



Portland Winemakers Club

October 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.

The group purchase of Syrah grapes from Quail Run Vineyard in Talent (Rogue Valley) was completed successfully when the grapes were picked up by Jeff Irwin and trucked back to my place in Buxton. We did all of the crush or de-stem and everyone went home with their requested allotment. Thanks to everyone.

The grapes were in really good shape and the group has shared their data with most seeing brix of 24+, Ph around 3.4 and TA around 5.8. I measured malic at .99g/L which seems very normal. (when compared with other grapes in previous years). Excellent grapes. I started 2 separate fermentations on Saturday, 1 with Biodiva and another with Lalvin Rhone 2226, 5 days later, the Rhone 2226 batch is already at 17 brix, and the Biodiva is at 21. When the Biodiva gets down to 20 brix, I will take some of the 2226 and added to the fermenter started with Biodiva. I am interested to see if I can sense any difference between the two batches when all is said and done.

For the October meeting, bring your Pinot Noir(s) for member Pinot night tasting, and bring a couple of nice pinot glasses to taste from. I always look forward to this tasting especially since I don't make Pinot every year anymore.

Cheers, and happy fermenting;

Bob



Upcoming Events / Save the Date

The next meeting of the Portland Winemakers Club is scheduled for Wednesday, October 21st at 7:00 pm in the lower level of the Aloha Grange. Tasting & judging member produced Pinot Noir.

Members are encouraged to bring a snack for the shared table, two tasting glasses, and a bottle of your own 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.

September Meeting Notes

Portland Winemakers Club

Meeting Minutes

September 16, 2026

Officer Roundtable:

Grape pickups are in full swing:

Aurora, Sagemoor, Marr Estate, Two Mountain, and Jamison have all had full or partial deliveries.

Campbell Lane ready by Friday, September 18th.

Jamison Rose' made available to club members for Sunday, September 20th pickup.

Quail Run Syrah (group buy) will be picked up and processed by group members on Thursday, September 24.

Paul Natale still has Pinot Noir available.

Bill Brown has Cab Franc and a bit of Pinot Noir left.

Bob Thoenen reached out to get the presentation from last month and has also reached out to the Clark County winemaking club.

Barb Thomson is working to get an insurance policy for the club.

She brought back the Washington State Fair judging results. Three members submitted wines for judging.

Bob Hatt reminded members that December will be elections, and we will need members to fill positions at that time.

Meeting concluded with tasting of member-produced other reds – nine members supplied wines for tasting.



Barb Thomson provided us with the names of PWC members who submitted wines to the Washington State Fair winemaking competition. There results are listed below. Congratulations!

Bob Thoenen:

2024 Tempranillo - Red ribbon

2024 Riesling - Red ribbon

2024 Sauvignon Blanc - Red Ribbon

2024 Pinot Gris - Red Ribbon

Al Glasby:

2024 Petite Sirah - Blue ribbon

2024 Viognier - Red ribbon

2024 Aglianico - White ribbon

Barb Thomson:

2020 Syrah - Red ribbon

2019 Viognier - White ribbon



After the business meeting we conducted a tasting and judging of “Other Reds” These were limited to red wines other than Pinot Noir or wines containing any Bordeaux varietal. Congratulations to Bill Brown for is 2021 Tempranillo and Ken Stinger for his 2020 Nebbiolo. Both won Gold awards.

September 2026 Other Reds							
Winemaker	Year & Wine Type	Gold	Silver	Bronze	None	Medal Score	Medal
Steve Fine	Grenache 2025	2	14	4	0	1.90	Silver
Bill Brown	Gamay 2025	2	16	2	0	2.00	Silver
Paul Rogers / Jim Ourada	Tempranillo 2021	2	8	10	0	1.60	Silver
Barb Thomson	Tempranillo 2023	2	7	11	0	1.55	Silver
Bill Brown	Tempranillo 2021	15	3	2	0	2.65	Gold
Mike Sicard	Red Blend 2023	0	5	15	0	1.25	Bronze
Ken & Barb Stinger	Nebbiolo 2020	18	2	0	0	2.90	Gold
Bob Hatt	Tinta Cao 2023	2	14	4	0	1.90	Silver
Bob Hatt	Grenache 2023	5	15	0	0	2.25	Silver

Pressing Matters

By Daniel Pambianchi

Mention winemaking, and it’s hard not to picture grapes being pressed — the iconic image of crushed fruit and juice running free. While the reality today is a bit less romantic (and a lot cleaner), that moment remains central to the process. Pressing separates juice or wine from skins, seeds, and pulp, directly influencing extraction and wine composition. Understanding when and how to press is a critical skill with a direct impact on wine quality.



