

The Wine-Maker's Calendar - June

Contributed by cab and gil

Summer's here. Instead of dancing in the streets, how about getting some wine on the go?

June is here. Summer at last, most years at least. And finally it's the start of what I think of as wine making proper. With fruit.

Not the very prime of fruit wine season yet, but it's when I hope to get at least a couple of batches on the go. When exactly you'll do this rather depends on where you are in the country; here in Cambridge the strawberry glut is big and early, followed by summer raspberries and currants shortly afterwards. Even gooseberries hit their prime in June.

But there are also other wines to make this month; summer herbs, and the first vegetable wines are do-able, including the famous (if you remember the classic comedy *The Good Life*) pea pod 'burgundy'.

(my first batch of the month, rose petal)

Gil says : Here in Scotland, the start of June marks the last chance to make Nettle wine (see April recipes) until the autumn's new growth. They're starting to flower and getting a bit coarse, so just pick the very tips, including the flower bud. Although the gorse is past its best, the Broom is looking good, and a wine can be made from its flowers using the Gorse Flower wine recipe from the May Winemakers Calendar. Not as coconutty as gorse, but an awful lot less prickly to pick. Hawthorn blossom wine is another one for early June (up here) - they're in full flower now, though may have finished down south. Elder trees are coming into blossom in the valleys, though not yet up in the hills : you can make Elderflower wine (see May for recipes). The classic wine for midsummer has to be Oakleaf - the leaves are a good size now, so picking 8 pints volume of them for a gallon of wine doesn't take as long as earlier in the season, but they're not too tannic either (see May for recipe). The wild roses are in bloom : *rosa canina* (the big-petalled bright pink ones); *rosa spinosissima* (the smaller creamy yellow ones) and the pale pinky-white ones : you could make a Rose Petal wine from them, using the recipe in this article.

Gooseberry Wine

3lb to 6lb gooseberries

2 1/2 lb to 3 lb sugar

Juice of 1/2 lemon

1 gallon water

1 cup strong tea

1 tsp wine nutrient

Pectinase

Champagne yeast

(gooseberries growing wild in Cambridge; alas, that bush is no more)

Gooseberry wine is, quite simply, as good as anything you can make. Gooseberries make a fabulous wine, in a good year indistinguishable from a good champagne gone a little flat.

Now, I know that I've covered a big range of gooseberry quantities there... I usually use about 3 1/2 lb, but you can really push this as far as you like. 6lb of very ripe berries with 3lb of sugar gives you a sweet dessert wine, 3lb of dry berries with 2 1/2 lb of sugar gives you a light, crisp table wine. Take your pick.

Put the gooseberries in a straining bag, in a sterile bucket. Boil up your water with the wine nutrient, sugar, and lemon juice, and pour onto the gooseberries. Let them cool, and when cool squish them up with the end of a sterilised rolling pin (or something), add a teaspoon of pectinase and also the activated champagne yeast.

Leave it in this primary ferment for a week, then decant into a demijon and progress as usual.

Now, gooseberries on their own make a superb wine, but don't stop there. Why not try gooseberry and elderflower, gooseberry and redcurrant, or even a gooseberry mead?

Strawberry Wine

4lb strawberries

3 lb sugar

1 gallon of water

1 teaspoon yeast nutrient

1 cup strong tea

1 teaspoon citric acid

1 teaspoon pectinase

champagne yeast

Strawberry wine is gorgeous, but you have to do this right...

Put the fruit into the straining bag, and put that into a sterile bucket. Boil the water along with the tea, citric acid, yeast nutrient and sugar. Pour this on to the fruit, and when cool add the pectinase and yeast.

Give it a day or so, then mash the fruit up with a sterilised rolling pin or something, then one more day in primary ferment. Rack into a demijon and keep it in the dark, or you'll lose the colour. Ferment out as normal, and drink it young. It's better younger than older.

Broad Bean Wine

4lb of old broad beans (shelled weight)

4 oz raisins

2 1/2 lb sugar

1 lemon

1 gallon water

General purpose yeast

Funny one this one. I mean, who would have 4 lb of old broad beans? Well, you'd be surprised. Go wandering along by allotments towards the end of the month and it ain't unlikely that you can swap something for a binbag full of old beans that are going past their best.

