

MAKING WINE

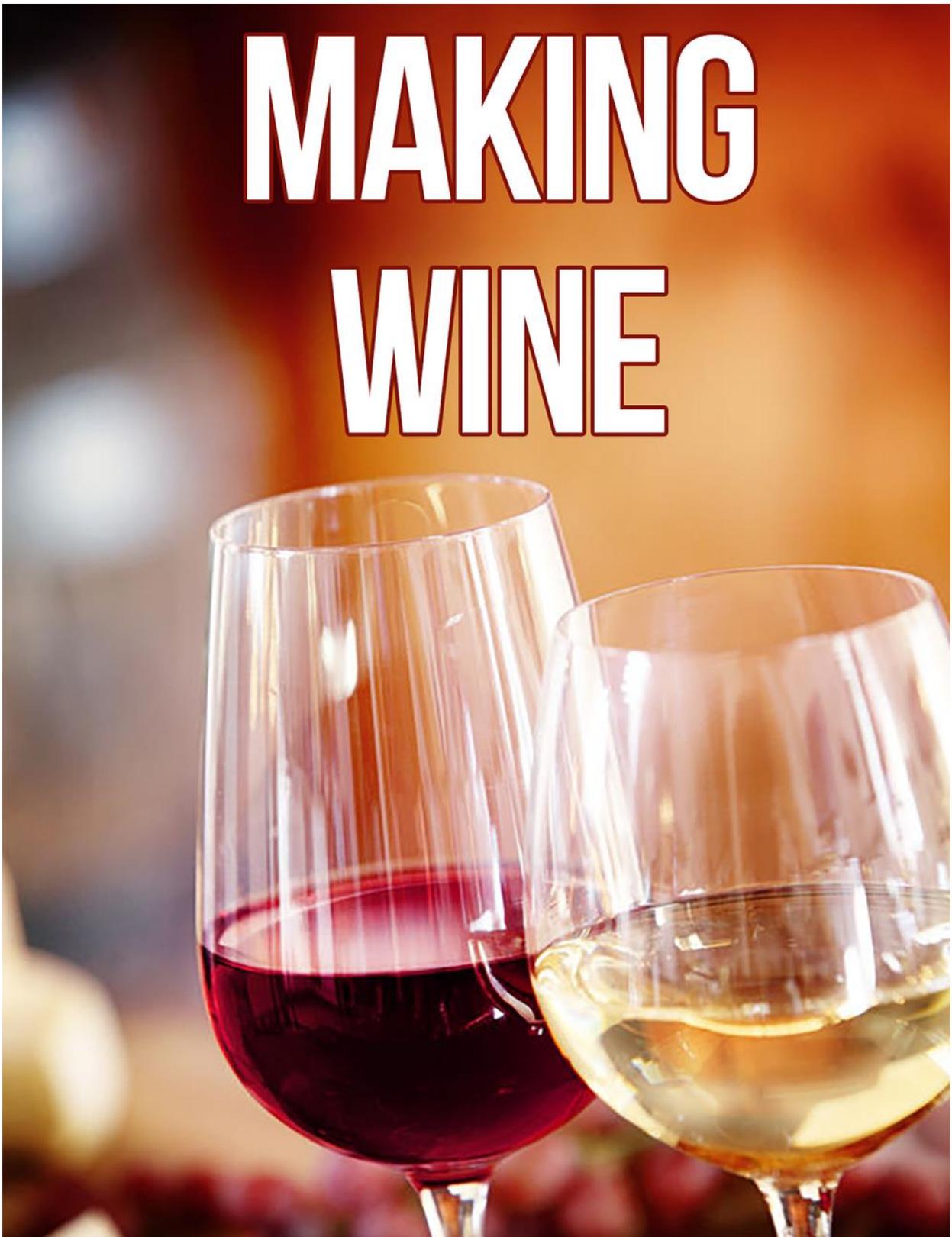


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Getting Started – Tools and Equipment

When creating wine, there are a few tools and equipment you're going to need. The exact things you'll need will depend upon what type of wine you are making. How much you plan to make, the fruits you are using and how much space you have available will also impact the tools and equipment you'll need.

Below, we'll look at a general guide of the tools and equipment used during wine making.

