten bubble nucleation and give rise to continuous streams of rapidly forming tiny bubbles dancing endlessly to the surface of the wine. Bubbles then burst into tiny droplets to release all those delightful aromas. And that's the reason why sparkling wine flutes washed with detergents tend to show fewer bubbling activity—the detergent will “seal” glass imperfections and reduce the surface area of nucleation sites. But if you have too many imperfections and considerable lees still in suspension, the result is excessive gushing and wine loss.

By riddling the sparkling wine according to the traditional method, the riddling aid, added just before bottling the wine for bottle fermentation, will help bring down the lees to the neck of the bottle. The bottle rotating and tilting procedure on riddling racks causes the riddling aid to “sweep up” up the lees from the side of the glass and help it move down to the neck. When done properly, the sparkling wine should be crystal clear with no visible particles on the glass when the bottle is held against a strong light source.

Ah! How clever those Champenoise pioneers were!!



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 - 2025Handbook – 8.8 MB 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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