Portland Winemakers Club

October 2020

"Bill's Meanderings"

Well it's finally happened. No longer is the first question asked when someone learns I'm a home winemaker "so do you smash your grapes like Lucille Ball?" Now it's "will all this smoke make your wine taste like a barbecue?" That's currently an issue for all winemakers, home or commercial, smoke taint.

While probably more of an issue with the commercial wineries there are still a lot of requests coming in to ETS for smoke phenols rather than the usual tests of fruit this time of year. While discussing this problem with an ETS chemist recently I was told the reason for the test for smoke phenols wasn't necessarily to mitigate the taint as much for having the documented results to turn into insurance for a failed crop claim. Looks like a lot of fruit will be going to the birds or on the ground. The 2020 vintage will certainly have some distinction.

Bill

Drink Responsibly. Drive Responsibly.

Portland Winemakers Club

Monthly Events

January 15th, 2020
Crush Talk & Planning

January 25th, 2020
Annual Gala

February 19th, 2020
Bordeaux varietals and Bordeaux blends, Blind Tasting

March, 18th, 2020
Speaker Meeting CANCELLED

April 15th, 2020
ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING

May 20th, 2020
ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING
Speaker: Richard Holmes, Ciel du Cheval vineyard

June 17th, 2020
ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING
Speaker: James Osborne, OSU Enologist

July, Annual Picnic
CANCELLED

July 15th, 2020
ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING

August 19th, 2020
ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING

September, 16th, 2020
ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING

October 21st, 2020
ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING

November 18th, 2020
Crush Talk

December 16th, 2020
Elections, Planning for Next Year, More Crush Talk

NOTE: Tours, Gala & picnic date & times may vary depending on availability.

Upcoming events / Save the date

Club Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for October 21st , "Zoom" sign in will be at 6:45 pm. This will be available on any device that can connect to the internet and has a camera and speaker capability such as a computer, iPad or smart phone etc. Jon Kahrs will again be the moderator. We will provide further sign in information and other details by e-mail prior to the meeting.

Agenda: We will go through introductions and pending club business. Any time left over will be used for general winemaking discussion. Sometimes we have a speaker sign into the Zoom meeting with us. We will let you know by separate e-mail if that happens.

Website: http://portlandwinemakersclub.com/

September Zoom Meeting Minutes

Present: 20

- **Our speaker, Len Parris from Chandler Reach Vineyard and winery, had several comments about smoke taint.**
- **The affect of smoke on grapes depends on the proximity of the grapes to the actual fire and the concentration of particulates that settle onto the grapes.**
- **Smaller wineries may be able to wash of a lot of the particulates.**
- **WSU and OSU may have articles available.**
- **Smoke taint can show up after a couple years in the bottle.**
- **Using free run juice only may help.**

Here are a couple articles from Laffort on how to minimize the affects of smoke taint.

LAFFORT® Harvest news flash:
Dealing with smoke taint

Practical Tips for Winemaking with Fruit Exposed to Smoke

Forest fires and exposure of grapes to smoke has become a major winemaking issue. Wines that are 'smoke tainted' receive negative comments from both winemakers and consumers, such as smoky, burnt, campfire, and ashtray. The key compounds responsible for the aromas are volatile phenols, guaiacol, 4-methyl-guaiacol, and many others, and are found on the outer (cuticle) layer of the grape.

The smoke taint compounds exist in juice and grapes in the glycosylated form. Winemaking practices can release the odorous free volatile phenols, as can time and subsequent acid hydrolysis. Juice may taste acceptable, but during fermentation and over time may develop more serious smoke taint issues.

There are a number of winemaking techniques that can be used to mitigate the effects of taint in wines, and these are more valuable when used in combination. The following recommendations are based on current knowledge of how to reduce the effects of smoke taint, however, there are no known processes to completely remove this issue.

General Recommendations

Early fermentative evaluation of fruit in small scale (5-gallon buckets) before actual harvest can aid in the detection of smoke taint intensity. Ferment a representative sample of the individual block a week before harvesting the block. Monitor daily to see of smoke taint is developing. This procedure can help determine the degree of smoke taint and can give information to base the harvest decision on.

Hand harvest fruit and keep fruit cool. Sort out MOG to reduce leaf material that can contribute smoke compounds. Smoke compounds reside in the grape skins, so it is important to reduce maceration.

Use activated carbon as a fining treatment if smoke taint is detected post fermentation.