A Press and Crusher

If you're going to be using fresh fruit, a press and crusher are essential. If you are following this method, the fruit will need to be fermented for a set period of time. This time will differ depending upon the type of fruit you are using.

If you are just starting out, many experts recommend starting with fruit juice or concentrate. This will allow you to skip the fermentation process and you won't need a press or crusher.

A Fermenter

If you do plan on using fresh fruit, a fermenter is an important piece of equipment you'll need. It helps to ensure the fruit is safely and correctly fermented. It uses specific microorganisms to help ferment the fruit into wine. You'll find a lot of different models on the market so be sure to compare them and read consumer reviews prior to purchasing.

Cleaning Agents

During the winemaking process, hygiene should be a top priority. There are cleaning agents and tools you can invest in which make cleaning your equipment more efficient. These include jug and carboy brushes.

You'll also want to look at cleaning agents such as potassium metabisulfite and citric acid. Be sure to research everything there is to know about cleaning your equipment before you begin.

Hydrometer and Thermometer

If you are following the fermenting process, a hydrometer is a useful tool. It helps to show you the weight of liquid compared to water. They are really inexpensive to purchase, but they are fragile so it's best to have a spare just in case.

A thermometer can also help you to monitor the temperature of the wine. If you want it to taste and look like wine, you're going to need to make sure the fruit doesn't spoil.

Acid Testing Kits

Both before and after the fermentation process, you're going to need to test the level of acidity. You can do this with acid testing kits. If you want the fermentation to be effective, there needs to be a good balance of sugar and acid. You'll find these kits are relatively cheap to purchase.

Bottles and Closures

After you've made the wine, you're going to need to store it. So, invest in a good selection of bottles and closures. You'll be able to find these in abundance online.

As you can see, you need a lot of tools and equipment to start making your own wine. There are wine-making kits you can purchase which come with everything a beginner needs. So, why not invest in one of those first and then add to your collection if you become a more serious winemaker.

[Getting Started – The Basics](#)

Thinking of making your own wine at home? There are some basic steps you'll need to follow. The process can be quite complex, depending upon the type of wine you are making. Therefore, it is really important to do your research before you get started.

Here, we'll run through some of the basic steps for making your own wine.

Stock Up on Ingredients, Tools and Equipment

Before you get started, it's important to make sure you have everything you need. This includes all ingredients, tools and equipment. In another article we've covered the different types of tools and equipment you'll need. However, ideally you should do your own research based upon the type of wine you want to make.

In terms of ingredients, if you're making your own fruit wine you might want to add some optional ingredients. These include bananas, raisins or white or red grape concentrate. These optional ingredients add sweetness to the wine.

Find a Recipe Online

You're going to want to follow a tried-and-tested recipe when you're just starting out. So, look for some good wine recipes online. You'll find sites such as Pinterest are fab for discovering easy homemade wine recipes.

Remember to look for beginner recipes too. The more advanced recipes tend to require technical steps that you likely won't be ready for right now. Once you have made some basic beginner wines, you can look at creating your own recipes.

Prepare the Fruit

Before you make the wine, it's important to prepare the fruit. This includes removing any stones and seeds from pitted fruit like plums or grapes. This is because the seeds will add a bitter flavor to the wine. Once this has been done, you'll want to freeze the fruit to help break down the walls of their cell membranes. This makes it much easier to extract the juice.

After freezing, thaw the fruit out and place it into a nylon bag ready to extract its juice. Use a press to do this or add sugar and leave it to extract naturally.

Ferment the Ingredients

Once you have the juice of the fruit, it's time to ferment it. Different fruits require a different fermentation time, so do your research to see how long the fruit you have chosen should be fermented for. You should also follow specific fermenting advice for the type of wine you are making.

Siphon the Wine Regularly

As the wine is fermenting, it will need to be siphoned into clean containers regularly. So, if using a carboy, you can siphon the wine into a clean carboy as and when it is required. Again, different wines will need to be siphoned at different rates.

These are the basic steps of making your own wine but as mentioned, the process is quite complex. For this reason, it is recommended you learn as much about the winemaking process before you attempt to make it yourself.

[Wine Making Terminology You Should Know](#)

If you're thinking of making your own wine, it helps to be aware of the terminology you'll come across. As a complete novice, you may not be aware of the terms used in the industry. This can make it tricky when it comes to making wine as you won't understand all of the instructions.

