



Strawberry Wine Production

By Robert Kime, Department of Food Science, New York Agricultural Experiment Station, Geneva, New York (New York State Gold Medal Vintner awardee)

First published in *Strawberry Production Guide, NRAES-88*. Eds. M. Pritts, D. Handley. 1998. 162 pp.

Wineries may be interested in purchasing local strawberries, as fruit wines are increasing in popularity. The value of wine from a pound of strawberries can be ten times greater than the value of the fresh fruit. In addition, overripe fruit can be used to make strawberry wine, so long as the berries are not too moldy.

To make strawberry wine, you do not need fancy equipment- just a large pot, a fermenting bubbler, wine yeast, a hydrometer, a 5-gallon glass jug, and some cheesecloth. About 30 pounds of strawberries are required for every 5-gallon batch of wine. Berries do not have to be capped prior to fermentation. Strawberries are very fruity and acidic, so water and sugar are added to the berry pulp prior to fermentation to reduce the acidity to about 0.8% and increase the sweetness. If the desired alcohol content is 10%, then add more sugar to the mix to bring the mixture to 20% Brix (2% sugar for each 1% alcohol). In general, for every 2 pounds of strawberries, add 1 pound of sugar and 1 pound (pint) of water. Additional sugar may be required to obtain the desired sweetness.

Next add the wine yeast. Wine yeasts, available from a wine supplier, can tolerate a much higher alcohol content than wild yeasts. Dissolve the yeast in 100°F water (use 1 gram of yeast for every 1 gallon of liquid), and add it to the fruit-sugar-water mixture. Add the yeast to the mixture within thirty minutes of dissolving so a food source is available to the yeast. Also, be sure the temperature difference between the yeast solution and the fruit mixture is no greater than 5°F, or the yeast may be killed. Fermentation should occur at 70°F for about three to four days. This can occur in an open container, and the mixture should be stirred occasionally.

After three days, strain the mixture through cheesecloth and place it into a 5-gallon glass jug fitted with a fermentation bubbler. After another five to ten days, the wine will have reached an alcohol content of about 10%. When the wine reaches the desired alcohol and residual sugar content, stop the fermentation by placing the wine mixture in a cold room (30°F) or filtering it. Then decant the mixture and add sulfites and sorbate to prevent oxidation and refermentation.

Strawberry wine can be allowed to ferment until the alcohol content reaches about 17%. However, wine with such a high alcohol is rather harsh and will require a significant amount of sugar to balance the alcohol. Stopping the fermentation process at 9 to 10% is recommended. Inexpensive kits are

available to monitor sugar, acid, and alcohol content. Monitor sugar content daily, as alcohol increases rapidly when fermentation occurs at room temperature.

Strawberry wines sometimes develop an orange color or an off-flavor, the cause of this is unknown. As with grapes, there may be varietal differences among strawberries in their ability to make high-quality wines, but this has not been studied. A mixture of strawberry varieties likely will produce better wine than a single variety.

Strawberry wine can have excellent color, balance, and flavor properties; however, it can be very unstable and should be consumed soon after bottling or kept refrigerated. Strawberry wine can be mixed with honey wine to produce another value-added product. Novice vintners may want to attend a seminar on wine making for more details on wine production.

To sell wine, you will need a license. The selling of wine is regulated by the state liquor control board and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms.

The information, including any advice or recommendations, contained herein is based upon the research and experience of Cornell Cooperative Extension personnel. While this information constitutes the best judgment/opinion of such personnel at the time issued, neither Cornell Cooperative Extension nor any representative thereof makes any representation, endorsement or warranty, express or implied, of any particular result or application of such information, or regarding any product. Users of any product are encouraged to read and follow product-labeling instructions and check with the manufacturer or supplier for updated information.

Cornell University provides equal program and employment opportunities.