



The Grapevine

Newsletter for the Sacramento Home Winemakers

SHW Monthly meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month starting at 7pm, upstairs at the Turn Verein located at 3349 J Street in Midtown, Sacramento. For more information on SHW membership, meetings and activities, visit:

www.Sachomewine.org

Inside this Issue:

- p. 2 President's Message
- p. 2-5 Understanding Free SO₂
- p.6 Upcoming Events
- p.6 Barrel Demonstration
- p.7 Calendar of Events
- p. 8 Wine Competition
- p.9 SHW Board Info

Bob Peak Headlines March 18 Meeting

The topic for the March 18 meeting is “Reduction Issues and Treatments & Cures” presented by Bob Peak of The Beverage People. Reduction issues can arise in white or red wines so Bob's topic should be of interest to everyone.

Bob Peak is an owner of The Beverage People, a retail store in Santa Rosa, CA dedicated to the needs of home winemakers, home brewers, and home cheese makers. Bob has a degree in Chemistry from Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, CA, and he had extensive experience in commercial environmental laboratories before switching to wine. He is a home winemaker and maintains a 1/3 acre vineyard of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay in his backyard in the Petaluma Gap area. Bob is also the Techniques columnist for WineMaker magazine and is a frequent speaker at their home wine conferences. He also makes cheese, brews beer, and is exploring charcuterie, but wine is his hobby of first choice.

This should be a great program and everyone will want to be there.

Thanks for helping set-up before the meeting, cleaning up afterwards, and consuming responsibly.



Presidents Message

Competing your wines in home winemaking competitions can not only be fun, but can serve as a great learning experience as well. We are all familiar with SHW's own June Jubilee and the California State Fair's home winemaking competition. Some club members have also regularly competed in the Winemaker Magazine International Home Winemaking competition. In fact, if you look around there are dozens of competitions that a home winemaker can participate in.

Most county fairs and regional winemaking clubs offer home winemakers the opportunities to present their wines for evaluations and awards. If you are new to winemaking or have simply never competed previously, I would highly encourage you to consider doing so. There are some great benefits in competing your wines that can serve to further your knowledge of winemaking and to ultimately make you a better wine maker.

One of these benefits includes the feedback and commentary that should be included on the completed judging sheets for your wine. Judges will typically include notes on their judging sheet about things they liked or did not like in your wine. Some may go so far as to make recommendations on improving various aspects of your wine. The judging sheets will also often have the judge's name; so if they don't include helpful commentary, you might be able to track them down later and ask them directly! Additionally, competitions typically involve some sort of awards ceremony where many of the other competed wines will be served and other winemakers will be present. It is a great opportunity for you to find other wine styles that you like and talk directly to the home winemaker to ask questions on how they achieved certain characteristics in their wine. So, take the plunge. Put yourself and your wine out there. Have fun with it and remember that the only negative feedback is that which was never received.

Wine Geek's Corner

I received a great question this week regarding SO₂ management which I wanted to share with the club. The timing was perfect as I was also searching for a topic for the Wine Geek's corner. Bingo! Topic discovered. I will not go into a full chemical definition of SO₂ as there is endless information about that already available including the SHW Winemaking Manual; I will assume you have a basic understand at least of what SO₂ is and that it is used in winemaking in some fashion.

First off, there are endless approaches to making wine and for every winemaker you speak with, you may get a different opinion on how to manage SO₂ in your wine; many of them correct at least in some fashion, a few horribly wrong. Yikes! What I provided in my response to the