To help, here we'll take a look at some of the most common wine making terminology you need to know.

ABV – This stands for Alcohol By Volume and it relates to the concentration of the wine. The ABV lets you know how strong the alcohol content is.

Aerobic Conditions – Some types of wine need to be made in aerobic conditions. This means they are exposed to oxygen in order to age.

Barrel Aged – Many wines are barrel aged, and it is a process you will more than likely follow yourself when making wine. It basically means leaving the wine to mature in a barrel.

Bung – A bung is a barrel stopper which can be made from plastic, glass or silicone. It is used to fill the bung hole found in the barrel, the same way as a cork.

Carbonic Gas – During the fermentation period, a byproduct known as carbonic gas is created. Most of it will rise to the surface, though some will stay within the wine. If the vessel is closed off, the gas won't have anywhere to escape and it will seep back into the wine, creating a sparkling variety.

Complex – The word complex is used to describe wines with a lot going on. It could be they have lots of different flavors, alongside different depths.

Crisp – Crisp is another word used to describe a type of wine. Generally speaking, a crisp wine is a little tart and has a higher acid content. It tends to go well with food.

Decant – This term is used to describe transferring the wine from the bottle to a container. It could be used to separate the sediment from red wine, for example.

Dry – A wine that is dry won't have any sweetness to it. You'll also find it dry in the mouth.

Fermentation – The fermentation process is basically the time it takes before the wine can be bottled. It includes adding yeast and sugar to the wine, allowing it to break down the fruit for a smooth and flavorful result.

Fortification – Fortification relates to adding strong alcohol to the wine. It should be between 77% and 98% proof. This is what will give strength to the wine and it can be added before, during or after fermentation.

Lees – Lees is the sediment that is left over from the fermentation process. It needs to be removed before the wine is bottled.

Mature – When the wine is ready to drink, it is said to be mature.

These are a selection of common winemaking terms you need to know. It is worthwhile researching and writing a list of the entire winemaking terms. That way, you will better understand what you are doing when you are following instructions.

Mistakes to Look Out For

When you're creating your own wine, there are a lot of mistakes you can make. Even expert winemakers aren't immune to making mistakes along the way. It is a learning curve, but luckily you can learn from other people's mistakes.

Here, we'll look at some of the top rookie mistakes to avoid when creating your own wine at home.

Using Poor Quality Ingredients

You aren't going to be able to create a high-quality wine if you're using poor-quality ingredients. Therefore, it's important to make sure you choose the best of the best if you want to enjoy the best flavor.

If you are growing your own fruit that will be used in the wine, be careful when you pick it. If you pick it too early or late, it's going to drastically impact the results. Even the yeast you plan to use during fermentation should be of a high quality.

Using Inadequate Equipment

Alongside using poor quality ingredients, using the wrong equipment is another rookie mistake. Things like carboys and spoons may look similar to common household items. However, you'll find actual winemaking tools and equipment are made with special materials. So, using standard homemade objects isn't going to give you the same quality wine.

In particular, avoid using utensils from around the home – especially those which have been used for cooking. This is because over time, the food odors seep through into the utensils. This can then be transferred into the wine, impacting its flavor.

Not Following Instructions

If you are just starting out, you're going to need to follow instructions to create homemade wine. The trouble is, many people fail to follow the instructions properly. This could be because they don't know what the instructions mean, or they may simply miss a step along the way.

Put simply, if you don't follow instructions, the wine isn't going to taste how it should. In fact, you could end up spoiling it completely.

Mistakes in the Fermentation Process

The fermentation process is the most difficult part of the winemaking process. This is because each type of fruit needs to be fermented for a different period of time. Any mistake you make in the process can have devastating consequences on your wine.

It is really important to understand everything there is to know about fermentation before you start making your own wine. Ensure you understand the terminology and how the process should work.

If you bottle the wine before it has fermented, the process will carry on in the bottle. This could push the cork out, as well as compromise the quality.

There are a lot of mistakes you can make in winemaking but the above are some of the most common. When you are just starting out, you need to follow specific recipes and spend a lot of time learning about the processes you can use. The more knowledgeable you are, the fewer the mistakes you are going to make.

Can You Legally Make and Sell Your Own Wine?

