

# The Wine-Maker's Calendar - August

Contributed by cab and gil

cab and gil walk you through it...

August is a big month for wine making, at least here in East Anglia. Early in the month comes the hunt for wild plums, followed by rowan berries, and then along come the blackberries.

I do like herb wines, and vegetable wines, but theres something about making wine from wild fruit that seems somehow the right way to be making wine. Its taking free, excellent ingredients and mixing them with just a few extremely cheap extras and turning them into a sort of bottled summer to go with dinners for the rest of the year.

However (says gil), here in Scotland, August is still a bit slack for wine-making fruit. Raspberries, redcurrants, various combinations thereof both wild and cultivated, and blackcurrants, are the main interest. There are probably still some gooseberries left to harvest as well. See the July calendar for recipes. There will be bilberries (see below for recipe), though it might take you all month to pick 4lb ! Towards the end of August, the brambles begin to ripen.

The fruit harvest north of the border really starts happening in September : brambles, rowans, plums, and damsons.

So this month we're concentrating on recipes that make full use of the August fruit glut.

## Plum Wine

4lb plums

Water to 1 gallon

2 1/2 lb sugar

1 cup of strong tea

1 teaspoon yeast nutrient

1 teaspoon pectinase

1/2 teaspoon citric acid (if the plums are very ripe)

All purpose, white or red wine yeast.

Put the plums into a straining bag, and that into the sterile bucket. Get the rest of the ingredients, save the yeast and pectinase, boiling, and pour it onto the plums. Cover, let it cool, add the yeast and pectinase. Give it about a week in primary, and rack off as normal.

Plums come in all sorts of colours and shapes. Dark plums give a darker wine, greengages give a very pale white. Take your pick, and experiment with different yeasts for different effects.

## Chez's Courageous Plum Mould Wine

I haven't tried this myself, but its a fascinating idea.

"I've also plucked up my courage and am going to try my neighbour's 'mould recipe' for the wine. You stone the fruit and shove them in a bucket covered in cold water. Then you put them in a warm place and forget about them for three weeks. After which, a thick crust of mould has formed on the top, which you remove and add your pectic enzyme, camden tap and sugar, before adding the yeast 24 hours later. After three days you stick it in a demijohn and proceed as usual, leaving at least a year before drinking. "

## Plum and Ginger

Make as above for plum wine, but add about an inch of grated ginger with the plums. Makes a light, spicy ginger wine.

## Plum Metheglin

4lb plums

Water to 1 gallon

3 lb honey

1 cinnamon stick

1 teaspoon allspice berries

1 teaspoon cloves

scraping of nutmeg

1 cup of strong tea

1 teaspoon yeast nutrient

1 teaspoon pectinase

1/2 teaspoon citric acid (if the plums are very ripe)

Champagne yeast

Put the honey in a pan with the water. Make a spice bag with the spices and muslin, pitch it into the pan with the yeast nutrient, citric acid, and tea. Bring to a low boil, and skim off any scum that comes. Keep it hot for a good 40 minutes or so, removing scum all the time.

Prepare the plums as for plum wine, and pour the honey mix on. Add activated yeast and pectinase when cool, and keep in primary for about a week before decanting into into a demijon.

### Slim Pickings Wine

1 lb plums

1 lb blackberries

1 lb apples

2 1/2 lb sugar

1 small tin of grape concentrate

water to 1 gallon

1 cup of strong tea

1 teaspoon yeast nutrient

1 teaspoon pectinase

Juice of 1 lemon

All purpose wine yeast

Cut up the apples, and proceed as for plum wine (above). A lovely wine in itself, play fast and loose with the ingredients but do keep at least 3lb of fruit in the recipe. Expect it to be variable, depending on what fruit you manage to find.

### Pear Windfall Liquid Gold

5 lb pears (windfalls or thinnings work fine)

4 1/2 lb sugar

1 teaspoon yeast nutrient

Champagne yeast

1 teaspoon pectinase

Sweeeeet. And strong. Lovely with it though. Described by one ex-girlfriend of mine as liquid pant remover.

Dice up the pears, put them in a straining bag, and proceed as for plum wine above. Be patient with it, it takes a long, long time to clear, even a year or so. But this is one of the finest sweet wines you will ever encounter.

### Bilberry Wine

4 lbs fresh bilberries

2 3/4 lbs finely granulated sugar

1 tsp citric acid

1 tsp pectic enzyme

1 cup strong tea

1 teaspoon yeast nutrient

Red wine yeast

1 teaspoon pectinase

Put the berries into a sterile straining bag in a sterilised bucket, and crush them. Boil the other ingredients (save the yeast and pectinase) and pour on, and cover tightly. When cool, add the activated yeast and pectinase. Allow three days in primary, and rack off into secondary. This makes for a full bodied red (albeit one that requires a lot of backbreaking berry picking!).

First of the Rowans

4lb rowans (ripe, but unbletted)

Water to 1 gallon

3 lb sugar

1 teaspoon yeast nutrient

1 teaspoon pectinase

1/2 teaspoon citric acid

All purpose wine yeast.

Procede as for plum wine above, but crush the berries up a bit when you add the pectinase, and only keep the wine in primary fermenter for four days.

Rowan wine made early like this remains kind of sharp and rowany, very wild tasting. Stay tuned for bletted rowan wine recipes later...