LAFFORT
l'œnologie par nature

LAFFORT® Smoke Taint Protocol

Tips for minimizing extraction in white wine grapes

- Mechanically harvested fruit may have extensive skin to juice contact during transport; in this case, separate the first juice that comes out of the press.
- Press fractions should be kept separate as they may have considerably higher concentrations of smoke compounds. Press cuts can be made at 100 gallons per ton.
- Whole cluster press and use a press cycle with few rotations.
- Use a settling enzyme such as **LAFAZYM® CL** or **LAFAZYM® 600 XL ICE** to rapidly remove solids from juice.
- Use **TURBICEL®** for increasing turbidity for fermentation when juice is highly clarified.
- Use activated carbon (**GEOSORB®** or **CHARBON ACTIF SUPRA 4 GR**) at juice settling.
- Use a yeast strain that produces high amounts of fermentation esters, such as **ZYMAFLORE® X16**.
- Consider using **NOBILE®** oak chips during fermentation, **NOBILE® SPICE** (light toast) or **SWEET** (medium toast) can increase wine complexity and help to mask smoke taint.

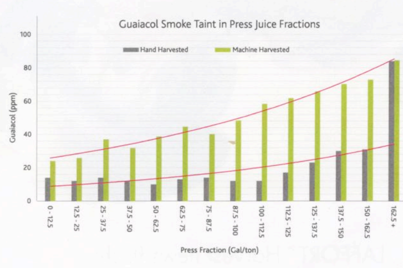

Figure 1: Smoke Taint in Press Fractions (Reference: Simos, Australian Viticulture, Jan/Feb 2008)

Tips for minimizing extraction in red wine grapes

- Use **TANIN VR SUPRA®** and **TANIN VR COLOR®** during fermentation to build structure and stabilize color.
- Use a high quality purified pectinase enzyme such as **LAFASE® FRUIT**, which is low in cellulase side activity and will extract color easily without excess maceration.
- Limit maceration programs and shorten time on skins to decrease smoke taint compound extraction.
- Keep fermentation temperatures cool, 70-75°F.
- Use a yeast strain that produces high amounts of fermentation esters, such as **ZYMAFLORE® RX60** or **ZYMAFLORE® XPURE**.
- Drain and press as early as 8 – 5 brix to reduce time on grape skins.
- Toasted oak chips such as **NOBILE® SWEET** and **NOBILE® SPICE** can reduce the intensity of smoke characteristics through increased wine complexity, as well as increasing polymerized anthocyanins.
- Conduct fining trials with activated carbon, either **GEOSORB® OR CHARBON ACTIF SUPRA 4 GR** on finished wine.

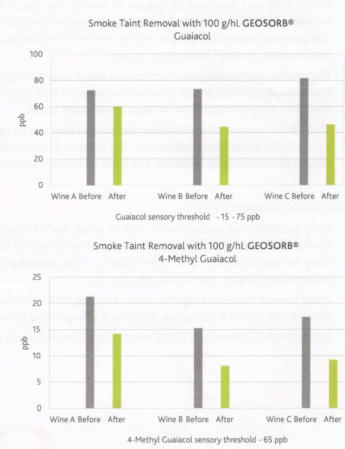

Figure 2: GEOSORB® Effect on Smoke Taint (Reference, Laffort South Africa, 2016)