Making your own wine can be much more than a simple hobby. Once you know what you are doing, you may be looking to sell your creations. The question is, is it legal to make and sell your own wine?

Here, we'll look at the legalities of making and selling your own wine, and the things you'll need to consider.

Is It Legal to Sell Homemade Wine?

While you can legally make up to 200 gallons of wine per two-person household, unfortunately it is illegal to sell it without formal permission. The quantity also drops to 100 gallons for those living alone.

If you do want to sell the wine you create, you're going to need a number of permits. Firstly, you'll need to apply to the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau to seek their approval. You also need to know how the business will be structured. For example, are you going to create a winery, or will you be selling it in smaller quantities?

It's important to research the legalities before you get started. You'll need to wait for your permits before you can sell it legally. You may find it best to seek expert advice. That way, you'll know exactly how the process works and they can help you to apply for any permits you do need.

Understanding Your State's Laws

Like with most things, the laws relating to selling your own wine vary from state to state. This means you are going to need to research specific laws in the state where you reside, as well as understand other state laws if you plan on selling it throughout multiple states.

Some states have much stricter rules you need to adhere to. However, most require a permit before you can get started. You only don't need permits if you plan on using the wine for personal use with friends and family.

Breaking the law regarding the sale of alcohol can lead to pretty harsh consequences. So, it's always worth taking the time to familiarize yourself with the rules.

Is It Worth Selling Your Own Wine?

Due to the fact that you do need to jump through quite a few hoops to sell your own wine, is it worth it? This will depend upon how serious you are about turning it into a business.

You'll need to make sure your wines are high quality and meet all safety standards. There is also bottle labelling to be aware of and a strict set of rules to follow. So, you should only get into this type of business if you are serious about doing it.

Setting up an actual winemaking business is expensive and time-consuming. For most people, simply making their own wine to enjoy with friends and family is enough. Therefore, before you decide whether or not to sell it, think about the cost and effort of turning it into a business.

What Fruit Should You Use?

When you are creating your own wine, you have full control over what goes into it. There are so many different types of wine you can create, and a lot of different ingredients to choose from.

The main ingredient of most wines is fruit. You can use a variety of fruits to create wine, so which ones are best? Here, we'll take a look at some of the best types of fruits you can use to create your own wine.

Grapes

The majority of fruit wines on the market today are made with grapes. This is because they are the easiest fruit to use in the winemaking process. They allow for clean, fast fermentation.

As well as being able to use them alone to create delicious-tasting wines, grapes can be easily blended with other fruits too. There are a lot of different types of grapes and you can use them to create both red and white varieties. Some of the best grapes to use during home winemaking include Chardonnay, Sauvignon and Malbec. However, you can use whichever variety you prefer.

Blackberries

If you're looking to create a delicious red wine, blackberries are a great choice. However, this type of fruit wine will also take the longest to make. It is recommended blackberry wine is aged for at least two years. This creates a bold red wine. You could also add pears or apples for a more unique flavor.

Plums

Plum-based wines feature a beautiful flavor and color. The plums need to be chopped up in order to ferment. These types of wines are early to mature and they take around a year before they are ready to drink.

Pears and Raspberries

You can create tasty wine by using just pears or raspberries. However, did you know that if you combine the two you are left with a mouthwatering flavor? The raspberries add a great aroma and they also alter the color of the wine. If you've never tried pear- and raspberry-based wine, now is the time to make some.

Strawberries

Another fruit that makes a beautiful wine is strawberries. However, they are also one of the hardest fruits to work with. This is because they have a very long fermentation period. This means you'll want to wait a good amount of time before it is bottled up. Like most other wines, it is best if it is aged for at least one year.

Rhubarb

Not recommended for the beginner, rhubarb wine delivers a unique flavor profile. It takes a staggering four years before it is drinkable, but the wait will most definitely be worthwhile. Once you have experience making wines, you can try out creating your own rhubarb-based variety.

So, there you have it – some of the best fruits to make your own wine. Before getting started, it's worth researching everything there is to know about fermenting the different fruits. There is a lot to learn with winemaking before you get started and how to use the fruit is just one thing you'll need to know.

