

LES GARAGISTES

PUNCH DOWN CHECK-LIST

If fermentation is under way, yeasts will produce CO₂ which will push the grape skins to the top of the fermenter, forming a “cap.” Submerging – or punching down – that cap will add flavor to the wine, even out the temperature, and give the yeasts much-needed oxygen to complete their debauched sugar-binge.

1. **WASH YOUR HANDS**, and roll your sleeves way up.

Then, for *each* fermenter:

2. Pull the cover off the fermenter – if it’s one of the wine tents, you can leave it hooked to the ceiling. Try your best not to get it wet with wine!

3. **SMELL**. Give the wine goo (or “must”, as it’s called) a sniff: anything off? Especially rotten eggs or fingernail polish? Make a note!

WARNING: Beware the CO₂ pooling in the fermenter! Do not dip your head too close to the surface of the must for too long!

4. **PUNCH DOWN THE “MUST.”** Grab the punchdown tool from the wall (it looks like a big plunger with a green bowl at the end), and start pushing the “cap” of grape skins back into the wine. Keep punching until the all the grape clumps are broken up and the cap is uniformly wet. The idea is to give things a good stir, but not to grind any seeds, stems or green berries lurking at the bottom, since those would squeeze harsh tannins into the wine. Put your thumb over the top of the punchdown tool tube to ensure no surprise eruptions of vino!
5. **MOG CHECK:** spend a few minutes fishing out any “Materials Other than Grapes” – leaves, stems, green berries – you see. Then, when you’re done, don’t forget to **take the MOG outside** before you leave!
6. Now grab the dairy thermometer to check the temp, and the slotted spoon, hydrometer and plastic cylinder to check sugar (see next page to ID).
7. **CHECK THE TEMPERATURE.** Drop the thermometer into the must and leave it for a minute or two while you do the sugar reading. We’re looking for Fahrenheit: this is America, pal!
8. **TAKE A SUGAR (HYDROMETER) READING.** Using the slotted spoon as a sieve, place the spoon over the mouth of the cylinder and dunk it under the surface of the must. Once it’s full, pull it out, scoop out any detritus or bubbles from the top of the cylinder, and drop in the hydrometer. Spin it in your fingers to

shake any bubbles, and note where the waterline is on the scale (*see right*): that’s how much sugar is left to ferment.

9. **THOROUGHLY RINSE** the thermometer, hydrometer, cylinder, slotted spoon AND the punchdown tool. For the latter, that means not only the outsides, but the inside: spray down the barrel of the handle.
10. **WRITE DOWN YOUR READINGS** on the board.

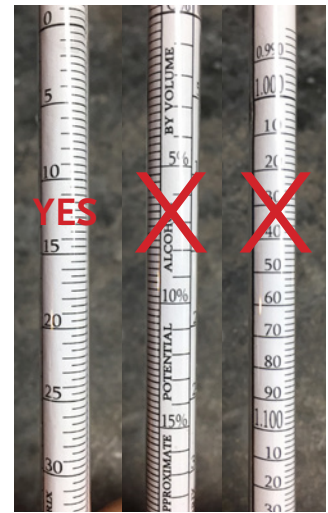
THEN, REPEAT STEPS 2-10 FOR THE NEXT FERMENTER

All done with the science?
Now the all-critical cleanup.

One of the big differences between pros and amateurs is sanitation. Which are we? That’s correct!

1. **MAKE SOME SULFITE WATER.** Add about a half teaspoon of metabisulfite (in the white foil bag) to a Nancy’s tub, add water, and stir. Don’t get too close!
 2. **WIPE DOWN EACH FERMENTER.** Using the sponge and the sulfite water, wipe down the inside of the fermenter down to the water/wine line. **Keep your sulfite water clean:** after wiping some grape goo, rinse the sponge in the sink before dipping it back into the sulfite water for the next wipe.
- All surfaces above the top of the cap should look showroom new, not smeary!
3. **REPLACE THE FERMENTER COVERS**, again trying not to get them wet with wine.
 4. **RINSE ALL THE TOOLS** in the sink and set them to dry in the rack, on the peg board, or on the wall.
 5. **TOSS ALL MOG** and grape detritus outside into the green bin. Don’t leave anything for the fruit flies to eat!
 6. Everything as clean as when you came? If so, then you’re done!

THE PROPER HYDROMETER SCALE TO READ



(in short, if you see 1.000 or a %, it’s not the one you want)

TAKE A MOMENT TO CHECK EVERYTHING IS CLEAN BEFORE YOU LEAVE YOUR WINE (AND THE NEXT GARAGISTE, AND MY WIFE) WILL THANK YOU

YOUR TOOLS



- A. The **SULFITE BOWL**. Noting how clean the sulfite water is, resist the urge to take a sip because it's got...
- B. Potassium metabisulfite, or in winemakers' parlance, "**META**." It's a powerful anti-microbial we use to clean stuff but also to put into the wine to inhibit bad bacteria. For punchdown, sprinkle a half-teaspoon into the sulfite bowl (B), fill the bowl with water, and stir until the sulfite is dissolved. Don't get your nose too close! Prepare a fresh batch each punchdown.
- C. The multi-celled, porous, sanitary instrument inspired by the invertebrate animals of the phylum Porifera. A (again look how clean) **SPONGE**!
- D. The **HYDROMETER CYLINDER** you'll fill with wine to take a sugar reading. This will (or should) be waiting for you in the drying rack.
- E. The **DAIRY THERMOMETER**. It floats! This, the hydrometer and the slotted spoon should be hanging on the wall.
- G. La cuillère perforée! So much sexier than "**SLOTTED SPOON**," oui? Use this over the mouth of the cylinder to keep grape bits out as you take a sample.
- F. The **HYDROMETER**. Fill the cylinder with wine, scoop off any detritus or bubbles on the surface, then plunge this baby in. The measurement you're looking for is at the waterline, in "Balling," short for "brix balling," a measure of how much sugar is in the wine.

BACK DOOR COMBO:

5739