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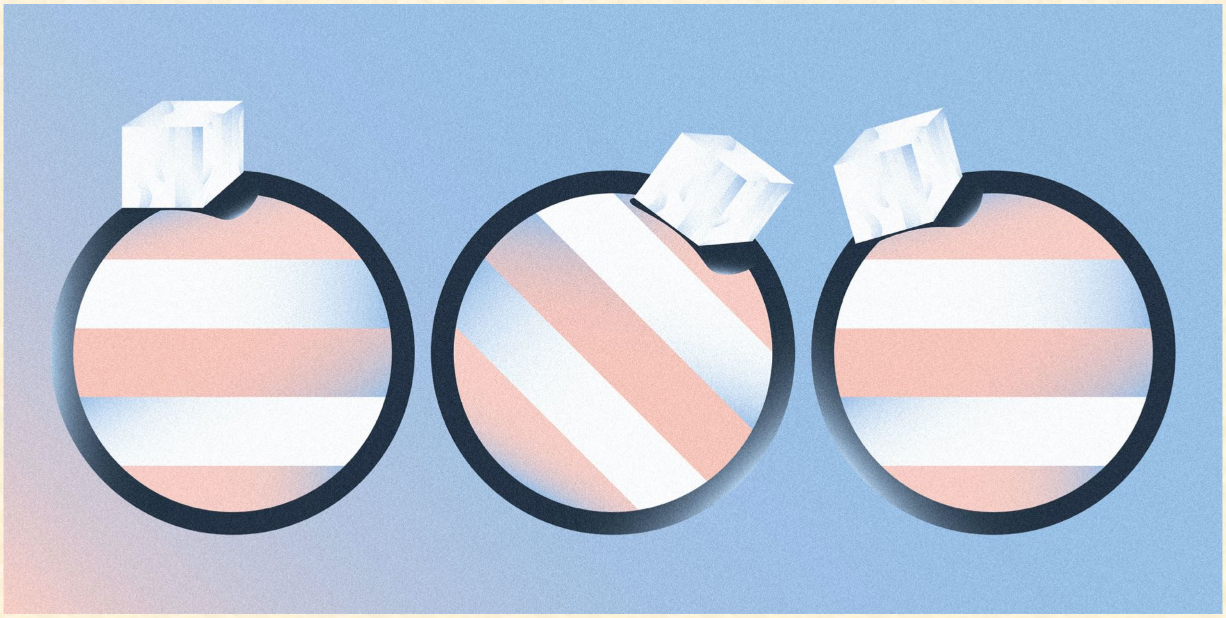
Modern Winemakers Are Rethinking Cold-Soaking as Wine Science (and Pinot Noir) Evolves

words: ZACH GEBALLE
illustration: DANIELLE GRINBERG
Published: November 3, 2019



Like most things in wine, cold-soaking — a technique used to extract flavors and aromas while minimizing harsh tannins — is the subject of contemporary debate. While some winemakers feel it is an invaluable way to develop desirable flavors, others say it's both inefficient and ineffective.

The origins of cold-soaking are a bit murky, but one generally accepted history suggests the practice rose to prominence in Burgundy in the 1970s. As the story goes, cold temperatures around harvest time meant wines naturally cold-soaked: In the era before temperature-controlled wineries and stainless steel tanks, if it was cold outside the winery, it was cold inside the winery and the tanks. As a result, fermentation often took several days.

Today, the commonly cited rationale for cold-soaking grapes is to deepen the color while avoiding over-extracting tannins. The two are closely connected, as pigment molecules, known as *anthocyanins*, commonly bond with tannins during the maceration process.

"The standard thinking is that the cold-soak period favors *anthocyanin* extraction as opposed to alcoholic extraction, which favors tannin extraction," David Ramey, winemaker, Ramey Wine Cellars, says. And so winemakers in regions that produce tannic reds like Cabernet Sauvignon, such as much of California and Australia, often favor cold-soaking.

Now, however, as we learn more about the complex science of winemaking, there's some skepticism about the actual advantages of the practice. Dr. James Harbertson, Associate Professor of Enology at Washington State University and an expert on tannins, believes that "the benefits are really about aroma."

"The origins of cold-soaking are actually from white wine production," he says. "In white wine production you're attempting to get a bit of flavor from the skins, which is carried to an extreme in orange wine production. The danger for white wine production is you pick up phenolics, bitterness, and oxidation with more skin contact, but the benefit is more aroma."

That might help explain why Pinot Noir was the initial red grape to receive the cold-soak treatment; in many ways Pinot Noir is closer to a white grape than a red grape, it's naturally low in pigment and is defined more by aroma than color, all characteristics that cold-soaking would help to enhance.

Instead of just relying on temperature-controlled tanks or wineries, producers like Ramey are starting to experiment with using dry ice, or frozen carbon dioxide, as the means of cooling down their grapes. "We're in our second year of experimenting with dry ice," Ramey says. "It has several effects: It cools the must quickly, it tends to exclude oxygen, which I'm opposed to in white juice but not opposed to in red juice, and when you're sprinkling dry ice onto the berries, the carbon dioxide ruptures some of the grape skin cells and facilitates the release of pigment into the juice."

Harbertson is dubious that cold-soaking is useful in most cases. "The story that's told is that you get pigment without tannin, but the reality is that anthocyanins are water-soluble and are super easy to extract," he says. "Thin-skinned grapes like Pinot Noir and Grenache are outliers, but for something like Cabernet Sauvignon, you don't need to do it."

