

A Taste of Tuscany

From Firenze to Siena, the spirit of art, sun and bucolic countryside generates a feeling; a warm spirit of place. We could call it the spirit of Chianti, the expression of Italy's wonderful Sangiovese grape. A grape that produces some of the world's finest wines. A grape drunk at every grape growers' table, and definitely at the finest restaurants.

Experience the making of Sangiovese, or deviate to take advantage of the IGT's regulation for a Super Tuscan. Take our hand and let's be a Chianti winemaker.

This adventure is designed to prepare you for the actual fermentation process. Ingredients (beyond the grapes themselves) are purchased separately. Equipment is purchased separately. Brehm Vineyards provides the grapes:

Sangiovese:

Chianti, as regulated, requires a minimum of 70% Sangiovese. Over the last 40 years the practice of diluting the wonderful Sangiovese grape wine, often with white juice for early drinkability, has diminished. The establishment of regulations and the upgrading of the vineyards and wineries has set a world class standard. Now we expect more out of Sangiovese than the straw covered chianti. Chianti, with its Brunellos and Super Tuscans, can claim rights to one of the finest wine regions, and finest grapes, in the world. Here, we have a perfect opportunity to know about this grape from a vineyard where it was purposefully planted for Sam Sabastiani, Viansa Winery. I can attest that vines like it here. They ripen well here, while retaining a good acidity. San Giordano Vineyard is nestled along Sonoma Creek and Arnold Drive, the main highway entering the Sonoma Valley in the Carneros. The average Sangiovese used for a Brunello style was harvested at 24.6° brix--for the Super Tuscan Style it was 26.6° brix. The grapes were mature, very clean, with no rot and mature skins.

Harvest:

Grapes are hand harvested into ½ ton macro bins. The bins are shipped over to Brehm Vineyards' crush pad 10 miles away. Grapes are destemmed with the goal of taking out the stems with minimum damage to the berry itself. The destemmed must is then placed into a container and sent to the freezer. You get the grapes like Nature made them. We maintain the right to add SO₂ and make standard fine wine adjustments. These grapes have no chemicals added. These, and most of Brehm grapes, are natural. Buying above average grapes allows this.

Receiving the Grapes:

You order the grapes using Fed Ex or make an appointment with the freezer to pick them up. Once in your possession, and at rest in your wine area, take off the lids or open the drum. The surface of fruit is the perfect environment for life/mold to grow. If there is a bit of mold, it will not affect the remainder of the grapes. Pluck off mold or freezer burned berries. Keep must covered. As soon as possible, submerge the grapes on the surface, at least twice a day.

Choice:

You do have the choice of adding SO₂ or not.

15 to 20 ppm of SO₂ will injure natural yeast and add a chemical into the juice. Higher amounts may also make a malolactic fermentation difficult. Addition of SO₂ **does** add a degree of protection to the must. Some prefer, with clean fruit, to taste the grapes and everything on them--the taste of the earth, and all the fauna thereof.

Quantity of potassium meta bisulphite per 5 gal. pail of must: 0.5 grams

Not adding SO₂ is riskier. The wine will be influenced by the yeast from the vineyard, for better or different – I do not add SO₂ **before fermentation**. It has not been a problem.

Once there is sufficient thawing to allow submerging the grapes below the juice, do so--at least once per day, 2x is better. Store pails at 65° to 70°F when defrosting. Add oak supplement to help bond the coloring components in the wine, helping them not to drop out—hoping not to add aroma/flavor.

Fermentation:

Once you have the grapes, begin making your yeast starter. Use 5 grams of yeast for each 6 gallons of wine, not skins. Yield of wine/juice is usually (there are variations) about 3.2 gallons per pail. The remainder, maybe 1.8 gallons, are some wonderful skins, still rich in flavor and fertile grounds for hydration and chaptalization. Recommend a 1:1 ratio of water to skins. A false wine is a wonderful base for experimentation: <https://www.eater.com/2019/10/1/20887572/piquette-glou-glour-natural-wine-trend-orange-skin-contact-what-somms-drink>

The recommended yeast is BM4 x 4.