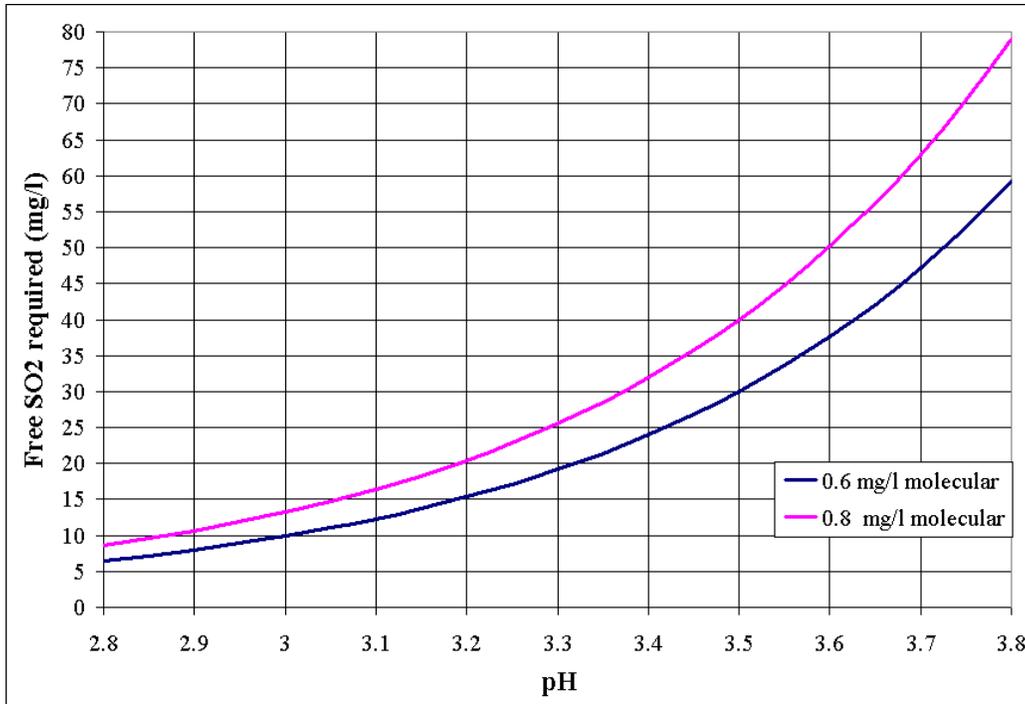
question and what follows below is my opinion, has worked well for me in making wine, and was derived directly from numerous sources; primarily from Shea Comfort's [MoreManual](#) on SO₂ Management. If you would like a much more thorough review of SO₂ management than what will be provided here, I highly recommend that you review this article on the MoreWine website.

The question I received specifically was along the lines of, "How do I know how much *Free SO₂* is in my wine? How much *Free SO₂* should be in my wine?" and lastly, "What is the difference between *Free SO₂* and normal *SO₂*?" The simple answer to the first two questions is of course, well it depends – which I will answer in more detail shortly. The answer to the final question is a little more straight-forward.

As we know, or should know, to make quality wines free of oxidative characteristics and spoilage organisms which can create a wide range of flawed characteristics in our wine – we should practice sound SO₂ management protocols to protect our wines. In short, SO₂ protects our wine by *binding* with oxygen molecules and spoilage organisms within our wine before they can do their dirty work and create flaws or undesirable characteristics in our wines.

The difference between *Free SO₂* and "normal" *SO₂* is simply that *Free SO₂* is not yet bound and therefore is available to bind with these undesirable elements making them inert and providing protection for our wine. Once bound, SO₂ is no longer available to protect your wine from future exposure to spoilage organisms or elements, however it does continue to contribute to the total sulfite level within your wine which is important to remember as an exceedingly high total sulfite level in your wine can reach a point where it is detectable when smelling and tasting the wine. In general, we typically want an appropriate amount of *Free SO₂* available in our wine during aging to be available to protect our wine.

So, what is an appropriate amount of *Free SO₂*. Well, there are two keys to consider when making this determination: 1) the amount of *Free SO₂* needed to protect our wine is directly dependent on the pH level of the wine. The higher the pH of the wine, the more *Free SO₂* is necessary to provide adequate protection, 2) the binding that was previously discussed occurs quickly when SO₂ is added to our wine and each wine is unique. So, we will automatically lose some unknown amount of *Free SO₂* immediately upon addition to our wine as it binds with existing oxygen and spoilage organisms. There are lots of charts and tables such as the one below which give a great guide on your target *Free SO₂* level in relation to the pH of your wine.



Of course, the best way to know your *Free SO2* level and pH is to test it regularly during the aging process. Every home winemaker should have a reliable way to test for pH. Although, many may not have testing equipment and chemical reagents necessary to test for free and or total SO2. You can take samples of your wine to any credible lab to have tested (including SHW's new testing service, see VP Bruce Currie for more information), or you can purchase various test kits or strips that can vary greatly in accuracy. In general, to account for the unknown binding effect and looking to be highly accurate in your additions, you will want to test, make your addition, re-test a week or so later and make whatever minor additions might be necessary.

Now, on to my method; what to do if you have a reliable gauge on your pH, but no good means to measure *Free SO2* and you don't feel like shelling out money and carting samples to testing labs every couple of months to be evaluated. Well, a general protocol for SO2 management can be applied that, while cannot guarantee total protection as a frequently and accurately measured protocol can, will help considerably in protecting your wine and the winemaker can learn to adjust as necessary.

With this method, in general you will measure pH at various stages of the winemaking process and add additions accordingly. With wines that have a pH of 3.5 or higher you will want to make additions equivalent to 50ppm at each step listed below (1/4 tsp per 5 gallons wine / must). For wines with a pH below 3.5 you can make additions around 30 – 35 ppm – a little more than 1/8 tsp per 5 gallons wine / must. These additions should be added at the following stages:

1. At crush – You should add 50 – 100 ppm of SO2 at crush. The must after crush is full of oxygen, spoilage organisms, and particulate matter. Most of the SO2 you add at this point will become bound quickly. This will not negatively impact your fermentation in

anyway, but will help to protect your juice right out of the gate against bad bugs and other undesirables.