This is an important point because cold-soaking is not without its risks and costs. One primary concern is the heightened chance of spoilage.

"Several strains of wild yeast that can produce funky and unpleasant aromas live on the outside of the grape, and they can tolerate colder temps and small amounts of sulfur dioxide," Harbertson says. "It takes a lot of electricity to cold-soak, or you can use dry ice, which is just a greenhouse gas turned solid, but no matter what, it will cost you time, money, or something."

With the allure of deep color and silky tannins still going strong, it's an investment many winemakers continue to make. For now.

Looking Inside the Tank: How Homogenous is a Fermentation?

A fermentation vessel should be regarded as more than just one big homogeneous tank. New research identifies where those variabilities might occur.

Erika Szymanski

PRECISION VITICULTURE HAS US looking at vineyards vine by vine. Optical sorters have us looking at harvests grape by grape. It feels inevitable to also be looking at fermentation vessels…layer by layer. The appropriate device for more precise analysis of a tank may be less obvious, but it has still become quite obvious indeed that tanks should be investigated as more than big, homogeneous pots.

Research from the mid-1970s onward has tended to support the assumption that white wine fermentations are more or less homogeneous and that reds–or any situation involving both solids and liquids, as brewing research will tell you—are where internal variability tends to arise.

New studies published in 2019 have augmented that foundation in two very different directions. In an effort to understand what really happens in wineries, a German group has considered how less than ideal cellar practices may create variations in white ferments where no one has been looking for them. In an effort to understand idealized processes in more detail, researchers at the University of California, Davis have developed new mathematical models to look at inhomogeneities in red ferments in a different way.

Inhomogeneities in White Wine Substantially more research has been conducted on tank inhomogeneities in beer and in red wine than in white wine fermentations. However, a group of German researchers, who represent a collaboration between institutes of oenology and fluid dynamics, has asked how much pitching yeast into the top of a tank might unpredictably change fermentation dynamics in white wines and therefore reduce winemaker control. While published recommendations call for dumping yeast into the bottom of a tank before filling it, yeast may well instead be pitched into the top of a filled tank and not mixed in, with hitherto unknown consequences.

To investigate those consequences, the research team rigged up a series of pipes and tubes to enable sampling directly from the middle and bottom of pilot- and industrial-scale tanks. When yeast was pitched into the top of full tanks, fermentation began at the top of the tank on day-2 but did not reach the middle of the tank until day-6. In contrast, tanks in which the yeast had been thoroughly mixed in at the outset began fermentation simultaneously in all parts of the tank.

In the absence of additional complicating factors, the matter at hand is gravity. Yeast cells are very small and very light, and must is relatively viscous. Previous estimates suggest that yeast fall through grape juice at a rate of about 2 centimeters per hour—a rate which surely varies with the particularities of any given juice but which is nevertheless painfully slow. Even if yeast cells are proliferating as they fall, it may take days for active fermentation to spread through a tank that goes unstirred at the outset.

The rate at which yeast mix in a tank will not depend on gravity alone once active fermentation begins, of course, since plenty of evidence demonstrates that rising bubbles of carbon dioxide are a good mixing tool. However, gas bubbles only rise through liquid; they do not fall. Therefore, early fermentation will only ever drive mixing above the level at which yeast are present. If yeast have been pitched in at the top, carbon dioxide will be of no help for the bottom until enough yeast sink by gravity for gas to be produced at the bottom.

Their results in pilot-scale and industrial-scale tanks matched with one important exception: in the industrial-scale tanks. Fermentation started at the very bottom of the tank at nearly the same time as at the very top while the mid-section continued to lag behind. While the authors' data cannot provide an explanation, they can make an educated guess. Because changes in specific gravity and temperature will prompt fluid movement, that movement might take the shape of a torus vortex, rotating in a ring from top to bottom without much effect on the middle. As they point out, however, few people have studied fluid dynamics in wine tanks–a deficit that might be time to remedy.

The authors found temperature variations across unstirred tanks, though saying what those findings might mean for any other tank setup, with its particular variables of size, shape, material, jacketing and temperature controls, seems impossible. More than direct implications for practice, what their temperature results indicate is that assumptions in some previous studies that temperature gradients are only significant in red wine fermentation are worth re-examining under less than ideal conditions.