How-To: Sparkling Wine

Still wine is the most common to make at home. However, it is possible to make your own sparkling wine too. It takes approximately nine months to create sparkling wine and there are three main stages you'll need to follow.

Here, you'll learn the basics of making sparkling wine. As with any type of winemaking, it is better to research as much as you can before getting started. This will help you to achieve the best flavor and results.

Fermenting It Twice

The main differentiating factor between still and sparkling wine is the fermentation process. If you want to make sparkling wine, you're going to need to ferment it twice.

After the initial fermentation process, you'll need to add yeast and sugar. When mixed in with the wine, it begins the fermentation process again, only the carbon dioxide produced by the yeast has nowhere to escape to. This causes the wine to become bubbly.

There are actually different methods you can use to create sparkling wine, and it's worth understanding what they are.

The Traditional Method

The traditional, or champagne, method is the most common method used by wineries. However, it can be expensive and extremely time-consuming for homemade wine.

You'll carry out the second fermentation stage in the bottle the wine will be stored in. A temporary cap will need to be used until the process has finished. After the yeast has worked, it dies and turns into lees. This will stay in the wine until it is removed. How long you leave it in will determine the taste and texture of the wine.

A process known as riddling is used to remove the lees from the bottle. This is actually quite difficult to do yourself, which is why many people choose to use alternative methods when making their own sparkling wines.

The Charmat Method

If you are looking for a cheaper alternative, the Charmat method is ideal. Named after the person who invented the method, it involves fermenting the wine in a tank, rather than in bottles.

The yeast and sugar are added to the tank and it gets to work much like it does in the traditional method. When it has stopped fermenting, the wine is filtered and then bottled. This method produces a clean, aromatic wine that is easy to drink.

This method is easier to use at home and is much less expensive too. Alternatively, you could use the hybrid method. This involves a mixture of both traditional and Charmat techniques. You'll carry out the secondary fermentation in bottles, then empty them into a pressurized tank. The sediment can then be filtered before the wine is packaged into bottles.

It is worth being aware of the different sparkling wine methods so you can ensure you are selecting the right one for you. If budget is a factor and you are just starting out, the Charmat method is the best one to use. Try to research everything you can about the method before you get started.

Should You Keep a Journal?

Did you know that a wine making journal can be really useful? Whether you are a beginner or an avid winemaker, a journal can help you to learn as you go. While you can invest in a pre-made journal, maintaining it is entirely down to you.

So, what is the best way to maintain a wine making journal? Read on to find out.

What Is a Wine Making Journal?

A wine making journal is where you record everything you need to know about the wine you create. It can be used as a reference point when you are making future batches, as well as help you to learn from your mistakes.

Wine making is a skill that takes years to fully learn. When you first start out, you'll go through quite a steep learning curve. A journal can help you to keep track of what works and what doesn't, as well as help you to save the recipes you create.

What Information Should You Include?

You can use the wine making journal to record everything about the process. The best things to cover in the journal include:

- Terminology
- Recipes
- Tips
- Notes
- Important wine information

Having a list of wine terminology that you can refer to is a great idea when you're starting out. You can also use the journal to record the recipes you create, including notes on how they can be improved and any tips which help with the wine making process.

Include things such as the time the wine needs to age, the best ingredients to use, and the tools and equipment you'll need. You could even make it fancy and include a label from your wine bottle on each recipe.

Have a Separate Notes Section

It's a good idea to include a separate notes section. This can be used to mark down anything you have observed which could prove useful when creating future batches. You can write down anything that went wrong and the things you need to change. You could also include tips you've discovered along the way.

Having notes is one of the best ways to learn as you go along. Winemaking requires a lot of learning and you can't do that if you don't keep notes.

Create Pages with Useful Information

Alongside your recipes and notes, it's a good idea to include useful information such as ambient temperatures for the different types of wine. Include absolutely everything you can think of, including how often you stirred it if applicable.

You should also track how long you aged the wine for. This can make a big difference to its flavor and body. By writing down how long it was aged for, you can determine if you need to leave it longer next time.

These are some of the best ways to maintain a wine making journal. While you can create them from scratch, you can save a lot of time by investing in a specialized wine making journal. You'll easily be able to find these online. By keeping a journal, it can really improve your winemaking skills.

