



New Wine Barrel: Care and Use

Preparation: Fill up the barrel with water for 1-7 days until the woods swells and any leaks are sealed. Empty the barrel, then sanitize it.

Sanitation: Fill the barrel with a solution of sodium metabisulfite and citric acid in the following proportions:

Use 2 oz of sulfite and 1 tsp of citric acid for every 5 gallons of water it takes to fill the barrel.

Allow to soak for several hours. Empty the barrel, rinse it well and then fill with wine.
Storage: Store your barrel in a cool cellar with good humidity. Use a solid stopper to seal the barrel. If barrel is opened for tasting, top-up with more wine and reseal barrel with solid stopper. Do not use an airlock if wine is not producing gas. Do not allow significant amounts of air space to develop. Evaluate the taste of the wine on a regular basis to determine when the desirable flavor has been attained. For barrels of less than 30 gallons, two to six months is usually sufficient.

Cleaning: Rinse the barrel with warm water until the rinse water runs clear. Do not use any cleaning chemicals or soap. Attempt to keep the barrel full with wine as much as possible. This will minimize wood shrinkage which could lead to barrel leaks. If the barrel must remain empty for a time, rinse the barrel out with warm water. Allow the barrel to dry completely, then burn a sulfur stick in the barrel and close the bung hole. Repeat burning a sulfur stick in the barrel every three weeks or when no odor of sulfur is detected in the barrel. This will prevent any bacteria or mold from growing in the barrel. Rinse the barrel with water and sanitize prior to refilling with wine. To remove external wine stains on the barrel, use sand paper.

Life: Barrels will contribute flavor and aroma to your wine. Tannins and toasted flavors diminish in about 3 years of continuous use. Replace barrel every 3-4 years.

Repair: During the life of the barrel, minor leaks can be fixed by applying chalk on the leak on the outside of the barrel. Toothpicks, barrel wax or small scraps of hardwood can also be used to plug leaks.