What about homogeneity once fermentation has spread throughout the tank? Stirred tanks started off homogenous and stayed homogenous throughout the entire 42-day monitoring period. Unstirred tanks began homogenous, developed substantial top-to-bottom differences by day-2 and maintained those differences until the top and bottom of the tank rapidly became homogenous around day-7, and then stayed homogeneous through to the end of fermentation.

However, that fivish day period of difference is enough to delay the completion of fermentation; even though both stirred and unstirred tanks fermented at the same rate after day-7, the unstirred tank completed fermentation a full four days after the stirred tank. The authors hypothesize that because yeast cells pitched in the top have to compete with a large number of other cells during their first few days, they suffer nutrient limitations and make a substantially slower start.

Uneven fermentation means slower fermentation. It also means uneven yeast growth and that some parts of a tank may be uncommonly crowded from a microbial perspective while others remain virtually vacant. In addition to being inefficient for completing fermentation, crowded yeast cells may produce undesirable metabolites–and, at the very least, metabolites that are poorly controlled–as yeast compete with each other for nutrients. In case you wonder whether differences in oxygen availability could be behind faster fermentation at the top of the tank, the researchers also thought of that possibility. But since fermentation progressed at the same rate at the top and bottom of the tank alike when yeast were stirred in, the oxygen explanation does not seem likely.

The team also compared measurements taken from the tank's sampling valve and built-in temperature sensors with their more precise across-the-tank measurements to assess just how far off a winemaker will be when working with the most readily available data. Was the sampling valve representative of the whole tank? Only during active fermentation. Is either pitching at the bottom or a solid bout of initial stirring significant to ensuring tank homogeneity? Evidently. Does not stirring make a difference in wine quality? Hard to say–and the answer will surely depend on a winemaker's quality targets, particular tanks and need for speed.

"Seeing Inside" Red Ferments

The other notable set of developments on tank dynamics this year approaches the topic from the opposite end of the experimental spectrum, constructing mathematical models to "see" inside an opaque fermenting vessel. A group led by David Block—professor of chemical engineering, who also holds an endowed chair in viticulture and enology at the University of California, Davis—has been working to make models less "ideal" so that the inside of their virtual tank more closely resembles what really happens on a physical winery floor. Block had three papers on that work published in 2019 in the *American Journal of Enology & Viticulture* and the *Australian Journal of Grape & Wine Research*, all making a specific improvement on what came before.

Where previous mathematical models have used a "well-mixed" model, Block's methods make it possible to consider heterogeneity inside the tank. After validating how their model handles temperature and sugar consumption against experimental data, they felt confident mathematically approximating the rate and pattern of how liquid moves in ways that are difficult to measure in practice, and that shed light on whether red ferments really are as homogeneous as they are made out to be.

In traditional round tanks with 1:1 or 3:1 height:diameter aspect ratios, their models indicate that the liquid below the cap should remain well-mixed because of convective fluid flow. The problem with mixing, in other words, really is a matter of the cap. Among their other findings, the jacket's inability to handle cooling the cap also stands out; regardless of tank size and shape, cooling from the jacket only ever penetrated about 50 cm (19.7 inches) from the jacket into the cap, leaving the center hot and uncontrolled in the absence of frequent mixing. The researchers think that this is why temperature gradients appear more significant in narrow tanks than in wide ones; that 50 cm (19.7 inches) of cooled cap is insignificant in a wide tank but a bigger proportion of the volume of a narrow one. Because they identified big differences in heat transfer and probable fermentation rate in tanks of different shapes and sizes, their model might be useful in testing the efficiency of a proposed new tank design before investing in the materials to build it.

Mapping the inside of a tank, as more than a big, well-mixed pot, calls for accounting for a lot of variables: differences in fermentation kinetics involving temperature, ethanol inhibition, and nitrogen limitation; three modes of heat transfer (evaporation, convection and conduction) in the cap and, separately, in the bulk liquid; and net movement of liquid due to diffusion and convection.

The team's main motivation for taking all of this trouble is that once they have the basic model down, they can predict how fermentation parameters are likely to play out in any number of different size and shape vessels without needing to set up physical experiments with the very wide variety of containers on the market—a prohibitively expensive endeavor, and much slower in any case, than crunching through a new set of numbers.

However, the model can also provide a more detailed picture than what most experiments relying on fixed sampling points can yield. That is especially true when the goal is to understand what is occurring inside a container so difficult to sample as a concrete egg, for example, which makes it no surprise that concrete eggs are one of the first places that Block's team pointed their model.

