

HTML clipboard **Wine Making Problems**

The problems most common with homemade wine batches are wild yeasts and acetic bacteria.

Acetic bacteria converts alcohol into acetic acid and could turn your carefully prepared wine must to vinegar. Sadly enough acetic bacteria is present in the air everywhere.

This is also true of wild yeasts and fungi spores. Although the effect of this wine spoiler is a flat or sour finished product.

If you've started your homemade wine batch on fresh fruit from the garden, supermarket or fruit stand, you're most likely to run into these troubles, but both troubles can also come from the water you use to get your batch going.

Although wine that has turned on you is not necessarily harmful to your health - it certainly is not a desirable outcome to all your hard work - so let's be sure to clear away all possibilities of spoilage before we start.

I've said it before on other pages, but it bears repeating here: Cleanliness is one of the largest components to making homemade wine.

Once everything has been sterilized - the fruit, water, bottles, fermentation bucket, transfer tubing, corks and more, you'll also want to keep your fermenting wine tightly covered and sealed from the air.

Covering a wine must in a jar is easy. The moment you add yeast to the mixture, is the time to seal the bottle, carboy or jar. You can do this with a tight fitting lid, saran wrap or a bung depending on your vessel.

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It is true that the most superior system you can have - certainly for keeping out bacteria and wild yeasts - is a wine carboy with a bung corker. The last time I checked you could get both for under \$30. The bung stopper is also called a fermentation lock.

The reason for a tight fitting fermentation lock is to prevent all outside air from reaching the wine. Fermentation locks may have a liquid inlet. This is used as a barrier to air and an easy release for the gas your wine must make. Many people use a sterilizing agent as their fermentation lock liquid. If you don't have a sterilizing solution for wine on hand, crush a campden tablet in sterilized water and use that.

Another advantage of having a fermentation lock in use is that it becomes very easy to see when fermentation of your homemade wine has ceased. During fermentation bubbles are passing through the lock - you can see and hear them. When fermentation stops or slows to one bubble per day (or so), shake or twist the carboy to stir up any last yeast particles and final fermentation will begin. This is generally another day or two.

Remember, the whole concept behind using a fermentation lock is to keep the harmful airborne particles from contaminating your wine. Ensure that the bung and lock are airtight. If they are not, the gas leaking out may prevent air reaching the wine during the early stages, but as the process slows air easily reaches (and may spoil) the wine.

The next step is in 'clearing' your homemade wine. Depending on the recipe you used this could be done instantly or naturally within a week to 10 days.