Pét-Nat and Orange Wine

New Wines to Attract New Customers

Phil Plummer

WineMaker Garagiste Conference 2025

What is Pét-Nat?

The Basics

- Short for Pétillant-Naturel, Pét-Nat is sparkling wine produced in the Methode Ancestrale tradition
  - Oldest method of sparkling wine production
- Often produced using low-intervention/natural winemaking techniques, but that isn’t a requirement
- May be produced in a variety of colors, sweetnesses, and carbonation levels
- Typically left undisgorged/roughly disgorged and sealed with a crown cap

How Does Methode Ancestrale Differ from Methode Traditionnelle?

Parameter	Methode Ancestrale	Methode Traditionnelle
Carbonation Method	Primary fermentation in bottle/pressure tank	Secondary fermentation in bottle
Stabilization/Filtration Prior to Bottling?	No*	Yes
Disgorging Post-Fermentation?	Maybe	Yes
Bottle-to-Bottle Variation	More Likely	Less Likely
Aging Time Post-Bottling	Short (potentially weeks)	Long (potentially years)
Closure Type	Crown Cap*	Cork and Cage

Why Should Wineries Embrace Pét-Nat?

- Most accessible style of sparkling wine to produce
  - Does not require the same specialized equipment as Methode Traditionnelle, Charmat, or Force Carbonation
  - May be produced and sold relatively inexpensively
    - Also a great style for hybrid grapes
  - Quick turnaround and ROI

Why Should Wineries Embrace Pét-Nat?

- Extremely popular with Millennial and Gen Z consumers
  - Entrenched style in low-intervention/natural winemaking
- Flavors and aesthetic are often similar to craft beer, cider, and kombucha
  - Consumers aren’t afraid of haze/sediment or funk
- Does not suffer from special occasion stigma

What are Some Challenges of Pét-Nat Production?

- Timing
  - Often requires careful management and bottling during harvest, when winemakers have the least time, space, and attention to spare
- Lack of Control
  - Less opportunity for winemaker intervention and corrective action both before and after bottling can make it extremely difficult to manage organoleptic properties of the wine
- Lack of predictability
  - Bottle-to-bottle variation is common
  - Sometimes gushing is a problem and may require the wine to be disgorged
    - Steps can be taken to avoid this issue, but there are no guarantees

Tips for Successful Pét-Nat Production

Universal Advice

- Start building your production strategy ahead of harvest
  - Make sure you have all of the appropriate equipment, additives, and packaging materials operational and available well before you need them
- Select grape variety and plan harvest strategy with this style in mind
  - These wines are generally acid-forward with lower ABV
  - Hybrids work well here, but vinifera is great too. If using vinifera, may want to harvest a little early
- Have a pressure target in mind and order packaging materials accordingly
  - 0.4 g/L RS roughly translates to 1 atm of pressure post-fermentation, so quantify RS prior to bottling and be sure that your chosen bottle can hold the corresponding pressure
- Have a way to agitate wine at bottling to homogenize yeast and prevent settling
- Be flexible and ready to change plans on-the-fly

Tips for Successful Pét-Nat Production

For the Cautious Winemaker

- Select a Champagne yeast strain (i.e. EC-1118) that isn’t killed by chilling
  - If chilling is available, it can be used to arrest fermentation at desired RS, buying time before bottling and allowing some rough cold stabilization (reducing odds of gushing)
- Don’t be afraid to ferment to dry, then chaptalize pre-bottling for desired pressure
- It may be helpful to add some riddling aid to the wine just prior to bottling
  - If disgorging is necessary, this will be extremely helpful
  - Even if disgorging isn’t necessary, this will improve settling and may prevent gushing

Tips for Successful Pét-Nat Production

For the Adventurous Winemaker

- If using indigenous yeast, chilling may not be a workable solution to dial in desired RS
  - Hold back some unfermented juice (chill or freeze) and blend into wine at bottling to feed fermentation
- EC-1118 naturally generates some SO_2 which may be leveraged to leave behind some sweetness without dosage
  - The amount it generates is relatively small, but can be potent at a low enough pH. Consult molecular SO_2 chart before attempting this

What is Orange Wine?

The Basics

- Also known as Amber wine, Orange wines are made from grape varieties typically used for white wine, produced under red wine protocols
    - Basically the photonegative of rosé
- Ancient style that has its roots in Georgia — home of our oldest evidence of winemaking
- Orange wines may be made under low-intervention conditions, but not necessary
- Frequently as or more age-worthy than their white wine counterparts

Why Should Wineries Embrace Orange Wines?

- Skin fermentation can provide new takes on classic grape varieties
  - Intensifies aromas on floral varieties
  - Intensifies/integrates texture on phenolic varieties
  - Captures unique color on “gray” varieties

Why Should Wineries Embrace Orange Wines?

- Can provide novel experience for seasoned wine consumers and beginners alike
- A very popular style in low-intervention/natural winemaking
- Very popular with Millennial and Gen Z wine consumers

What are Some Challenges of Orange Wine Production?

- Due to increased phenolic content, these wines may be more prone to reduction
- If high acid varieties are used, astringency may be an issue
- May require longer aging in bulk/bottle to soften and integrate textures
  - Might have implications for packaging/closure selection

Tips for Successful Orange Wine Production

- Adjust harvest parameters to prioritize phenolic ripeness (and maybe lose some acid?)
- Select grape varieties that suit your comfort level with this style
  - If you're less comfortable, choose a grape like Chardonnay that already sees some techniques like MLF, barrel fermentation
  - If you're more comfortable, choose grape varieties for aromatic, color potential
- Manage tannin-acid balance to avoid astringency
  - How long should you leave the ferment on skins?
  - MLF?
  - May sort itself out if you use hybrid grapes

Tips for Successful Orange Wine Production

- Take a more oxidative winemaking approach to limit reductive aromas and soften tannins
  - Pump-overs, rack-and-return, micro-ox, barrel aging, etc.
- Be patient!
  - Bulk and bottle aging allow for aromatic and texture integration
- Choose an appropriate closure
  - Bottling under cork may allow for more graceful aging than a more reductive closure like Stelvin

Questions?

phil@montezumawinery.com