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Sanitation Brings Taste into Fruition in Winemaking

We've all experienced it in the brew-your-own world, that off taste or off odor in one of our batches of wine. The most common reason for this is using less than sanitary equipment to brew wine. This article will discuss what sanitation means, how and when it should be employed and the article will give you some insight into the chemicals commonly used in sanitation.

Sanitizing your equipment is one of the most important steps in the brew-your-own process. It is not the same thing as sterilizing or cleaning. Sanitization involves reducing or removing bacteria and undesired micro organisms from your equipment through heat or chemical means. It can be a simple process and involves some basic tools: water, brushes (long or short handled, soft or hard bristled) and a chemical agent. Before going any further into the sanitation cycle this article will discuss some sanitation chemical agents.

Sanitation methods vary from simple boiling techniques to the involved application of strong chemicals. Boiling is the most basic way to sanitize equipment. Although this is often cheap and easy, boiling can be time consuming and hazardous if you are not careful around hot water! A common chemical used in sanitation is chlorine. It is used in our drinking water to kill bacteria, is the most universal sanitizer, and is found in many household cleaners. Diluted chlorine can be used to sanitize your winemaking equipment, however the equipment must be thoroughly rinsed once chlorine has been used. If not properly rinsed, the equipment will carry the taste and smell of chlorine and this will adversely affect the taste and smell of your wine. Iodine can also be used for sanitizing. Unlike chlorine, you do not have to rinse your equipment after it has been sanitized with iodine. Quick and convenient as this sanitizer may be, users should be aware - iodine will stain your clothes or skin and be as toxic as chlorine. A product designed specifically for sanitation in the winemaking and beer making industry is B-Brite. This powder, when mixed with water, cleans the equipment with active oxygen. B-Brite has the benefit of being chlorine free and the ability to clean fermentation residue. Another gem in the sanitizing world is Campden tablets. These can be crushed and mixed with water which can be used as a sanitizing solution. The last product to be discussed is not the least by far! Potassium Metabisulfate Powder works well as a sanitizing agent because it also inhibits bacterial growth. This powder can be mixed with water to create a



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sanitizing solution. It is not necessary to rinse potassium metabisulfate after use, however great care needs to be taken when mixing the sanitizing solution. This article does not supply the best mixing or preparation method for each of the sanitizers. It is best to follow the manufacture's instructions for the sanitizer you choose to employ. Most manufactures will provide directions and instructions for their product and you should follow their recommendations.

Having knowledge of the better sanitation chemicals available, it is time to discuss the sanitation cycle. This cycle should always follow one general rule: wash everything before you use it and wash it again when you are done. This involves inspecting the equipment, cleaning the equipment (paying attention to small crevices where bacteria like to grow), sanitize the equipment and rinsing it before it is used. Once you are finished using the equipment, it is best to follow the sanitation process once again: inspecting, cleaning and sanitizing. You should be sanitizing any piece of equipment that comes into contact with your wine – including your hands. The most common pieces of equipment used in winemaking are: measuring devices, stirring paddles, hydrometers, stoppers, airlocks, carboys, siphoning equipment, racking canes, bottles, tubing, fermenting buckets, thermometer, wine thieves, sample jars and bottling wands. It is also important to ensure that the environment you are working in is sanitized. This includes counter tops, sinks, floors and door handles.

The sanitization cycle is intuitive and involves common sense. It is an extremely important step in winemaking and will make all the difference in the fruition of your wine. Sanitized equipment and brewing environment are easy to attain if you follow the sanitation cycle and use reputable sanitizing chemicals. To order sanitizers online, visit www.abccork.com.



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