Anyway... Weight the beans, out of their shells, and put them into a thumping great big pan. Add the water, and boil them for an hour. Some of the old recipes now say you can eat the beans, but generally speaking, don't. If they're old and tough enough to withstand an hour boiling, theres nowt you can put them in to hide how nasty they'll be by now. This is the important part; don't break them. Don't mash them up at all.

Scoop out the beans, add the sugar, raisins, and juice of the lemon, bring back to the boil and pour into a sterile bucket. Add the yeast when cool, and leave in primary ferment for a week, then rack into a demijon and progress as normal. Good to drink in about 8 months.

Lettuce Pray

3lb lettuce

1/2 lb raisins

2 oranges

1 lemon

3 lb sugar

1 gallon water

general purpose wine yeast

I know, tacky name.

It's in June that the first spring lettuces are starting to bolt. Again, either pick your own spares that you didn't eat or go scavenging down on the plots, someone will have some lettuce going to seed. You can either compost your old lettuce, use it to feed to snails to purge them, or make it into wine. Your choice.

Pluck off any bad or dirty leaves, and boil the lettuce for about 20 minutes. Take out the lettuce gloop, add the sugar till dissolved, and pour into a sterile bucket into which you have squeezed the lemon, oranges, and tossed the fruit rinds in too, and of course the raisins. When cool also add the activated yeast. Give it a week in primary before decanting into a demijon.

Peapod Burgundy

3lb peapods

2 1/2 lb sugar

1 gallon water

2 teaspoons citric acid

1 teaspoon yeast nutrient

1 teaspoon pectinase

1 cup strong tea

Champagne yeast

Remember the stuff in the Good Life that always had Margo acting like she'd be all over Tom if she had any more of it? Well, this is it, although this recipe is I think better than the one Tom Good would have used (if I'm any judge, he'd be using the one from CJJ Berrys 'Winemakers Companion').

Peapods can be saved whenever you have them and frozen till you have enough; heres my current 'stash', I'm about half way to havnig enough for a batch.

Boil your peapods with the sugar, citric acid, tea and yeast nutrient for about 20 minutes, then pour the whole schebang into a sterile bucket. Add the pectinase and activated champagne yeast when cool.

Give it a couple of weeks in primary, then strain into a demijon. Takes a good while to clear, longer to be drinkable, longer still to be good. But what else are you going to do with your peapods?

Thyme Flower Mead

4 cups fresh thyme (sprigs and flowers)

3 lb honey

1 gallon wine

1 cup strong tea

juice of 2 lemons

champagne yeast

The above is an orange thyme plant in my garden. Along with its sisters, I hope it'll provide enough for my next batch.

Gently simmer the honey in the water, with the tea, lemon juice and yeast nutrient, until no more scum floats off (usually 30-40 minutes). Keep skimming the scum off.

Put the thyme into a straining bag in a sterile bucket, pour on the water/honey mix, cover, let it cool. Add the activated yeast, and stir it once a day for four days. Remove the straining bag and decant the liquid into a demijohn, ferment out as normal.

Apricot Wine

4lb apricots

juice of 1 lemon

3 lb sugar

1 gallon water

1 cup tea

1 teaspoon yeast nutrient

1 teaspoon pectinase

white wine or general purpose yeast

Keep your eyes open for some time in late June when the price of apricots in the shops plummets. There'll be a day or two when the local market is practically giving them away. Then pounce.

Half and stone the apricots, put them into your straining bag in a sterile bucket. Boil the water with sugar, yeast nutrient, tea and lemon juice, pour on to the fruit and add the yeast and pectinase when cool. Give it about a week in primary.

Good to drink when surprisingly young. The wine, not the drinker.

Gil's Broom Flower Champagne

(kaboom, kaboom, kaboom...)

Ingredients

4-6 pints broom flowers

1lb 9oz sugar

juice of 1 lemon

1 litre white grape juice

1/3 mug black tea (pot dregs)

yeast

OK, here's the proper method to do a flower champagne. Requires a bit of forethought, because you start the fermentation, and add the flowers after (rather than both at the same time). But you can add the flowers as you start, so don't worry.