Cabs Annual Blackberry Binge Wine

4lb blackberries

2lb sugar

water to 1 gallon

1 teaspoon of yeast nutrient

1 teaspoon citric acid (or juice of a lemon)

1 cup strong tea

1 teaspoon pectinase

## Red wine yeast

Put berries in a straining bag, boil up everything else other than the pectinase and yeast, put the bag in a sterile bucket, pour the liquid on, add the yeast and pectinase when its cold. Transfer to a demijon after a few days, treat as for any other wine from that point.

This recipe makes a reasonably dry wine most years, although as wild blackberries do vary it sometimes turns out quite sweet. If you want to guarantee a sweeter result then up the sugar content to two and a half pounds.

If you like, you can do without the pectinase. Its not entirely necessary early in the season when the fruit is at its fattest and juiciest, but you will get more out of the fruit with pectinase.

## Gil's Blackberry Port

Here's another, stronger and sweeter than Cab's, more like port. Different method too.

(per gallon)

4lb blackberries

2.5lb sugar (to start with ) (1 kilo + 4oz)

2oz chopped raisins

juice of 1 lemon

1 litre red grape juice

1/2 mug strong black tea

1 tsp yeast

1 tsp yeast nutrient (optional)

1 tsp pectic enzyme

1 tsp sodium metabisulphite

1. Put berries and raisins in a fermentation bucket with a lid, mash with potato masher, pour on 2 pts boiling water, and add 1 tsp sulphite to sterilise fruit (especially if manky), and 1 tsp pectic enzyme.
2. Leave to steep for at least 24 hrs, stirring occasionally.
3. Boil up 1 pint water, and dissolve 1/2 kg sugar in it. Add to bucket.
4. When mix is finger-warm, make and add the yeast starter and yeast nutrient. Put bucket in a warm place. Ferment should start within 24 hrs.
5. Leave to do its stuff for 5-7 days

6. Dissolve the rest of the sugar (1/2 kilo + 4oz) in 1 pint water, and cool till warm
  7. Strain off the pulp through a colander / muslin bag into a demijohn
  8. Add the sugar solution, grape juice, lemon juice and tea.
  9. Top up with water to just below shoulders of DJ, and fit airlock.
  10. Measure the SG with a hydrometer. (expect between 1080 and 1100)
  11. Leave in a warm place to ferment further.
  12. When fermentation slows, take the SG again. When it is less than 1000, start adding more sugar, a little at a time [start with 2oz more], either dry, or in boiling water cooled down before adding to the DJ. Fermentation should get busier again.
  13. 5-7 days later, measure SG again. If less than 1000, add 2oz more sugar.
  14. 5-7 days later, measure SG again. If less than 1000, add 1-2oz more sugar.
  15. 5-7 days later, measure SG again. If less than 1000, add 1-2oz more sugar.
- That's probably enough, but if the yeast is still going, you can add more sugar, tapering off the amount you add each time

Sounds fiddly, but worth it for the port-ness

#### Treacodactyls Easy Blackberry Wine

The recipe I base my blackberry wine on is different too and much simpler. For a gallon it uses 4lb of fruit and 3lb of sugar, water and yeast. IIRC I add some red grape juice but nothing else and the wine tastes great (on the sweet side which I like). I don't have a problem with starting fermentation although it does take ages to ferment out. I've always found the wine to be very clear so no need for the pectic enzyme for me.

#### Grape Pruning Wine (Grape Fiddle)

This recipe is taken from the excellent book "Winemaking - Month by Month" by Brian Leverett. Copied here almost word for word, as we can't really improve on it. Our only addition is the second title of 'Grape Fiddle', an old allotment growers name for this brew.

At this time of the year grapes should have a light pruning and unlike most green materials, these prunings can be used to make a most acceptable wine. Since most of the materials that will go to make the grapes will travel up the stems, its not suprising that such a good wine results

1 gallon (4.5 litres) lightly pressed vine leaves and soft wood prunings

3lb (1.5 kg) Sugar

1.5 tsp citric acid

yeast

Wash the prunings and make sure that they are free from insects.

To the prunings, which should measure one gallon(4.5 L) when lightly pressed, add 6 pints (3 L) of boiling water and cover the bucket. Leave standing with frequent stirring for 3 days. Strain the liquid into another bucket, containing the sugar and citric acid. Add the yeast and allow to ferment until the vigorous head has subsided, this usually takes a week to ten days. Transfer to a demijohn, top up, fit an air lock and ferment to dryness.

Honeysuckle Wine

(also based on Brian Leveretts book, with a few modifications based on my own Dads way of making it)

2 pints Honeysuckle flowers

1 lb Sultanas or 1 small tin of grape juice concentrate

2 1/2 lb Sugar

2 tsp citric acid

pectic enzyme

yeast

Pick only fully opened flowers of the wild variety. Strip away any remaining green or leafy stuff (really matters with honeysuckle wine, otherwise it'll go bitter) and place in a nylon straining bag along with the minced up sultanas (if using). Boil up the water, sugar and acid and pour it on to the straining bag in a sterilised bucket, then cover tightly. minced sultanas and citric acid. Add six pints (3 litres) of boiling water and stir thoroughly. When it is cool, add the pectinase and yeast. Stir daily for 4 days and then strain into a demijohn. Ferment out as normal. Honeysuckle wine is excellent when matured.