2. After pressing – 35 – 50 ppm (dependent on pH). Your wine after fermentation will have little to no *Free SO2* remaining. This addition will help protect your wine from oxidation and bad bugs prior to initial racking and transfer into aging or secondary fermentation vessels. Many winemakers skip this step in fear that an SO2 addition at this point may inhibit secondary or malolactic fermentation. While this can be true, it is highly dependent on the chosen malolactic bacteria. Many are resistant to SO2 levels well above 50 ppm while some are highly sensitive to even low levels of SO2. It's important to read the documentation for the products you use and use them accordingly. I routinely add 35 – 50ppm to my wines prior to ML fermentation without any issues. However, I am sure to choose ML bacteria that can thrive in that environment.
3. At each racking (every 3 to 4 months) – Add 25 to 50 ppm depending on pH level. This continues to ensure you have an appropriate amount of *Free SO2* during aging to protect your wine.
4. At bottling – Add another 35 – 50 ppm depending on pH level to ensure your wine is protected from any remaining bugs and / or oxygen your wine may have present in it prior to consumption.

While this method does not provide the degree of certainty that accurate and regular testing and re-testing does; it will provide a generally sound level of protection to your wine which should help you in making wines that are less likely to have flaws relating to oxidation or spoilage organisms. If you have been struggling with how to manage SO2 in your wine, I'd recommend trying this method first. It is easy, cost effective and will provide consistent results in your quest to make high quality wine.

Please Enjoy Responsibly

Far better than any Gold Medal, the best reward for making a great wine is simply enjoying and sharing a bottle with friends and fellow wine makers. SHW wants to remind you to please do so responsibly and be aware of your capacity to drive and get home safely. Our number one priority is making sure all SHW members make it home from club meetings and events without injury to themselves or others. If you find yourself or a friend a glass or two beyond being able to do so, please notify a club officer immediately so we can assist in arranging safe transportation home.

Wine Analysis for SHW Members

The new wine analysis service as a member benefit got started at the Feb 18 SHW Meeting. Samples will be received again by Bruce Currie at the March 18 meeting after the program presentation by Bob Peak. The form for submission of samples can be found on the SHW website under the Member Resources tab is Wine Analysis. Print out the form and bring it with

The Grapevine March 2015

your samples and payment. Samples of at least 50 mL should be in containers with screw on or snap on lids, like small plastic (PET) water bottles.

Note: Bruce will be traveling during April so bring your samples to either the March 18 meeting or the May 20 meeting.

Upcoming Programs in March and Beyond

Barrel Demonstration – March 21, 2015



reWine of Salem, Oregon is setting up shop locally on Saturday, March 21 for a barrel toasting and maintenance demonstration for home winemakers. Learn about barrel toasting, barrel maintenance, and fixing those pesky barrel head leaks. reWine will demonstrate a technique for removing and replacing barrel heads and bands without damaging the barrel staves, heads and bands.

The event is planned from 10 AM – 1 PM at Sonia and Carol’s winery in Elverta. After the demonstration, the hosts invite you to stay for lunch – they’ll be grilling brauts. Please bring a dish, bottle of wine to share (doesn’t have to be homemade), and a wine glass for your use. Thanks for your R.S.V.P. via text/call to Sonia’s cell at 916 825-4952 by March 18. Sonia will also share the location then. The event is free for SHW members; \$15 for non-members.

Check out reWine’s website: <http://www.rewinebarrels.com/>.

Upcoming Programs for April and May

The April program will feature educational evaluations of 2014 Bordeaux varietal red wines. These wines should be new and unfinished wines from the 2014 vintage. The evaluations will provide helpful information that can be used to adjust those wines before finishing and bottling. Chik Breneman, winemaker at the UC Davis teaching winery will be the evaluator.

The May program will be complementary and have evaluations of 2014 non-Bordeaux red wines that are new and unfinished. The evaluators will be Allen Kreutzer, owner and winemaker, Drytown Cellars of Amador County and Kevin Luther, winemaker, Wise Villa Winery of Placer County.

Events Committee – Looking for You!

Want to organize a wine tasting or food and wine pairing? The Events Committee is looking for a couple members who have the right stuff to help coordinate these specific SHW activities and events. We’re looking for your ideas and energy! Contact Shannon Shackelford at shan_shackelford@yahoo.com.