1. Boil 2 pints water and dissolve the sugar in it. Allow to cool to finger-warm.
2. Put into a plastic fermentation bucket, and add the grape juice, lemon juice and tea.
3. Make a yeast starter, and add to bucket

Making a yeast starter

Does everyone know what a yeast starter is ?

If not, it's this :

- a. Boil some water, and fill a mug about 1/4 full.
- b. Add a teaspoon of sugar and stir to dissolve

- c. Add cold water to about 1/2 mug
- d. Stick your finger in - it should feel tepid
- e. If it is, add 1 teaspoon of yeast, and put in a warm place for 30 minutes to start working
- f. Add it to your wine mix in the bucket

Back to the recipe...

- 4. When the yeast is working, leave the bucket in a warm place for 2-3 days to get the most vigorous bit over with.
- 5. Go and pick the flowers.
- 6. Put them in a muslin bag / jelly bag or what ever, tied up with string, and suspended in the liquid.
- 7. The bag will float. Sterilise a heavy plate and put it on top to weight it down.
- 8. Leave to ferment for 5 more days

- 9. Take the plate and bag out
- 10. Strain the must through another jelly bag or whatever into a demijohn, put an airlock on, and leave to ferment out.
- 11. Rack as usual.
- 12. Leave for a couple of months.
- 13. Rack again, as usual

Then see instructions for Nettle Champagne in May Calendar for turning what you have into a sparkling wine.

You could make an ordinary non-sparkling wine using broom flowers :
just increase the sugar to 2.5lbs per gallon. After second racking (13.
above), leave for 2-3 months, then bottle.

Gil's Rhubarb Wine

Use same method but the following ingredients per gallon if you want a drier wine :

2.75-3lb rhubarb

1kg-2.5lb sugar

small piece of bashed ginger

juice of 1 lemon

1 litre white grape juice

1/2 mug black tea

yeast

For general principles of rhubarb wine, see the April article. Here in the South we get our rhubarb earlier than Gil does, where the chill wind rushing through the passes keeps things a little behind. And the weather is colder too.

If you use 3lb rhubarb or less per gallon, you don't need to bother with precipitated chalk to neutralise the oxalic acid - it also neutralises the flavour.

Clover Wine

1 gallon of clover blossoms, red and white

1 gallon water

3lb sugar

1 teaspoon citric acid

juice of 1 orange

1 teaspoon yeast nutrient

1 cup of strong tea

general purpose wine yeast

Put the clover blossoms into your nylon straining bag, and that into a sterile bucket.

Boil the water with the sugar, orange juice, tea, citric acid and yeast nutrient. Pour that on to the flowers, cover tightly, add the yeast when it is cool. Give it a week in primary, then ferment out as normal. Makes a surprisingly aromatic wine that is good to drink about 3 months after bottling.

Redcurrant Wine

3lb red (or white) currants

3lb sugar

1 gallon water

1 cup strong tea

1 teaspoon yeast nutrient

General purpose wine yeast

Make this wine by exactly the same method as the strawberry wine (above). You're aiming at a medium pale rose here, unless you're using

white currants, so keep it in the dark. Don't add any acid to this wine; it won't need lemon juice or citric acid.

Rubus Surprise (or what to do with tayberries, loganberries, raspberries...)

3lb berries

2 1/2 lb sugar

1 gallon water

1 cup strong tea

1/2 teaspoon citric acid

1 teaspoon yeast nutrient

You might have a few fruit bushes here and there producing loganberries, raspberries, tayberries (like those above), salmonberries, dewberries, etc. And if you do, this is a general purpose Rubus recipe that'll work for nearly any of them. Bear in mind that if you're using a very strongly flavoured berry you may end up with a rather overpowering wine, so blending berries together is always a good idea. I like to keep a few of different sorts in the freezer till I have enough to make a batch of wine.

Other than not having to stone the fruit, make exactly the same way as for apricot wine (above).

Rose Petal Wine

Dark red roses like the one above (from my garden) will make dark rose wine.

Make using exactly the same recipe as for thyme (above), using either 2 1/2 lb of sugar or 3 lb of honey. Use the blossom that falls from any really aromatic roses, as long as you know they haven't been sprayed (some rose growers go a bit mad fighting aphids!).