At a more advanced level, pressing is not simply about extracting liquid — it is about managing the extraction of phenolic compounds, tannins, color, and other structural elements that influence mouthfeel, stability, and aging potential. Pressure, duration, and fraction separation all influence the final wine style. Mastering these variables allows the winemaker to move beyond basic production and begin shaping style with precision.

Wine Presses: Turning Grapes into Juice (and Wine)

While pressing is often seen as a single step, its role and timing vary depending on wine style.

In white winemaking, pressing is typically one of the very first steps. Grapes are crushed — or sometimes left as whole clusters — and pressed to extract juice before fermentation begins. This early separation limits the contact between juice and skins and pickup of phenolics, helping preserve freshness, delicacy, and color. Pressing whole clusters can yield a purer, more delicate juice with lower phenolic extraction, though it typically comes at the cost of reduced overall yield compared to pressing crushed fruit.

allowing color, tannins, and flavor compounds to be extracted during fermentation. Pressing comes later in the process — either late in fermentation or once it is complete — to separate the wine from the spent skins and seeds.

In rosé winemaking, pressing plays a more flexible role. Some styles are made by allowing a short period of skin contact before pressing, giving the juice just enough time to pick up color and flavor. Others are made by pressing immediately — particularly when working with richly colored varieties where even a short maceration would result in excessively deep color. In both cases, the timing of pressing is what determines the final color and structure.

Across all of these styles, the press serves the same essential purpose: To efficiently separate liquid from solids while giving the winemaker control over how much is extracted. Whether you're working with grapes or other fruits, understanding how and when to press — and choosing the right equipment — can make a significant difference in both yield and quality.

Another important factor worth considering is whether to include or remove grape stems. In most cases, stems are removed before crushing — though the order may vary — as they can contribute harsh, green tannins and unwanted vegetal flavors. Stems also contain significant amounts of potassium, which can raise the pH of the juice or must — reducing freshness and making color in red wines less stable over time. For these reasons, grapes are typically destemmed before processing, unless a specific style calls for whole-cluster pressing or fermentation.

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What a Wine Press Does (and When You Need One)

At its most basic, a wine press applies controlled pressure to fruit or fermented material to extract liquid that would otherwise remain locked within the skins, pulp, and cellular structure. While some juice or wine will drain on its own —referred to as the free-run fraction — a significant portion remains trapped and can only be recovered through pressing.

In practical terms, pressing serves two key purposes. First, it increases yield by recovering liquid that gravity alone cannot release. Second, it gives you control over how extraction occurs. Gentle pressing yields cleaner, more delicate juice or wine, while increased pressure draws out additional compounds from skins and seeds that can impact structure, body, and, at times, astringency. That liquid is referred to as the press-run fraction.

In addition to mechanical pressure, yield can also be improved through the use of pressing enzymes. These enzymes break down cell structure, releasing more liquid with less effort — particularly useful with difficult-to-press grapes or pulpy fruits. When used appropriately, pressing enzymes can increase yield while also improving juice clarity and ease of extraction (read more about the impact of these enzymes in this “Wine Wizard” column).

You'll need a press whenever you are working with solid fruit material and want to recover liquid efficiently and with control. This applies whether you are pressing freshly crushed grapes, partially fermented must, or fully fermented pomace.

The role of the press becomes especially clear as free-run flow slows. What drains easily at first soon gives way to diminishing returns, with much of the remaining liquid held within the fruit.

Applying pressure allows you to recover that remaining portion, while also deciding how far to push extraction based on your quality goals.

This is particularly important when making fruit wines. Many fruits break down into dense pulp that resists drainage. In these cases, pressing becomes essential not only for improving yield but also for producing a cleaner, more manageable juice or wine.

In short, pressing allows you to recover more of what you've created while giving you control over the balance between yield and quality — an essential part of shaping the final result.

Types of Wine Presses

For home winemakers, wine presses generally fall into two main categories: Traditional basket presses and more modern bladder presses. While both are designed to accomplish the same task of separating liquid from solids, they do so in different ways, and each offers its own advantages depending on batch size, preferred working style, and budget.

