

Full synopsis: Tim Patterson's "Home Winemaking for Dummies"

Just under 350 pages, organized into seven parts, 23 chapters and four appendices (glossary, grape and equipment sources, conversion tables and formulas for additions), the book addresses the basics of making red, white and pink grape wines as well as dessert and sparkling wines. Tim takes the role of a supportive and encouraging teacher and coach, guiding the reader through safe and sound practices.

The book follows conventions of all "For Dummies" books, including icons: "Remember" - most important point, "Tip" - 'insider' information, "Technical Stuff" - deeper background, "Warning!" - flags hazards in the process and "How the pros do it" - tips from commercial winemakers.

Part One starts with some reality checks: Home winemaking is a lifestyle (yes, you will have to forego Fall vacations). A diagram of the basic decision making tree is appropriately used here. A chart converting fresh grape weight to finished wine volume is found in Chapter 2 and matches my experience. Patterson then takes the reader through a reasoned thinking process of choosing type and source of wine grapes.

A sound round-up of necessary equipment, from crush to bottling, follows. Tim does a good job covering the ancillary supplies one never thinks they'll need - until they need them. His pointers on designing a home winery are good as well. As this list unfolds, the other truism of home winemaking comes to the forefront: home winemaking can be one of the more expensive hobbies around. He wraps up with a broad discussion of the importance of temperature control, oxygen exposure and sanitation.

Part Two is a didactic step-by-step discussion of the wine making process. A good discussion of Brix, pH and TA is included. A little later, Tim discusses chaptalization and acidulation. The next natural (...) step, fermentation, includes a discussion of yeast strain selection. A rudimentary but sufficient yeast chart is provided. Chapter 6 wraps up with a discussion of dealing with stuck ferments.

The key post-fermentation procedures: racking, checking dryness, sulfiding, malolactic fermentation are given good coverage next. Tim touches on preventing MLF but it seems that he feels this is almost impossible. Chapter 7 has a decent overview of H₂S issues and touches briefly on Brettanomyces. He ends with an admonition about letting wine age in contact with oxygen.

Patterson then goes into good length about ageing vessels, including oak alternatives and caring for barrels, in Chapter 8. The rest of the chapter is devoted to tending the wine, touching on racking and *sur lie* time. He spends a lot of time on blending before he comes back to flaws: hydrogen sulfide, aldehydes from oxygen exposure, brettanomyces (giving the sound advice that it is nearly impossible to "micro-manage" Brett levels on a home wine making scale). Only half of the last page is dedicated to a discussion of Volatile Acidity.

Chapter 9 deals with finishing and bottling the wine. Fininig, filtering and cold stabilization are discussed in a fair amount of detail. Tim also goes into some depth discussing the benefits, how-tos, pitfalls and caveats of filtering. The final eight pages of the chapter patiently discuss all the pertinents of bottling. It seems like a lot, but this is a very critical step. Read it carefully.

Part Three is where the stylistic nitty-gritty for red wines can be found. Patterson starts with reds which are easier to make and should be the first wine all "homies" (as he calls home winemakers) make. His brief introduction of general sensory characteristics of different varieties (he avoids the 'variety'- 'varietal' discussion by using the word 'grapes') connects wine appreciation to wine production.

Touching, to one extent or another, on tannin extraction, cold soaks, temperature of ferments, *saignee*, co-fermentation, whole cluster fermentation, carbonic maceration, *délestage*, timing of pressing and pre-ageing clean-up Tim provides a number of interventions which can give the home winemaker some stylistic control over their wine. A decision tree at the end of Chapter 11 summarizes the options.

Chapters 12 through 15 deal with the specifics of making red wines. Chapter 12 covers Bordeaux reds. After a little history, the chapter is chock full of wine styling tips, including tips from commercial producers from coast to coast. He gives Cabernet Sauvignon a good amount of space but does not completely neglect Cab Franc, Malbec and Petit Verdot. He wraps up with some blending strategies for achieving various styles - in long and table form and recommends a few yeasts. He follows a similar format for Rhone reds in Chapter 13, and Pinot Noir, Zinfandel Tempranillo and Sangiovese in Chapter 14. The latter are dealt with together because they have a reputation for being challenging. He delves into the deep end with these varieties and gives each of them a good discussion. Chapter 15 deals, albeit briefly, with more obscure Italian grapes (Barbera, Nebbiolo), and makes cursory mention of Douro varieties, Lemberger and Tannat. The Bulk of the Chapter is about hybrid grapes, ending on an esoteric note with a foray into teinturier grapes (Alicante Bouschet, Souzao, Saperavi and Rubired).

In Part Four, Patterson talks about white wines and follows the same paradigm as in Part 3. Of course, there are some departures from the paradigm: malolactic fermentation plays a more varying role in whites and the winemaker must pay closer attention to temperature and oxygen exposure as well as sanitation and oak use. The one exception is intentional oxidation, which has its place before, during and after fermentation.

In Chapter 16, Tim talks a lot about Chardonnay and the techniques behind the two main styles: Chablis and Montrachet. Sauvignon Blanc gets almost as much coverage, followed by half-page entries for Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, Marsanne and Roussanne, Spanish Whites, Italian

Whites, German Whites and Gruner Veltliner. This is probably rightfully so, because (as Patterson points out) the first two varieties make up the bulk of the white wines Americans drink - and that dictates fruit availability. He defers detailed discussion of Pinot Gris to the chapter on aromatic whites while giving general tips on vinifying the rest. The remaining two pages of the chapter are focused on hybrids and two charts on style and yeast selection. Most notable in this discussion is Tim's coverage of intentional oxidation of white wines, which he follows by the caveat that this method is one to try after making a few conventional batches of white wine.

Chapter 18, "Aromatic Whites" is dedicated to what Patterson calls the All-Star Team: Riesling, Muscat, Gewürztraminer, Viognier and Chenin Blanc. He starts by delineating the practices which drive the style. He first discusses this one-by-one: temperatures, crushing, pressing and skin exposure practices as well as yeast selection, malolactic conversion and other manipulations which enhance the wine (oak, lees contact and residual sugar). Next, he gives variety-specific pointers for each of the All-Stars in much the same way as in previous sections. He touches very briefly on blending and aging (ageing?) before giving a similar treatment to what he calls Semi-Aromatic Whites: Pinot Gris and Albariño. As with other chapters, he wraps up with charts summarizing yeasts and style options.

Part Five takes the reader to the edge of conventional home winemaking. Patterson begins, in Chapter 19, by covering the production of pink wines, referencing many of the techniques introduced and repeatedly covered in previous chapters.

Chapter 20 delves into new territory with discussion of Residual Sugar - its perils and how to make it work in your wine. Tim focuses on late-harvest and fortified wines while giving some mention of sparkling wines with some RS. Then, he proposes a way of making Sherry without building a solera. The last on the sweet wine list is the vin doux naturel - for those who want to try making [Angelica](#). Patterson wraps up with a discussion of sparkling wine production, although he admits to a tenuous grasp of the style. Still, it's a starting point. Having attempted sparkling wines, I can say it's enough for a "homie" who already has made a few wines.

In Part Six, "The Part of Tens" Tim reiterates key admonitions and gives money-saving tips. The "Ten Differences between Wine(makers) and Beer(brewers)" chapter is more entertainment than education.

Of the appendices, Appendix D ("Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂) and pH") is where the real meat is. Take time to read, think about and understand it.