

Barrel Care

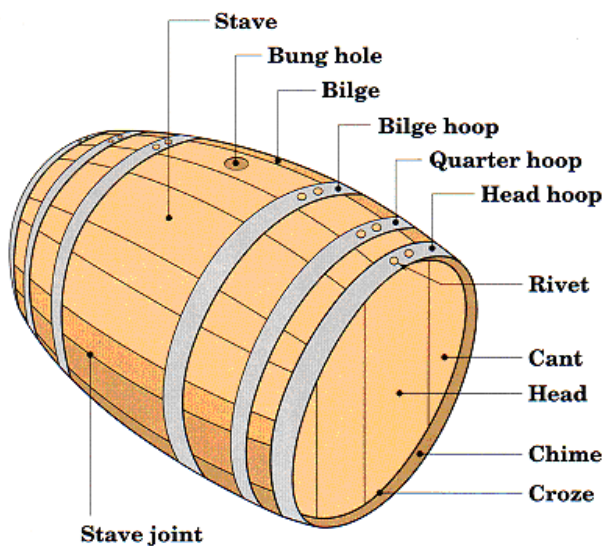
Inspecting & Caring For Your Barrel

The following document provides some guidance on the inspection and preparation of an oak wine barrel. Additional information on using a Citric Acid/Sulfite Holding Solution can be found in the related articles section of this article. For those of us who will eventually make the investment into the purchase of barrels by the lot, there is some very detailed information regarding the inspection of barrels that can be found at the following web site <http://www.practicalwinery.com/mayjun02p68.htm>.

For the remainder of us who will at some point venture out to purchase a barrel or two for home use, there are some simple steps you can take toward making sure the barrel you purchase is sound.

INITIAL INSPECTION OF A NEW BARREL

Your inspection should begin with a visual examination of the barrel's exterior, including the wrapping – if it is still wrapped. Damage to the wrapping may offer clues to hidden damage. Look for broken chimes, heads dented or displaced from the croze, and misaligned staves. Also look for scrapes and gouges, and especially any torn or burred hoops. Such tears or burrs can later cause physical harm to hands during the handling of the barrel. The following diagram illustrates the parts of a barrel. The image below and lots of other good information can be found at www.barrelcarving.com



For more information, please contact us at 877.812.1137 or email support@juicegrape.com. Thank you.

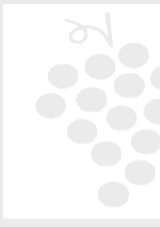
Looking to the inside of the barrel, the inside should be dry and free of mold. Check the area where the heads meet the staves for mold that may have occurred from a combination of standing water and exposure to a starch medium used in the construction of the barrel. The barrel aroma should be clean, fresh, oaky, and/or toasty. Other than sulfur, there should be no chemical odors and certainly no aroma of spoilage.

While there are more aspects to a complete barrel inspection, for the home winemaker, the two described above will go a long way toward confirming that a new barrel is sound.

PREPARATION FOR WINE

With your new barrel in tow, the next test is whether it will hold water or wine rather... Barrels must go through a re-hydration process and subsequent inspection to verify there is no leakage. If leakage does occur, it may indicate un-even re-hydration that can be remedied through additional iterations of water soaking. The people at worldcooperage.com offer two options for re-hydration, which are described below.

Option 1 (Hot Water/Quick Method):

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- Fill the barrel with 3-5 gallons of filtered, chlorine-free, hot water. Use the hottest water possible, with 180°F or 82°C the ideal temperature.
 - Place a silicone bung in bunghole.
 - Rotate the barrel from side to side, completely wetting the barrel's interior.
 - Stand the barrel upright on one head up to 4 hours to completely hydrate the head.
 - Rotate and stand upright on the other head up to 4 hours repeating the hydration
 - Check for leakage. See instructions below if present.
 - Empty the barrel and allow it to drain and dry completely (approximately 1 hour).

Option 2 (Cold Water/High Volume):

- Completely fill the barrel with filtered, chlorine-free, cold water.
- Let the barrel re-hydrate for 24 to 48 hours.
- Check for leakage. See instructions below if present.
- Empty the barrel and allow it to drain and dry completely (approximately 1 hour).

WHAT IF THERE IS LEAKAGE?

If leakage is present, drain the barrel and allow it to dry completely (approximately 1 hour). With chalk, circle the area where the leakage was present. Examine that this exterior area is completely dry.

Repeat Option 1 or Option 2 above and re-examine for leakage.

If after several attempts the leakage continues, it is important to call your sales rep immediately. Empty the barrel, allow it to drain and dry completely, treat each barrel with 10-20 grams of sulfur sticks (or the equivalent in gas form), and re-insert the bung. Again, be certain the barrel

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is completely dry prior to sulfur treatment. These guidelines are very important because despite a issue with leakage, we still want to maintain the integrity of the interior of the barrel.

*** Water should not sit in a barrel for more than 48 hours without the use of a sulfur and citric acid holding solution ***
*** Use caution when removing bung due to internal pressure build-up ***

STORAGE OF NEW BARRELS

New Barrels should be stored in a cool, humid environment. If the barrels have plastic film on them, keep the plastic film on the barrels if you are storing the new barrels for an indefinite time period. A new barrel must be stored in a cool, humid environment in order to maintain its integrity.

EMPTY STORAGE OF PREVIOUSLY FILLED BARRELS

Cleaning and Storing between Wine Fills

If you wish to store empty barrels between fills, the barrels must be thoroughly rinsed with water until the draining water is clear. Each barrel should be dried completely by placing the bung hole down and draining the water.

An application of 10-20 grams of sulfur sticks (or the equivalent in gas form) will aid in the prevention of microbial growth. Next, tightly insert a silicon bung. Store the barrel in a cool, humid environment.

Repeat the sulfur treatment monthly for extended storage of empty barrels.

Complete Option 1 or 2 above for barrel preparation prior to refilling with wine.

A NOTE ON BUNGS

Given the choice between wooden, natural cork, and silicon bungs for your barrel, silicon bungs tend to fair the best. Why? Because the wooden and cork bungs are prone to allowing air seepage around the sealing surface. The bung hole does not have the tendency to change its shape and the wooden nor the cork bungs are capable of deforming accordingly to affect an air tight seal.

For more information on barrel care, check out Daniel Pambianchi's book titled Techniques in Home Winemaking.

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