The basket press, sometimes called a ratchet press, is the classic design that many winemakers picture. It consists of a cylindrical basket made of wood or stainless steel, into which crushed fruit or fermented grapes are loaded. Pressure is applied from above using a screw or ratchet mechanism, forcing juice or wine out through the sides of the basket. Basket presses operate in stages: Pressure is applied gradually, then released, allowing juice to flow before tightening again. This stepwise process gives the winemaker a high degree of control but requires patience and effort.



Pressure is applied from above using a screw or ratchet mechanism in a basket press, forcing juice or wine out through the sides of the basket.

In contrast, the bladder press uses internal pressure to achieve the same result with less manual effort. A flexible bladder mounted inside the press is inflated to apply even pressure outward against the fruit. Depending on the model, the bladder is expanded using either water pressure (hydropress) or air pressure, both of which provide a more uniform and continuous pressing cycle. This gentler, evenly distributed pressure can improve extraction efficiency and reduce the risk of over-extracting harsh compounds from skins and seeds. Bladder presses are typically faster and easier to operate, though they come at a higher cost and require access to water or air pressure.

Both types of presses can produce excellent results when used properly. The choice between them ultimately comes down to how much fruit you plan to process, how hands-on you want the operation to be, and how much value you place on efficiency versus simplicity. Many home winemakers start with a basket press and upgrade over time as their production increases and their process evolves.

Choosing the Right Size

Selecting the right size press is one of the more important decisions a home winemaker will make. A press that is too small can turn pressing day into a long, repetitive process, while one that is too large may be inefficient for smaller volumes and harder to use effectively. When choosing a press, focus on the typical volume of fruit you expect to process in a single batch, rather than your current needs alone. Many home winemakers find their production increases over time, so it often makes sense to select a press with slightly more capacity than you initially require to avoid the need to upgrade too soon.

It's also important to consider how the press fits into your overall workflow. Larger presses reduce the number of loads but require more space and handling effort, while smaller presses are easier to manage and clean but may require multiple pressing cycles.

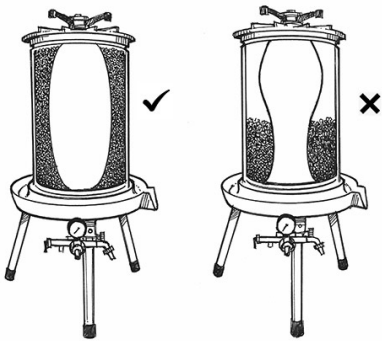
A small 2.5-gallon (10-L) stainless steel basket press (such as the one shown below) can easily handle 50 lbs. or 25 kg of crushed, fermented fruit. At the other end of the scale, a 25-gallon (90-L) bladder press or #45 basket press can each handle roughly 300 lbs. (140 kg) of crushed fruit, making them well-suited for larger batches

Loading the Press: Set Yourself Up for Success

How you load the press has a surprisingly large impact on how well it performs. Even the best press will struggle if fruit is packed unevenly, while careful loading improves performance and saves effort later.

The first priority is to load the press evenly. Whether you're working with crushed grapes, fermented pomace, or fruit pulp, the material should be distributed as uniformly as possible throughout the basket. An uneven load leads to uneven

pressure, which can reduce juice flow and make the press harder to operate. It may also cause liquid to channel through certain areas while leaving other portions under-extracted. This is particularly important when using a bladder press. If the press is only partially filled and the load is concentrated toward the bottom, the bladder can expand unevenly as pressure increases, placing excessive stress on the unsupported portion of the bladder and potentially causing damage and shortening its life. Figure 1 illustrates the correct and incorrect loading of a bladder press.



It's equally important to avoid overfilling the press. Leaving some space at the top allows you to position pressure plates or blocks properly and ensures that pressure is applied gradually and effectively. Overfilling can make it difficult to assemble the press, limit movement of the pressure mechanism, and reduce overall efficiency.

For many fruit wines — and even some slip-skin grape varieties such as Niagara and Muscat — drainage can be a challenge. These fruits tend to break down into a dense pulp that restricts juice flow and can lead to clogging in the press. To improve extraction, it can be helpful to contain the material in a mesh bag or liner, which keeps solids in place while allowing liquid to flow more freely and simplifies cleanup.