How to Tell When Your Wine is Mature

The fermentation process when making wine can take quite a while. So, how do you know when it's ready to drink? This of course will depend upon the type of fruit being used, as well as the type of wine you are making. However, there are some general tips you can follow to determine when your wine is ready to drink.

Here, we'll look at the best ways to tell when your homemade wine has fermented.

Look Out for Visual Clues

When your wine is ready to be bottled, there are some visual clues you can look out for. If the wine is still fermenting, you'll see tiny bubbles floating to the top of the wine. You might also see bits of fruit moving throughout the wine.

If you are utilizing an airlock, the bubbles you see in the wine could point to the pressure inside the vessel being higher than outside. While looking out for bubbles in the wine isn't always a good representation of when it is ready, it is a good starting point.

So, if there are bubbles continuously rising to the surface, your wine isn't ready.

Measure Its Specific Gravity

Using a refractometer or a hydrometer, you can measure the specific gravity of the wine. You'll need to measure the levels in the wine frequently, ensuring they are the same before you bottle it. It is best to do this over the course of a week.

If you get consistent readings for a week, it's likely the wine is ready.

Don't Rely on Bubbling

We mentioned earlier that bubbling can be a good indicator of when wine is ready. However, it's important to not just rely on the bubbling effect. This is because the bubbling can stop and start intermittently. This is referred to as stuck fermentation.

If the bubbling stops and you bottle the wine, it could start the fermentation process again in the bottle. There would be nowhere for the CO₂ to go, which would push the cork out of the bottle.

It's All About the Sugar

So, if bubbling isn't a reliable indicator, what is? The sugar content is what you mainly want to look out for. You can use a wine hydrometer to see whether there are any sugars still remaining.

You'll need to find out how to use the hydrometer correctly. You'll find instructional videos online you can follow to learn everything you need to know.

Aging the Wine

Remember, even when the fermentation process is complete, it still might not be ready. Most wines need to be aged for a specific timeframe before they are bottled. This gives them the best flavor. So, be sure to leave the wine to age for the time period specified for the type of wine you are making.

Knowing when your wine is ready can be difficult for beginners. The above are the basic things to look out for. Before making wine, it's important to learn everything there is to know to ensure it turns out perfectly.

Storing Your Homemade Wine

Once you have made your wine, the work doesn't stop there. You now need to ensure that it is stored correctly. If it isn't, it could ruin the wine and give it a sour flavor.

If you want to wine to retain its quality, there is a process you should follow. Here, we'll look at the main things you need to do in order to store your wine correctly.

Make Sure You Use a Quality Cork

It may seem like a small detail, but the cork you choose to bottle the wine is extremely important. It helps to determine the quality of the wine, with poor quality corks potentially causing the wine to oxidize.

Ideally, you'll want to look out for a cork that is long and less porous. This is because this type of cork creates the best barrier. It enables you to potentially age the wine further too, giving it more of a full flavor. It may sound trivial, but the type of cork you choose can potentially improve or ruin the wine.

What to Do Immediately After Bottling

Once you have bottled the wine, you'll need to make sure it stays in an upright position for around 3-5 days. This ensures the cork has time to fully expand, creating a tight seal at the top of the bottle. If you don't give it time to expand, the wine could leak when you lay it down on its side.

You should also check how long you need to store the wine for. Does it need to age for a specific amount of time? If so, don't forget to add this to the label, marking down when it will be best to drink it.

Where Should You Store It?

Homemade wine is best stored in a cool, dark environment. You can store it on its side in a wine rack, making sure the temperature of the room remains consistent. If you don't have a wine cellar, you can invest in bespoke wine racks. These are designed to keep the wine in an optimal environment.

Temperature and Humidity

The most important things to pay attention to when storing wine are the temperature and the humidity. If the room is too hot or cold, it's going to ruin the wine. The optimal temperature to store the wine will depend upon the type you have made. Generally speaking, wine is best stored in temperatures of around 55 degrees Fahrenheit.

No matter what type of wine you have made, never store it below 25 degrees Fahrenheit as this could cause the wine to freeze. You should also make sure the humidity is between 60% and 68%.

Knowing how to store your homemade wine correctly can help you to achieve the best results. Store it incorrectly, and it could ruin your entire batch. The above are the most important things to consider when storing wine. Ideally, you should sort out where you will be storing it before you've even made it.