

These are the notes and adventures for Alaric's first attempt at brewing. Hopefully these notes will be useful and entertaining for those who read them. Here goes!

This brewing experiment involves two types of grape juice (Pinot Noir and Barbera) and creating three different blends (25/75, 50/50, and 75/25), with the goal of having some wine available for Pennsic 2020.

The order of the notes is the most recent entry is at the top. Makes it easier to find the recent updates. Minimal scrolling!

08-Jan-2020

Clear. Good fingers. Pinot finish.

75P / 25B

Bottled.

50P / 50P

Clear. Strong fingers. Pinot at the start and finish. Barbera in the middle. Fruity nose.

Bottled.

12-Oct-2019

75P / 25B

Nice ruby red. Good fingers. Tart finish. Musty overtones. Remove oak chips. Sharp bite around the edges.

Racking again.

50P / 50P

Ruby red color. Slightly fruity nose. Semi dry and slightly sharp. Strong fingers. Slight mineral flavor. Remove oak chips.

Racking again.

25P / 75P

Medium fingers. Dark red. Floral / sweet on the nose. Tart finished.

Bottling now.

24-May-2019

Most of the oak chips have sunk to the bottom of the carboys and some bubbles on the surface. There is an occasional “glub” but not much fermentation happening at this point.

11-May-2019

Thanks Muirgheal and Jorundr for the help!

75 Pinot Noir / 25 Barbera	50 Pinot Noir / 50 Barbera	25 Pinot Noir / 75 Barbera
Racked; moved to glass carboy with 0.7 oz of untoasted oak LD Carlson Company.	Racked; moved to glass carboy with 0.7 oz of untoasted oak LD Carlson Company.	Racked; moved to glass carboy with 0.7 oz of untoasted oak LD Carlson Company.
Very strong fingers, slight effervescent, thick, slightly yeasty, much particulate visible	Slightly effervescent, medium fingers, almost no particulate; very clear.	Lots of particulate, darkest color in the glass, medium to medium - light fingers, thin mouth feel
Pinot Noir note then finishing with Barbera.	More balanced, smoother, less difference between notes	Sweetest of the three, most drinkable of the three.
Needs at least one more year. Peak around 3 to 5 years.	Possibly ready by 12th Night 2020 as young red.	Will probably be ready first; possibly good by 12th night. 2020.
Next racking post Pennsic - before November.	Next racking post Pennsic - before November.	Next racking post Pennsic - before November.

11-May-2019

Racking day has arrived! I've moved everything upstairs so it is ready to go.

Learning Moment: When I went to carry the buckets up, I couldn't use the handle for one of them because the airlock was in an inconvenient place! Next time, when putting the lids and airlocks on, make sure that the handle can still be used, otherwise it is more difficult to move the bucket!

The oak chips are soaking in sanitized water ... 0.7 oz (dry weight) for each bucket.

09-May-2019

I made a trip to [South Hills Brewing Supply](#) to get the next round of supplies: three 5-gallon carboys, a siphon, tubing, hydrometer, wine thief, and stoppers. Racking is on Saturday ... Jorundr and Muirgheal are coming over to help.

Also tonight was the Debatable Lands Brewer's Guild meeting. Got to help bottle mead and came home with a couple dozen bottles for later! Some of them have all the labels removed and some still need some work.

07-May-2019

The yeast is almost done ... only an occasional "gloop". Time to get ready to rack the wine!

20-Apr-2019

The yeast is doing it's thing ... tasty grape juice glubbing away in the basement!

01-Apr-2019

IT IS ALIVE!!! No fooling! I went downstairs to put the extra bucket and gear away and while I was there, each bucket in succession gave a "gloop" (they were even in order, from left to right!). The yeast is doing it's thing. Go yeast, go!!

31-Mar-2019

Jorundr and Muirgheal came over to help blend the wine. They brought some extra buckets as well as seals for the airlocks. Important things to have. Before they arrived Alaric removed the yeast from the fridge, mixed up the sanitizer, and brought the bathroom scale down because blending by weight, rather than volume, would be easier. Again, thanks Jorundr!

Some Juice Fun Facts:

Each bucket of juice weighed (I should probably say massed :-)) 27 kg, with an empty bucket weighing in at 1kg. With the three planned blends, the breakdown was (approx):

Blend	Pinot Noir	Barbera	Bucket	Total
25% Pinot Noir / 75% Barbera	4.4kg	13.0kg	1kg	18.4kg
50% Pinot Noir / 50% Barbera	8.7kg	8.7kg	1kg	18.4kg

75% Pinot Noir / 25% Barbera	13.0kg	4.4kg	1kg	18.4kg
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Each blend is approximately 4 gallons, which should be around 20 bottles each.

The kitchen scale was adequate but because it was solar powered, it timed out so it didn't display the weight for a long enough time.

While Jorundr and Alaric worked on sanitizing the buckets, lids and pitchers, Muirgheal sanitized the airlocks and stoppers. Also, the yeast was "smacked" in order to activate it. Finding the packet inside the packet is harder than it looks! Kind of like "whack-a-mole" when the moles move, rather than just ducking into a hole. But the yeast was started so the blending could begin.

We first blended the two 75%/25% blends, figuring that what was left after those two would be the 50%/50% blend. As expected, not all the juice made it into the buckets, but that is where Jessi and Dale come in (ok, more Dale than Jessi). They helped clean up the mess! Grape juice ... tasty! :-) Dogs for the win!

The airlocks were appropriately filled with sanitizer.

After getting the juice into the buckets the lids were put on and then they were carried down to the basement where they'll live while the yeast performs its magic. While downstairs the airlocks were installed. Alaric decided to show his strength and one stopper went into the wine, which required that it be fetched out, sanitized, and installed again. Try number two was more successful!

A final cleaning / sanitizing of the outside of the buckets and they're left to their own devices. Alaric plans to check over the next several days to make sure the fermentation is taking place. Racking current planned for around Memorial Day weekend.

Thanks Muirgheal and Jorundr for your help!

Lessons Learned:

Get a better scale for weighing. A postal scale was suggested.

Use a dropcloth when blending. That way anything that spills doesn't go on the floor. Sorry dogs!

Don't push the airlock in too far or you might be fishing the stopper out of the wine!

Sanitize **everything**! Sanitize **everything**! Sanitize **everything**!

30-Mar-2019

Alaric drove to [Luva Bella Winery](#) to pick up his juice. One bucket of Pinot Noir and one bucket of Barbera. These are both from Chile. While there also picked up several air locks, some oak chips, and sanitizer. Because you sanitize **everything**! Thanks Jorundr for the advice on what else I needed to pick up!

The folks at Luva Bella were great, offering samples while we waited as well as helping me find what I needed. I felt out of my league **only** picking up two buckets ... there were people picking up a dozen (or more)! But there were others only picking up two or three buckets, so not so bad. I had a great experience and would go to them again!

Lessons Learned:

Stay for lunch next time!

18-Mar-2019

Alaric ordered the yeast. Three packets of [Summation Red](#) ordered from [Midwest Supplies](#) ... thanks Jorundr for the advice!