To further improve drainage, you can add a small amount of stems back into the crushed grapes as you load the press, though care must be taken to avoid extracting harsh tannins. A more controlled approach is to use rice hulls at a rate of about 1:100 (for example, 1 lb. per 100 lbs. of fruit, or 1 kg per 100 kg of fruit). Sprinkled evenly over the fruit during loading, rice hulls help maintain a looser structure within the press and allow juice to flow more efficiently while contributing no flavor.

Finally, think of loading as part of your overall workflow. Have your collection vessels in place, ensure the press is stable, and be ready to begin pressing as soon as the fruit is loaded. A well-prepared setup keeps everything moving smoothly and minimizes unnecessary handling or delays once juice starts to flow.

How to Press (Without Hurting Your Wine)

Pressing is not about applying maximum pressure, but the right pressure at the right time. A gradual approach improves both ease and wine quality, while rushing the process often leads to harsher results.

The process begins with a light application of pressure to release free-run juice or wine. This initial fraction flows relatively easily and is typically the most delicate and clean. Rather than tightening the press aggressively, it is best to apply gentle pressure and allow the liquid to drain naturally.

Free-run wine is typically softer, with more intense and stable color, lower pH, and fewer suspended solids. This lower pH contributes to greater tartrate stability, improved protection against microbial spoilage, and reduced sulfur dioxide requirements.

Press-run wine, by contrast, is more phenolic and structured but often harsher and with higher pH due to increased potassium extraction, which can reduce color and microbial stability and limit



When buying a press, consider the size batch you typically process and may in the future. This small 2.5-gallon (10-L) stainless steel basket press holds about 50 lbs. (25 kg) of crushed, fermented fruit.

aging potential.

From there, pressing should proceed in stages. After each adjustment of the pressure mechanism, pause and give the juice time to flow before tightening again. This rhythm — press, wait, press — allows the structure of the grape skins or fruit pulp to settle and reconfigure, improving drainage and making the next pressing step more effective.

As juice or wine begins to flow, it's also a good idea to place a sieve or colander under the press spout to catch any stray solids that may escape during pressing. Even with careful loading, small amounts of skins, seeds, or pulp can make their way out with the liquid, particularly at higher pressures. Straining the outflow at this stage helps keep your juice or wine cleaner, reduces the amount of sediment to manage later, and simplifies handling during transfer to your fermenter or storage vessel.

As pressure increases, additional liquid is extracted from within the skins and pulp. This later fraction often contributes more body and structure, but it can also introduce greater amounts of phenolic compounds, including tannins. For this reason, it's important to avoid pushing the press to extremes. When resistance becomes significant and flow slows to a trickle, further pressing may yield diminishing returns and lower-quality liquid.

Throughout the process, pay attention to how the press is behaving. Juice should flow steadily, not spray or force its way out unevenly. If liquid begins to channel from one side or stops flowing despite increased pressure, it's often a sign that the load needs time to settle or that too much pressure has been applied too quickly. With bladder presses, it may also be helpful to place a splash guard bag over the basket to contain spray and prevent a mess; most models come with one for this purpose.

Finally, consider whether to separate press fractions. Many winemakers choose to collect early and later pressings separately, giving them the option to blend later based on taste and structure. This adds a layer of control and allows you to fine-tune the final wine.

In the end, successful pressing is about patience and observation. Let the press do the work, guide it gradually, and resist the urge to force the process. The quality of what you collect will reflect the care you put into how you press.

Table 1 summarizes the key differences in the chemistry of free-run and press-run wine fractions.

TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF KEY CHARACTERISTICS FOR FREE- RUN VS. PRESS-RUN WINE

Characteristic	Free-Run Wine	Press-Run Wine
Texture / Mouthfeel	Softer, more delicate	More structured, often harsher
Color	More intense and stable	Less stable
Phenolics	Lower	Higher
pH	Lower	Higher
Suspended Solids	Fewer	More
Stability	Greater tartrate and microbial stability	Lower stability
SO ₂ Requirements	Lower	Higher
Aging Potential	Longer	Shorter

A Practical Tip for Smooth Workdays

Pressing can quickly become hectic once juice or wine starts flowing, so preparation goes a long way. Before you begin, stage your workspace so everything is within easy reach — collection pails under the spout, funnels or strainers ready, and clean, sanitized receiving vessels positioned for easy transfer.

Think a step ahead. As juice collects, you may need to empty containers quickly. Having spare vessels ready and a clear plan prevents delays and spills. Working methodically reduces the amount of time your juice or wine is exposed to air, helping preserve quality.

