



ABCCORK PRESENTS

Punching Down The Cap: What is that?

What is the Cap? Why would you punch it down?

The Cap is the solid mass of skins, pits and stems that forms at the top of your wine during fermentation. Punching the cap down simply refers to the process of pushing it back into the wine to keep it moist during fermentation.

You only need to worry about punching down the cap if you have made a wine from grapes and not a concentrate.

Benefits

- Punching the cap down is very beneficial to your wine, especially if you are trying to make a big, bold red wine. Recall, it is these stems, skins and pits that provide red with its colour and rich tannic flavours.
- There are other benefits to punching down the cap that go beyond red wines. Punching down in the early stages of fermentation introduces oxygen to the wine and thus gives fermentation a jumpstart.
- Punching down helps the yeast mix in with the must which also aids fermentation.
- Helps prevent the growth of harmful bacteria by keeping the temperature of the wine down during fermentation.
- Enhances the colour, tannins, flavour, astringency and phenolic compounds in your wine.

How Do You Punch the Cap?

Firstly, make sure you have enough room to punch the cap as you will displace your wine and you don't want to lose any! Make sure your carboy is at least 1 gal larger than the volume of your wine.

Chose your tool wisely. The best choice for the home winemaker is a stainless steel potato masher. It is the right size and is easy to use, clean and find. Avoid wooden tools as their porous surfaces may harbour bacteria.

When you punch down, gently break down the cap and eliminate any lumps. The surface of the wine should be smooth and moist.

Punch down three times a day after pitching the yeast. Fermentation will happen quite rapidly after punching. The CO₂ produced during fermentation floats the cap to the top easily. Do not let it become dry or caked on the surface of the wine. Eventually the cap will stop forming and the particles will start to sink instead of float. This means that fermentation is slowing down and it is time to press.



ABCCORK
YOUR ONE STOP SHOPPING SOURCE SINCE 1972

www.abccork.com
London, Ontario N6N 1N7