

One-Week Wine

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Tools used in this project

- [Bicycle](#) (1) *While not required, this vehicle allows for a fast rate of travel and easy access to roadside trees.*

Parts relevant to this project

- [Fruit](#) (1/2 gallon)
- [Sock](#) (1)
- [Jug](#) (1)
- [Vessel](#) (1) *A second vessel for use as a transfer container*
- [Funnel](#) (1) *not required but certainly helpful*
- [Yeast](#) (1) *wine, beer, champagne, or bread*

In June 2006, I biked through Greece for seven weeks. The summer brings hot, arid conditions there, yet feral roadside fruit trees grow by the millions, particularly figs, cherries, and mulberries. The berries made for excellent road fare, but it occurred to me that mulberries also could make allowable wine. So I crushed the berries by hand, collected the juice in my 1-quart bottle, and added bread yeast to turn the fructose into our good friend, alcohol. I snugly lodged the bottle in a travel pannier on my bike while the juice fermented, and in four tries my results were consistent and potent: full-bodied, no-joke wine within one week — no corkscrew needed.



Step 1 — Pick a half-gallon of berries.

- Depending on the wealth of the tree or bush, this may take as little as 30 minutes or more than an hour.



Step 2 — Juice the berries.

- Note: For this step you'll want a water source nearby for washing off when you've finished.
- Take a clean sock or a sack fashioned out of cheesecloth and fill it about 3/4 full with mulberries. Squeeze from the top down. The juice will seep through the fabric and down over your fingers.
- Carefully drip or funnel it into your bottle, or a temporary collection vessel with a wide brim. When the berries in the sock have been squeezed dry, discard the pulp and refill the sock. Keep on juicing.




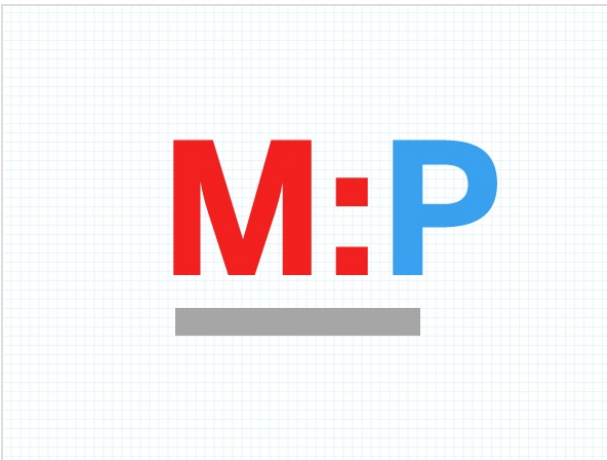
Step 3 — Jar the juice.

- When your berry collection is spent, pour the juice into your sealable container. You'll want a screw cap, as it can be tightened almost all the way — but not quite — and thus allow for the fermentation gases to escape.
- Leave 1 1/2" of empty space to accommodate the bubbling and frothing that occurs as fermentation commences. Drink any excess juice you may have.




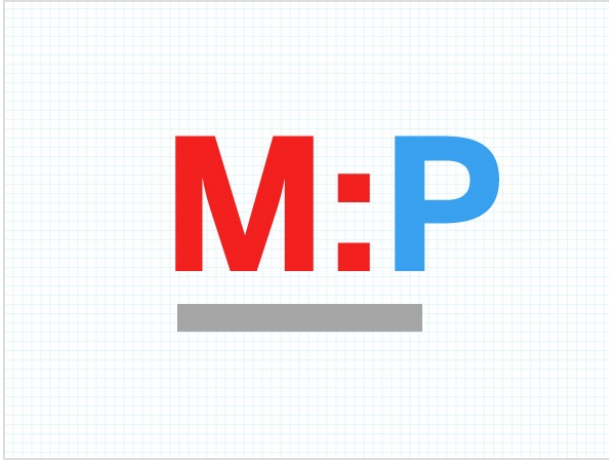
Step 4 — Add the yeast.

- Note: Winemakers and brewers use specially bred yeasts, which are available at homebrew and winemaking supplies shops. Bread yeast from the local countryside baker also does the trick, and a pinch is all you need for a quart of wine. 
- Sprinkle the yeast over the surface of the juice (no need to stir it in). It can be entertaining to watch the yeast particulates begin to wake up from their dormancy as they react to the surplus of sugar in their midst.
- Within several hours they will begin to swell. Bubbles may appear around them, and within 30 hours, a foamy head will have developed on top of the fruit juice.



Step 5 — Read these warnings.

- **WARNING:** Beware of explosion from pressure! To avoid a minor disaster, you must periodically loosen the cap to allow the pent-up gases to escape. If your bottle remains stationary during your winemaking enterprise, you can keep the cap loosely sealed for the duration of the fermentation. You may hear a persistent fizzing or whistling noise as the gases seep into the open air. 
- When traveling, however, circumstances are more complicated. On the bike, I keep my bottle tightly sealed to prevent spillage. Meanwhile, the constant disturbance produced by the rigors of travel actually invigorates fermentation, thus increasing the rate of pressurization. At traffic lights and food and water breaks, I always loosen the cap for a moment, then reseal it before moving onward.
- In the midst of heavy fermentation, never completely remove the cap, no matter how badly you wish to peek inside at your frothing wine. Carbon dioxide bubbles will abruptly expand in the liquid, and within seconds the juice will accelerate upward. If the cap is not replaced in an instant, much of your potential wine will spill over the brim and be lost.



Step 6 — Ferment.

- Allow 7–10 days for complete fermentation. By day 4 or 5, you will notice a deceleration of activity in the bottle and a progressively weaker hiss each time you crack the cap to release the pressure.
- If you wish to drink your mulberry wine slightly bubbly, enjoy it now, but it will be less potent than fully fermented, non-bubbling wine.



Step 7 — Decant.

- To prepare your wine for consumption, let the bottle sit undisturbed for 6–8 hours. Expired yeast cells and other “dust” precipitates from the liquid and forms a sooty layer of sediment on the bottom of the bottle.
- Pour the wine into a clean vessel, leaving waste matter behind. Your clean sock may be used as a filter.
- Wash out the fermentation vessel, pour the wine back in, and seal the cap.



Step 8 — Drink!

- Mulberry wine is a rustic, punchy, big-boned beverage, dominated by yeast aromas and lingering traces of berries. There is little tannic quality, making it surprisingly smooth.
- The alcohol probably runs at 8% by volume, although I never had the opportunity to measure. Don't expect a first-rate drink — this is travel wine. Enjoy it in the afternoon, but remember that it's always 5 p.m. somewhere, and in Europe it doesn't really matter anyway.

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