Keep your work area organized. Pressing involves lifting, transferring, and cleaning, so a tidy space improves efficiency and safety. A well-prepared setup turns a messy operation into a smooth, controlled process — and makes pressing day more enjoyable.

Common Pressing Mistakes to Avoid

Even small adjustments in technique can make a big difference in pressing efficiency and wine quality. Keep these common pitfalls in mind:

Pressing too fast or too hard

Applying excessive pressure too quickly compacts the fruit, restricts flow, and can extract harsh, undesirable compounds.

Overfilling the press

An overloaded basket prevents even pressure distribution and reduces extraction efficiency.

Skipping pauses between pressings

Pressing works best in stages — tighten, wait, then tighten again. Rushing traps liquid and reduces yield.

Ignoring fruit type differences

Dense, pulpy fruits and slip-skin varieties require gentler handling and may benefit from mesh bags or structural aids like rice hulls.

Not separating press fractions

Free-run and press-run portions differ in quality and structure. Keeping them separate gives more control through blending.

Poor preparation and setup

Not having containers, funnels, or a workflow plan ready can lead to delays, mess, and unnecessary exposure to air.

The Takeaway

A wine press isn't just a piece of equipment — it's where your wine begins to take shape in a tangible way.

Choose the right type, take your time with the process, and treat pressing as a controlled extraction rather than a forceful squeeze. The care you put in at this stage is reflected directly in the quality of the wine in your glass.



Oaking by Doing

By Claire L. Torbeck

Like many winemakers, I didn't begin with a deep understanding of wine chemistry. I learned by doing. Early on, winemaking felt like following a recipe: Clean fruit, careful fermentation, patience, and the hope time would do the rest. Only later — through trial, error, and tasting — did I begin to understand how a handful of decisions quietly but permanently shape a wine. Among them, none proved more consequential than how oak is used.



I write this not as a chemist or a commercial winemaker, but as a home winemaker who learned the craft hands-on, and as a wine judge who regularly evaluates both amateur and commercial wines.

Oak is seductive. It smells wonderful, promises polish, and suggests seriousness. But oak is also one of the least forgiving choices we make that cannot be dialed back once overdone — and in small lots its impact is magnified.

My first foray into oak was with a new 30-gallon (115-L) French oak barrel, followed later by a new Hungarian oak barrel. Both were eye-opening. The smaller format accelerated extraction, softening the wines early and adding weight and roundness.

What surprised me most wasn't the aroma, but the texture. Acidity was still present analytically, yet it felt muted. The wines were impressive early, but less engaging over time. These barrels taught me that oak doesn't just add flavor — it reshapes how a wine feels and evolves.

My experience with oak chips came from exposure at trade shows, where sample kits including different species and toast levels were common. Chips are accessible and promise quick results — but that speed comes at a cost. In many wines, especially those made from ripe fruit, the oak character sat on top of the wine rather than integrating into it. I often perceived a resinous quality — phenolic, coating, and persistent — that dulled freshness and tired the palate. Once present, that character rarely resolved.

My experience shifted when I discovered Xoakers, small oak balls. Working primarily with French oak versions, I began cautiously — adding small amounts and tasting regularly rather than committing upfront. That approach made all the difference. Extraction was slower and cleaner, adding aromatic complexity without bitterness. The oak felt supportive rather than dominant, reinforcing a lesson I now share often: Control matters more than intensity. Oak should frame a wine, not seal it.

In addition to price, barrel cleanliness is a genuine concern for many home winemakers. Oak alternatives offer a practical solution by eliminating that risk, even if they sacrifice the slow oxygen exchange that barrels provide. Understanding this trade-off helps explain why alternatives are so widely used — and why restraint becomes even more important when oxygen is no longer part of the equation.

Years later, judging at wine competitions reinforced these lessons. Oak-related issues are among the most common challenges I see. By contrast, wines where oak is applied conservatively — even if they seem less impressive initially — tend to hold together better over time. Balance consistently outperforms intensity. Oak isn't the enemy, but it is not a shortcut to quality.

Home winemaking taught me how wine is built. Judging taught me how it fails. Oak taught me restraint. Learning by doing doesn't require mastering chemistry, but it does require listening — to the wine, to the palate, and sometimes to mistakes.



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**

pwd_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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