In general, red fermentations in traditional tanks demonstrate good mixing in the liquid phase and increasingly high heterogeneity across the cap as elapsed time from the last punch-down or pump-over increases. Most of this mixing is a function of temperature differences across pockets of liquid—hot liquid rises, cold liquid falls, and cold liquid falling down the sides of a tank collides at the bottom to create turbulence in the middle, all to good effect.

The same dynamics are at play in concrete eggs, but less so, because it turns out that liquids move at a lower overall velocity in eggs than they do in traditionally-shaped cylindrical tanks. As a result, eggs are more likely to hold on to pockets of unmixed liquid for longer. In addition, while their relatively thick concrete walls might act as heat sinks during active fermentation, those walls function even more as insulators, further increasing temperature disparities. Eggs, therefore, tend to be less homogeneous than cylindrical tanks of the same size, making them trickier to control.

An obvious gap in Block's team's model is that it does not account for the action of rising carbon dioxide bubbles during active fermentation. On one hand, as the authors note, adding even more mixing makes little difference when the temperature gradients they do model are already enough to demonstrate that actively fermenting juice is going to be well-mixed—and modeling gas bubbles is extremely computationally expensive. On the other, in light of the German team's findings, that may represent a significant deficiency if they ever extend their model across early, active, and concluding phases of fermentation.

It goes without saying that a winemaker may still prefer the results obtained with concrete egg fermenters, or with pitching yeast into the top of a vessel of any shape, for any number of known or unknown reasons. Whether it is "wrong," or imperfectly controlled hardly matters if it yields desirable results in a satisfactorily replicable way. These studies are all predicated on the assumption that more control is a good thing. While it may be hard to disagree with that assumption, being able to control the results that you obtain would seem even better than being able to control every element of how you get there.

2020 National Amateur Wine Competition

Details at:
awscompetitions.com/online- entry

DEADLINES:

•Paperwork can be submitted now. Deadline is October 15, 2020. Online registrations are preferred (less chance for copying errors), but we can accept mail and fax registrations

•Delivery of wine is accepted from September 1st and deadline October 22nd to: Effingham Manor Winery ; 14325 Trotters Ridge Pl Nokesville, VA 20181

COMPETITION INQUIRIES: Vincent Williams (618-363-3015) awc@americanwinesociety.org

Top-Up Carboys to The Neck

Carboys come in many sizes, but all of them have generally the same shape and features, including a small neck. The small neck of the carboy may make them difficult to clean but it has one huge benefit. Small surface area. Six gallons of wine in a more traditional vessel, like a bucket will have a surface area of over 100 square inches, which is exposed any gas that happens to be in your carboy. Another six gallons of wine topped up to the neck of the carboy will have a surface area of less than 1.5 inches. This small surface area dramatically slows the rate of oxygen absorption into the wine.

But my carboy is full of CO2... what's the big deal if I leave some space?

A lot of home winemakers go by this train of thought but a lot of home winemakers occasionally make wine bordering on sherry or vinegar. While this is true for a while, don't bank on a pure carbon dioxide blanket for any extended period of aging. Wine produces enough inert carbon dioxide gas to protect it during the active fermentation, and it is highly saturated with CO2 for a short while after. During the first month or so of a wine's life, the yeast activity creates enough of a reductive environment and CO2 that oxidation is not much of a concern. The wine is essentially saturated with CO2 and contains a good bit of oxygen reactive elements like tannin and sulfides. Racking will degas much of this CO2, and by about the third month of aging, don't expect to have much of any CO2 in saturation. Once the wine is mostly degassed, it is extremely important to limit the exposure to oxygen to a minimal and topping up is one of the best strategies to do so. You would think that by not ever opening a 3/4 full carboy, the heavy CO2 gas would protect the wine and never escape. This is true to some extent but don't bet on it for more than a month or two. Both the wine and the gas above the wine will expand and contract with small changes in temperature. This allows the airlock to push out CO2 and pull in air which becomes a problem over time. Though CO2 is heavier than air, it is also soluble with air. Any air pulled into the carboy will mix with the CO2, creating a blend which now includes a small amount of oxygen. Over time, this will cause negative oxidation effects in the wine. By topping up to the neck, you limit the total amount of air that can ever enter the carboy and also limit the surface area, making it much slower to dissolve into the wine. A topped up wine in bulk can last a very long without much concern of oxidation.

