

# The home vintner

By Arlene W. Correll

I would like to talk today about the person who has been making wines and who doesn't utilize his or her home winemaking potential to the fullest. Do you produce the same wine year after year without trying something new? Or have you a favorite type of commercial wine that you would like to reproduce? Why not start thinking about designing your wines? Big wine companies do. Their advantage? They know what they want to do and with a little planning so can you.

Soon you will be gathering your grapes or berries or whatever you want to put into wine this year, or stopping in at your local wine supply shop to pick up your favorite concentrates. After you get your wine started you can really start considering what you really want from your wine.

Designing a wine has four simple steps: 1. Decide what the finished product should be like, 2. Consider the available ingredients and choose your most appropriate ones, 3. guide your wines to your goal and 4. react to changes and be prepared to get the wines back on the path you have chosen for them.

How would you go about doing this? One way would be to sit down with the wine drinking members of your family and some of their favorite wines, whether they be home made wine or commercial. Have a tasting and make notes. Which ones do you prefer? Are they more or less sweet, more or less acid? More fragrant? More flavorful or more or less wood, or astringent? Try to make a decision on one or two critical wine features.

If you don't think you can do it, just try it and you will surprise yourself. If your family likes a slightly sweet wine, then add a little sugar to a slightly astringent wine and see if that does not suit your taste. Try adding a little acid (citric or tartaric, which you can purchase from your local wine supply shop) and see if that adds or detracts from what you are trying to achieve. Try adding a little grape tannin (also from the wine shop) and see if the added astringency improves the wine.

By running a few simple tests on the wines you enjoy you could find out the acid and sugar levels. Things like this would help you to determine which kinds of wine you would like to make and also tell you which kinds of wines you would not like to make.

It's really just like cooking. Not very many cooks invent a completely new recipe. They merely improve upon an old basic recipe with some simple improvisations and a lot of imagination. The same applies to the art of winemaking.

You can turn yourself into a great winemaker just by discovering what you and your family and friends like in wines and developing these traits in designing your wines. You can produce high acid wines for the person who likes dry wines or low acid wines for the sweet wine drinker, or high alcohol wines with moderate sugar (to take the chill off the bones during these long winters). You can do all this to several bottles of one batch of a certain wine flavor you and your family likes just by working with the wine a little.

Again if your wine is lacking in acid, add an acid blend, or citric acid or tartaric acid. Your wine too astringent? Age it longer, be patient. Put some oak wood chips (available from a wine supply store) in a little vodka or wine and add this solution to your wine. This will help you achieve a wood flavor if you like that in your wine. Most people who age in a glass carboy can only achieve this with the oak wood chips. If you are fortunate enough to have oak barrels and you have aged it too long and have too much wood flavor, then try mixing it with some other wine to achieve the correct balance of good wood flavoring.

Reshaping or racking your wine several times between two containers will have an astringent affect that can sometimes help a wine with a bad smell. Let it rest a couple of weeks and then retaste it.

You could also reblend some good wine with it and let it rest a couple of weeks and see if that helps.

If nothing helps, then dump it. It is a waste to ruin a lot of good wine by adding some poor wine to it.

Most important keep accurate records of what you are doing. Not only for your own future reference, but to exchange with fellow vintners. If their luck is better than yours or vice versa then you might want to exchange a few bottles for blending stock. If you do this, be patient.

as many wines improve with age. Separate your wines, and taste them every six months. You may be pleasantly surprised. This is a good practice to follow on all your wines. Tasting every six months provides an accurate record for you.

I find it easier to design my wines against a commercial wine as their wine is uniform and made the same flavor year after year. I taste their wine and then my wine. Does it taste as good or better? Should I try some more aging or whatever it is I feel it needs to match or better it? Have your family do some tasting too. Do they agree or disagree with your findings? Try it with different foods. You may find that what tastes good with pizza is not going to go as well with Sunday's leg of lamb.

All in all you will have learned a lot about your wines. This will help you to

make them better.

If at this point you are wondering why you should go to all this bother, I would consider this thought. Even though I keep saying that one of the advantages of home winemaking is the low cost, the fact of the matter is that even home winemaking has some cost and like everything these days the cost is more than it used to be. You have time and money invested. Bottles, must, corks, labels, etc. Your wine should be as good as, if not better than, what you can buy at your favorite wine shop. A little forethought will make them all the more enjoyable and that is really on of the things I like about home winemaking-ENJOYMENT.

I would be glad to try to answer your home winemaking questions through this column. Just write the Home Vintner, Box 2, Hopkinton, 12940.



GET A HORSE for a hood ornament—this unusual hood ornament caught photographer Viki Levitt's fancy during a photography workshop sponsored by the Potsdam Museum and taught by Sherwood Smith.

## Historical day in Parishville is August 21

The annual Parishville Historical Day will be Saturday, August 21. Festivities will include crafts, exhibits, special presentations and bus tours from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Parishville Town Hall and museum.

A dinner will be held at the Town Hall, beginning at 11:30 a.m. Prices are adults, \$2.50, children, \$1.50, and children under five, free.

Museum hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**VISITS AREA**  
Mr. and Mrs. Gerald "Red" Armstrong of Wildomar, California have recently completed a visit with their aunts Jennie Breese and Estella Delisle of Potsdam. While in the North Country they also visited relatives in Plattsburg and Dannemora.

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