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Making White Wine: A Labor Of Love

By Ken Finnigan

Wine is made in winery and wineries exist all over the world and come in a variety of sizes. The grapes are grown at the wineries and then turned into wine and there are many varieties of grapes; each one either used either alone or combined to make different wines. But how exactly is white wine made?

To make a white wine, once grapes are brought to the winery they are de-stemmed and crushed before anything else is done. A machine is used to split the grapes to remove stems and stalks from each bunch because they contain astringent tannins, which might be acceptable for red wines, but are rare in whites. To stop the fermentation process from starting and turning the grapes brown and oxidizing (causing a vinegar type taste) a chemical called Sulphur Dioxide is added to the grapes. For those with allergies to Sulphur Dioxide, "sulphur-free" wine is produced as well, however the lifespan on this wine is much shorter and needs to be consumed quickly.

After the grapes are split and the stems have been removed, they are sent to be pressed. Pressing the grapes releases their juices. The press is a large machine that has a canvas like material that separates the juice from the skins and seeds by allowing the juice to escape. The separated juice is then pumped gently to another steel tank where the sediment is allowed to settle to the bottom before being transferred again. The now sediment free juice is either pumped into another steel tank (unwooded wines) or to wooden barrels (wooded wines) where the preferred yeast type is added and fermentation can begin. Fermentation of white wine can take 3 days or 30 days depending on the type of wine being produced.

For unwooded whites, once the fermentation process is over, the wine is removed from the steel tanks and separated from the dead yeast cells. Whites such as Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay are typically unwooded wines, however there are small exceptions. Rieslings in Europe can be made in wooden barrels, though the barrels usually have a crust of tartaric crystals (found in grapes and solidifies in their juices), which acts as a barrier preventing the oak flavor from being infused in the wine. Examples of oaked Sauvignon Blanc can be found in France, however the aging of unwooded Sauvignon Blanc in bottles produces a nutty toasted flavour as if it was stored in wood therefore it really is not necessary.

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Why would someone want to produce an unwooded wine? The answer is simple, money. It is much cheaper to produce wine in large steel tanks, and the work required after fermentation is minimal allowing bottling and release to be quicker. This does not, however, mean unwooded wine is in any way inferior to wooded wine. It is simply a different process.

Wooded wines can often begin their fermentation in steel tanks before being transferred to oak barrels to finish fermenting, or they can have a second fermentation known as malolactic fermentation. A third option, barrel fermentation, is to simply ferment the wine once from start to finish in an oak barrel. Malolactic fermentation is the process in wine where malic acid begins to turn into lactic acid. This happens with the addition of bacteria, which in turn gives the wine buttery creamy characteristics. Wooded white wines are in barrels from six to twelve months before being filtered.

The next step in making white wine is filtration. The most common way commercial wineries filter their

wine is with a membrane filter, which catches all the particles floating in the liquid. Some winemakers prefer not to filter at all thinking it will remove characters from the wine that were created in the winemaking process. After the wine has been filtered it is bottled and sealed and ready for marketing.

It all seems too easy, but it takes great skill. Climates need to be controlled, ingredients need to be accurately measured and timing needs to be perfect. Sometimes it is easy to forget that a bottle of wine can take so long to make and that patience is key. However, it is this patience and attention to detail that brings out the best in a bottle of wine.

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Valencia And Wine

By Peter Vermeeren

Valencia is famous for its wine production; many of its wines are exported overseas for use in restaurants, or for personal use. Valencia's weather climate and soil consistencies form the perfect conditions for wine production.

Wine is a delicacy to be served with meals and on special occasions. Valencia is well known for its fiestas and celebrations throughout the year, so wine is often a part Valencia's lifestyle.

Knowing which type of wine to select with your meal, or to give as a present is important, as you will want to compliment your dinner with the right wine, or surprise your guest with a wine that suits their

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tastes.

Essentially, there are types of wine and all of some of these are more suitable to certain types of foods than others. White wines usually go well with white meat dishes, such as fish and chicken, while red wines traditionally go with red meat and pasta dishes.

Generally, there are sweet and dry wines, which can be found in both white and red wine varieties. If you are looking for a sweet white wine you might choose a Riesling. Leaving the grapes on the grape vines for a longer period of time makes sweet wines.

When looking for a sweet red wine you might try a merlot, or a cabernet sauvignon, both of which a delightful sweet red wine varieties. If looking for a dry white wine, you might try a Pinot Noir, or Sauvignon Blanc and if looking for a dry red wine you might try a Shiraz.

All wines should be chilled either in a fridge, or bucket of ice, prior to drinking, as this allows you to derive the most benefit from the wines flavors and experience. Also, most consumable wines are designed to be drunk within a few years from being made, so if you are buying wine for your cellar, keep this in mind.

Well, now that you know a little bit more about wines, you can enjoy Valencia's wines by making the right choices. Valencia wines can be sampled in its many restaurants and also at the Spanish Wine Festival, known as the 'La Rioja Wine Festival'.

The 'La Rioja Wine Festival' Wine Festival is a celebration of Spanish wines and, during this time, there are events and wine tasting, dinners and lots of merriment. Valencia also holds many fiestas throughout the year, which feature food and wine, such as the 'La Tomatina' Fiesta and the 'Fiesta Fallas de San Jose'.

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