Hydrate in distilled/pure water at 102° F. The addition of Go Ferm by La Lamand helps the viability of the yeast. Once the water has cooled and activity is noticeable, add a small amount of the defrosted juice to the starter. Gradually feed the yeast with the thawed juice, allowing the yeast to get going again. We wish to get the temperature of the must and starter within 10°F of each other.

Chemistry:

Brunello Style – 100% #1718 Sangiovese

2 pails from the Italian themed Santo Giordano Vineyard are the grapes for this wine. These Santo Giordano Sangiovese have an average sugar tested at 24.6° Brix, Total Acid 5.7 %, and a refreshing 3.47 pH--ideal for a rich, fresh wine not needing any adjustment. Malolactic fermentation recommended. Yield of the 2 pails should be approximately 6.3 gallons of wine

Super Tuscan Style – 2 pails #1817 Cabernet Franc and 1 pail #1818 Sangiovese

Sangiovese has proven to be a wonderful companion for Bordeaux varieties. This Tuscan inspired grape combination blends and enhances each other. Prepare the must for fermentation by adding to the 3 pails: 1.8 liters of pure water, 64 grams/2.3 oz. of tartaric acid, and yeast nutrient once fermentation begins, and again at 17° brix.

During freezing, water is the first ingredient frozen. This freezing starts on the outside and expands inward and up. This disruption and defrosting make chemical analysis of the must when newly thawed very difficult. The bottom of the pails will have cream of tartar on their bottoms. This is from the grapes' principal acid, tartaric acid. Tartaric acid is unstable at cold temperatures, and combining with potassium in the skins makes cream of tartar. Once the juice warms, some of the cream of tartar will dissolve back into the juice or wine. A low pH would indicate the presence of malic acid. A fermentation with malolactic bacteria will convert malic acid into a milder, more stable lactic acid. This addition will be made near the end of sugar fermentation or after sugar fermentation (in the case of a sluggish, stalled sugar fermentation). SO₂ will be added when the malolactic fermentation is complete.

Fermentation:

The fermentation generates heat, converts sugars into CO₂ and alcohol, extracts color from the skins, and increases mouth feel. The coloring material in the skins can incorporate into the grape's white juice once stemmed. Freezing and storage in containers is a wonderful 'cold soak'. The juice should be red. The only change in the grapes from fresh is a slight increase in color and juice--cellular breakdown--makes sense. The pails are best combined in a 15 to 20 gallon fermenter.

Place the thawed grapes into your fermenter. Cover. Once the active starter and must are within temperature range, empty the starter on the outside edge of the must in the container. Seal the container loosely.

Temperature and exposure of the fermenting juice with the berries are within your control to extract just the amount of color, richness, age potential, mouth feel and smells you desire.

Temperature controls are a lot easier when starting with frozen fruit. Starting with fruit harvested in the 95° sun needs a lot of temperature control to chill the juice. You may need to chill. You may need to heat. The goal is to have a slow fermentation that builds into a crescendo at 85° f in the cap of grapes supported by CO2. 90° is the upper limit. As the concentration of alcohol increases the ferment declines in its fermentation rate.

The grape skins have already given up a good degree of color by the start of fermentation. Most of the color from the grape skins will be in the juice by the 4th day of fermentation. Most of the skin tannins will be extracted upon reaching 85° for 24 hours. Seeds have the bitter, rough mouth feel. Once the alcohol reduces the protective shield over the seeds, the time before enjoyable drinking is lengthening. In all instances for this fermentation, press at 5° to 1° brix.

Manipulation of the cap will have a significant impact on the finished wine.

Feed Back on oak aging: 100% Sangiovese--No oak after 2 years in bottle—'*Fresh, wonderful nose, lively fruit, aromatics were surprisingly wonderful. The same wine oak aged was deeper – a different wine, possibly needing more time, while very nice now.*'

Super Tuscan Style – 3 pails

These grapes would blend well with mild oak aging.