

Winemaking in the 1880s

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With white grapes I proceed as follows: the grapes are crushed in a tank, then must drawn off and pumped into an open tank. In a few hours fermentation will take place and increase rapidly. Heavy extraneous matter, such as particles of earth, settle to the bottom of the tank. At this stage, which may be 24 hours after the tank has been filled with "must," I ascertain the amount of sugar with a saccharometer. When the scale shows about 10–15 degrees of saccharine, I remove the surface scum and draw the fermenting liquid into puncheons or pipes. Two or three days from the time of transferring to the puncheons will be sufficient to terminate the fermentation, when casks can be filled with wine taken from one of the same kind. The filling process is repeated as soon as the wine is quiet and commencing to clear, then the casks can be bunged and allowed to rest until ready for racking. It should be observed that the faucet from which the fermenting wine is drawn should be two inches above the bottom of the tank to prevent the sediment from flowing into the cask.

By this process I have succeeded to put through a large lot of wine, which, at present (four weeks from picking the grapes) is perfectly dry and almost crystal clear. This way of handling the grapes has many points in its favor:

- The must from the crusher or press is thoroughly assimilated and uniform, the press wine furnishing the necessary tannin to the whole batch.
- The wine goes to the casks the same stage of

fermentation and the same temperature, each cask completing its fermentation at the same time.

- Most of the extraneous matter adhering to the grapes at the time of crushing is separated and removed from the must before the fermentation is completed.

The fermentation of red wines at this vintage has proved a puzzle by the oldest and most practical wine makers and upset many theories which had heretofore been accepted as correct. The grapes being crushed in tanks as usual, whether at a high or low temperature,



have in a short time developed a most extraordinary fermentation, in some cases the temperature of the mash running as high as 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Such a degree of heat is considered fatal to a complete fermentation and will almost invariably kill the fermenting germs and leave the wine sweet. It is a condition so

abnormal that [it] will result [in] milk sour (lactic acid) wine.

As soon as the fermentation is arrested, I immediately drain the wine, pumping it into an empty vat. The pomace is pressed and the wine expressed is pumped into the same vat. It may contain five or ten degrees [of] unfermented sugar, but the same process is practiced. I then crush fresh grapes over this unfermented wine in quantity equal to the wine already in the tank. In the course of a few hours new fermentation takes place, the must is stirred three times a day, and at the end of the week the fermentation will be over and dry.