

Wine Making Starter Pack: Handy Tips.

Check to make sure you have everything listed in your Starter Pack, and read these notes fully before starting.

The two most important things to consider whilst wine making are cleanliness and temperature. If you are mindful of these two issues, you will produce a successful brew every time (as long as you read & follow the instructions).

Sterilisation

Start with clean equipment! Everything that comes into contact with the wine should be sterilised. The Love Brewing sterilisers we stock are used by the commercial wine producers. It's strong so you only need to put enough into your container to be able to swish it around. In a 23/25 litre container this would typically be 5 litres of water with sufficient steriliser (around 2 teaspoons). Please follow the instructions. Both No Rinse and Cleaner Steriliser are recommended.

The No Rinse is designed for new (very clean) equipment. Again mix a small amount with hot water and swirl around the equipment for 10 mins. Pour away and you are good to go.

Always make sure you thoroughly clean your equipment once you have used it as it really helps to prevent the build up of stains. Mark your container (if it's not already done) on the outside at 23 litres. You will need this later on.

Temperature

Temperature is the other important item to remember. We are looking for a room temperature typically between 20-25° C. However the thing to bear in mind is we are looking for a constant temperature. Far too many of us get the temperature too high and think because the airlock is popping like mad we are having a great fermentation.

Ideally we are looking for a steady rate of popping through the airlock. If the room temperature is cooler, then the fermentation will take a little longer, but on the upside the taste will be better. As with almost all home brewing, we are weighing up speed against quality.

All of our starter kits include a thermometer, so use this to find the right area to place your fermenting container. Whilst we are talking about temperature it's also important that the liquid temperature (consult your instructions for the actual temperature) is correct before we add the yeast. If the liquid is too warm then allow it to cool until we reach the ideal temperature. Don't worry about leaving the liquid to cool for a few hours, as no harm will come to it as long as you ensure the lid is secured on the bucket. Similarly if the temperature is too cold then leave it somewhere warm to increase.

One thing worth noting is that once the fermentation starts the yeast will generate heat as it works, so the temperature of the liquid in the container will always be higher than the room temperature.

For more information on controlling temperature, see our handy video at <http://www.lovebrewing.co.uk/videos/product-demos/temperature-control/>.

Wine Making Starter Pack: Handy Tips. (Cont).

Airlocks

Airlocks should be half filled with clean water. The airlock functions as a one way 'valve' which allows excess gasses given off by the fermentation to escape, without letting outside air in. This means that the fermentation is protected by a head of carbon dioxide, which helps prevent any infections.

Some airlocks come with a cap and this should always be placed on the top. The cap prevents any liquid from being squirted out of the airlock. If the fermentation is quite lively, liquid can be forced out of the airlock and end up decorating your floor and walls! If this happens reduce the room temperature, or move the container to a cooler area. if you don't have a cap you can put some cotton wool in the top of the airlock.

If the airlock isn't bubbling, you might need to improve the seal between the airlock, grommet, and where it joins the bucket/fermenter lid. You can do this by smearing some Vaseline around the joint.

Siphons

Siphons vary in style but all the ones we stock have a special fitting on the end to help prevent sediment being drawn up from the bottom of the container. This means you can go very close to the bottom and extract as much liquid as possible.

Whilst the design of the siphon helps prevent you from drawing up sediment, we would always recommend siphon-ing off from the top of the container, and slowly lower the end of the siphon towards the bottom of the container as the liquid is removed. This requires slightly more effort on your part, but it is time well spent.

As you reach the bottom of the container, and have removed the majority of the liquid, a good trick is to wedge something under the bucket on the opposite side to the siphon, thus tilting the bucket and helping to extract every last drop of liquid. Always leave the heavy sediment behind in the bucket.

Most of the siphons in our starter kits have a tap or pipe clamp fitted to the end and come with a bucket clip. The bucket clip is a great help as it frees up your hands. Most siphons require a good suck to get them started (except our Easy Start siphon uses a pump action to get it going). Some also have a bottling device fitted to them which will make bottling the wine much easier.

If you haven't used a siphon before, we strongly recommend you have a test run using water. This will allow you to get a good feel for it without wasting any valuable wine!