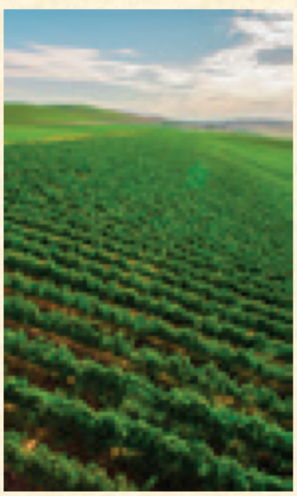
What is the best way to top up to the neck of the carboy?

There are some options. If you are close to the neck, you can use a similar wine from a previous vintage or a store bought wine to top up (just make sure that it is a healthy wine!). Another option is to add marbles to the carboy until the wine rises to the neck, but that is a bit of a clumsy solution. On some wines that often need watered back (Like Concord), you can usually get away with topping up with water or acidulated water. If your wine has more than a half gallon or so of airspace, usually the best bet is to use a combination of different sized containers rather than one un-topped carboy. I like to use various sized carboys (3 gal, 5 gal, 6 gal, 6.5 gal), growlers (1/2 gal), 1 gallon jugs, and even wine bottles on occasion. For instance, if you have 5.75 gallons of wine, you can use a 5 gallon carboy, a growler, and a wine bottle with topper. This gives you some smaller batches to use for future top-ups which can be very handy.

Words of Caution...
Do not top up an actively fermenting wine unless you are looking to create a volcano. Wait to top up until after things have settled down. A little oxygen during fermentation is actually a good thing and will help to keep the fermentation healthy.

When topping up, be sure to leave 1 to 1.5 inches of space between the bottom of the bung and the wine. This allows ensures that any expansion does not push wine up into the airlock.

Be wary of natural cork and silicone bungs. Natural cork can be very permeable to air, depending on the grade. Silicone is one of the most air permeable elastomers, which is especially concerning when the silicone bung has a thin one way breather on top. Solid bungs are really the best, but just be careful that they don't blow off under pressure**. I personally prefer standard rubber bungs with airlocks and just stay topped up. When I do open the carboy to check on things, I give a little spritz of my homemade sulfite and acid sanitizing solution to scavenge any air that I may have introduced.**



Royal Slope is Washington's newest AVA The Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) published the final rule for the Royal Slope, officially defining it as American Viti- cultural Area. "Many of our wineries and grape growers have been championing the terroir of Royal Slope for a long time, so it's thrilling for them to be able to put an official AVA name on the bottle," said Steve Warner, president of the Washington State Wine Commission.

The Royal Slope AVA is a total 156,389 acres within the Columbia Valley AVA. It is located just to the south of the Ancient Lakes AVA, and to the north of the Wahluke Slope AVA. The area encompasses Frenchman Hills, a 30-mile long east-west trending ridge with a gentle to medium-steep south-facing slope. There are more than 1,900 acres of wine grapes currently planted within the AVA, producing more than 20 varieties.

Willamette Valley pinot noir loses a friend in Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Sep 21, 2020 By Michael Alberty

In 2008, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and her family journeyed to Carlton, Oregon, to render a verdict on Willamette Valley pinot noir. It was a unanimous decision: delightful as charged.

In the wake of Ginsburg's death last Friday, mourners celebrated her life and a legal career spent championing equal rights. Close friends also found time to remember Ginsburg's more private pursuits. Opera singer and friend Joseph Calleja posted on Instagram: "Her love of food and wine only confirms that she was a perfect being."

In September 2008, Ginsburg traveled to the Willamette University College of Law in Salem for the Oregon Civic Justice Center's dedication ceremony. Despite a busy schedule of activities, Ginsburg found time for a secret mission: a visit to Ken Wright Cellars in Carlton.

News that Ginsburg wanted to meet with him was a bolt from the blue for winemaker Ken Wright.
"We only heard about it a week in advance. Then her security team called two days before she arrived to nail down every little detail, including the route we'd be taking to visit McCrone Vineyard," Wright said.

The arrival of Ginsburg, her family, and Secret Service agents in black vehicles with tinted windows was not an everyday occurrence in the sleepy little wine town of Carlton.

"It was pretty funny with all those suits in sunglasses running around. It was also quite a scene when everyone packed into my winery office," Wright said.