SHW Calendar of Events

- Executive Board Meetings – 6:30 PM; contact President J.D. Phelps for location; jd.phelps@gmail.com
- General Meetings – 7:00 PM; upstairs at 3349 J Street, Sacramento
- Meeting and event details - www.sachomewine.com; see Events Calendar and latest Newsletter.

General Meeting	March 18, 7PM Wednesday	Reduction Issues and Treatment & Cures Speaker: Bob Peak, The Beverage People
Barrel Demonstration	March 21 10AM – 1 PM Saturday	reWine Barrels from Salem, Oregon demonstrates barrel toasting, maintenance and fixes . See article in this newsletter for details.
Board Meeting	April 1, 6:30PM Wednesday	All members are welcome.
General Meeting	April 15, 7PM Wednesday	Evaluation of 2014 Bordeaux Varietals Red Wines Evaluator: Chik Brenneman, UC Davis Winemaker
Board Meeting	May 6, 6:30PM Wednesday	All members are welcome.
General Meeting	May 20, 7PM Wednesday	Evaluation of 2014 non-Bordeaux Varietals Red Wines Evaluator: Allen Kreutzer, Drytown Cellars
Board Meeting	June 3, 6:30PM Wednesday	All members are welcome.
Jubilee Wine Competition	June 13 Saturday	Annual SHW wine completion . Entries due May 20. More info to follow.
Jubilee Picnic - Awards Ceremony	June 14 Sunday	A day of food, wine and friends and find out whose wines excelled in the previous day's competition.
Winemaking 101	August 1 Saturday	Designed for new and novice winemakers. Training certification to use Club equipment.

Upcoming Home Wine Competitions

Time to bottle up and get some skin into the game - Home wine competition season is just around the corner!

SHW Jubilee - Wine Competition and Picnic-Awards Ceremony: save the date for the Club's annual wine competition on June 13. Last day to enter is at the May general meeting. In 2014, Over 170 wines were judged so polish off your best to compete. The picnic and awards ceremony will be on the following day, Sunday, June 14. This competition is required to compete for the Club's *Winemaker of the Year* contest.



We'll need volunteers for both the wine competition and picnic. Details are forthcoming.

Missouri Winemaking Society – wine and wine label entries are due March 20. More info can be found at mowinemakers.org.

California State Fair - This wine competition is also required to qualify to compete for SHW's *Winemaker of the Year*. Online entries will be accepted thru April 21. Details are available on the Fair's website; www.bigfun.org.

SHW is also helping the State Fair with part of the competition and home wine booth at the fair and is looking for volunteers who are available to help. Text/call Cellar Master Henry Wilkinson at 916 997-3056.

Dixon-May Fair - wine and label competition entries are due by April 10. Fair is in Dixon. Website: <http://www.dixonmayfair.com>.

Calaveras County Fair & Jumping Frog Jubilee - wine competition entries are due by April 11. Fair is in Angels Camp. Website: <http://www.frogtown.org/#!amateur-wine/c1jox>.
El Dorado County Fair - the El Dorado Home Winemakers Association is presenting the fair's homemade wine and wine label competitions. Wine entries are due by April 24 and label entries will be accepted through May 21. Details found here.

Colusa County Fair - wine entries are due June 4. For more information, please visit their Website: <http://colusacountyfair.com/county-fair/how-to-enter/2015-entry-guide>

CLUB EQUIPMENT:

Destemmer/Crusher: Matt Sainson,
(916) 833-4214
ifermentgrapes@gmail.com

Basket Press and Corker:
Jacque and Craig Brown
jbrown6766@gmail.com

Filter: Donna Bettencourt
(916) 454-5487
Bettencourt1045@softcom.net

Each item is subject to a nominal
upkeep fee per use:
Destemmer/Crusher: 10\$
Basket Press: 10\$
Corker: 5\$
Filter: 5\$

SHW

Elected Officers

President: JD Phelps

**Vice President:
Bruce Currie**

**Treasurers:
Steve Barrett/Mary Breedlove**

**Secretaries:
Joe and Lynne
McGillivray**

**Membership Chairs:
Gin Yang
Fred Millar**

SHW

**BOARD OF
DIRECTORS;**

Donna Bettencourt—Past President

Mikc Touchette—Past President

Fred Millar—Past President

Lynn Keay—Past President

Gary Young—Past President

*

Needed!

**Volunteers for
Hospitality.**

Choose a month
to help the club!

Duties are to purchase cheese and
cracker and/or bread for the
monthly meeting. The club will
reimburse you for your expenses.
Please cut the cheese and slice the
bread. Most important when the
meeting has ended, stay to remove
the left over, package them and
wash the tables. See Jacque or Craig
Brown to sign up.