Wine Making Starter Pack: Handy Tips. (Cont).

Containers

Depending on which starter kit you ordered you will have received:

A bucket to do the fermentation. Ideally at the end of the fermentation it will help to be able to transfer the wine into another container leaving behind the sediment. If you don't have anything else and you are careful you can transfer directly into your bottles.

A bucket & a 25 litre fermenter with a large black cap. Ideally we will start the fermentation in the bucket and then transfer (only certain of the more expensive wine kits will require this) the liquid to the fermenter when the gravity reaches 1010. If the kit doesn't call for this, then we will use the second fermenter at the end of the clearing process to transfer the clear wine into.

A bucket & a 23 litre clear plastic carboy. This is really for the more expensive wine kits. We start the fermentation in a bucket & then transfer at 1010 to the 23 litre carboy. We can leave the wine in this for a good length of time without the risk of infection (as there is no head room above the liquid).

Hydrometer

A Hydrometer is the must have piece of equipment in wine making. The instructions for use are included inside the container but we have also written a guide (search our website for hydrometer guide) which may be more helpful.

The purpose of the hydrometer is to measure the specific gravity of the liquid. The higher the gravity, the more alcohol we will have at the end of the fermentation. It is therefore important to do a hydrometer reading at the start of the fermentation and make a note of this. Most kits normally give a guide of the starting gravity. If you find you are too low with your initial reading, give the liquid a good stir, and take it again. Low initial readings can normally be attributed to poor mixing. When you get the same reading twice you are there, If it's not the same after mixing then repeat until it is.

If you have any concerns about the fermentation, and are unsure if anything is happening, take a reading with the hydrometer and compare it to your previous reading. This is the only way to know if a fermentation is happening (bubbles through the airlock are only a guide). If the container allows you can drop the hydrometer directly into the liquid or you might have to draw some liquid off into a separate container to facilitate taking a reading. Some kits have a separate hydrometer trial jar included, others don't, sometimes you might be able with certain types to use the case the hydrometer comes in. Fill this with liquid about $\frac{3}{4}$ full and then drop the hydrometer into it. Give it a twirl so it doesn't stick to the sides. The reading is taken across the liquid line. You can always drop it in the bucket.

To determine if your fermentation has finished, take two hydrometer readings 24 hours apart. If there is no change in the reading, then your fermentation has finished. At this point you can calculate the final alcohol strength using your starting gravity reading, and your final reading, using the following formula:

Starting gravity – Final Gravity \div 7.5 (some use 7.2)

E.g.

1075 – 1000 is $75 \div 7.5 = 10\%$ ABV.

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Bottling

We recommend using screw top bottles if you are making any of the quick to ferment wines (like the Wineworks range). These are ideal for keeping wine in providing you are planning to drink it within 6 weeks. Just sterilise the bottles (including the screw cap). Fill the bottle with a small amount of steriliser, screw on the cap and shake. If you hear any hissing or have any leakage, then dispense with that bottle.

If keeping your wine for more than 6 weeks we would recommend a cork. Have a look at our bottling starter pack <http://www.lovebrewing.co.uk/bottling-starter-pack/>, and also our video guide on bottling at <http://www.lovebrewing.co.uk/videos/wine-making-videos/bottling-and-storing-your-wine/>.

When corking, the bottles should be stood upright for 3 days once the cork has been inserted. You can then add a shrink cap to the bottle. After this, bottles should be stored on their side to ensure the cork is kept moist.

Final Notes

If you ask the advice of any seasoned home brew expert, one of the first things they will tell you is 'R.T.I.', which is 'Read The Instructions'.

We have written so many instructions for all types of kits, and the vast majority of queries we get regarding problematic fermentations are caused when people have deviated from the instructions or just ignored them altogether!

Our number one aim is help you produce a fantastic tasting wine that's right first time. We know that home brewing can sometimes be daunting to newcomers, so if you have any concerns or queries, the please email us info@lovebrewing.co.uk, as all of our staff are only too happy to share their experience and expertise.

Once you've enjoyed that first glass of home made wine, you'll never look back, and once you expand your knowledge, you'll be able to experiment a little, and perhaps start making your own wine from scratch.