Ginsburg's visit was exploratory in nature. According to Wright, "She was just getting into pinot noir, and she wanted to know why the Willamette Valley was so special. She wanted to know why this grape worked so well here."

To tell the Willamette Valley's story, Wright packed Ginsburg, her husband Martin "Marty" Ginsburg, and her daughter Jane C. Ginsburg off to McCrone Vineyard. The vineyard, owned by Don and Carole McCrone, is located just north of Carlton, in the Yamhill-Carlton American Viticultural Area.

"The vineyard sits on a ridgeline with a view that allows you to see everything from the Coastal Mountains to the Eola-Amity Hills. It's a nice spot to explain things," Wright said.

Wright's family joined the group along with the McCrones and Mr. and Mrs. Michael Bennett from Willamette University. It was a warm day, so a tent was constructed, and as much water was poured as wine.

Wright remembers the Ginsburg family being knowledgeable about wine, with a wine vocabulary to describe what they liked and didn't like.

"The words freshness, texture and purity came up a lot as they talked about Willamette Valley pinot noir. Especially purity," Wright said. Oregon's signature grape had a new set of fans.

The Ginsburg family left just as much of an impression on Wright.

"It was a super enjoyable two hours. Justice Ginsburg was an amazing, open person. We didn't talk a lot about politics. We discussed wine and other mutual interests we enjoyed. She was definitely a thoughtful, critical thinker," Wright said.

When the vineyard session concluded, the convoy traveled back to the winery, where Wright set up Justice Ginsburg with an assortment of wines based on their vineyard discussions. "Then 'poof,' she was gone," Wright said. Wright returned to harvest preparation.

A few days later, Wright received another bolt from the blue: an envelope from Washington, D.C.

"It was just the most beautiful 'thank-you' note from Justice Ginsburg. Her family loved wine for all the right reasons," Wright said.

"I don't remember the name, but it had a taste that I liked."

References

Here is a list of Hobby Winemaking Manuals and other materials in the Secretary's digital file available for downloading by e-mail or via an internet transfer service. All are PDF. E-mail Ken Stinger at kbstinger@frontier.com

Scott Labs Winemaking Handbook - 21 mb - 59 pages
Scott Labs Cider Handbook - 24 mb - 49 pages
Scott Labs Sparkling Handbook - 8 mb - 58 pages
A guide to Fining Wine, WA State University - 314 kb - 10 pages
Barrel Care Procedures - 100 kb - 2 pages
Enartis Handbook - 4.8 mb - 108 pages
A Review Of Méthode Champenoise Production - 570 kb – 69 pages
Sacramento Winemakers Winemaking Manual - 300 kb - 34 pages
Sparkling Wine brief instructions - 20 kb - 3 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

Portland Winemakers Club
Leadership Team – 2020

President: **Bill Brown** bbgoldieguy@gmail.com
• Establish leadership team
• Assure that objectives for the year are met
• Set up agenda and run meetings

Treasurer: **Barb Thomson** bt.grapevine@frontier.com
• Collect dues and fees, update membership list with secretary
• Pay bills

Secretary: **Ken Stinger** kbstinger@frontier.com
• Communicate regularly about club activities and issues
• Monthly newsletter
• Keep updated list of members, name tags and other data

Chair of Education/Speakers: **Rufus Knapp** Rufus.Knapp@fei.com
• Arrange for speakers & educational content for our meetings

Chair for Tastings: **Paul Sowray & Barb Stinger** davids1898@aol.com kbstinger@frontier.com
• Conduct club tastings
• Review and improve club tasting procedures

Chair of Winery/Vineyard Tours: **Damon Lopez.** dlopez5011@yahoo.com
• Select wineries, vineyards etc. to visit
• Arrange tours
• Cover logistics (food and money)

Chair of Group Purchases: **Bob Hatt** bobhatt2000@yahoo.com
• Makes the arrangements to purchase, collect, and distribute
• Grape purchases
• Supplies – These should be passed to the President for distribution

Chair of Competitions: **Paul Boyechko** labmanpaul@hotmail.com
• Encourage club participation in all amateur competitions available. Make information known through Newsletter, e-mail and Facebook.

Chairs for Social Events **: Marilyn Brown & Mindy Bush** brown.marilynjean@gmail.com mindybush@hotmail.com
* Gala / Picnic / parties

Web Design Editor: **Alice Bonham** alice@alicedesigns.org