

Mexican Tapache—Ready for a Fiesta in 4 Days!

Here's a simple, homemade pineapple wine I had in Mexico called Tapache ("tah-PAH-chee"). The instructions were very simple: Chop the leaves off a ripe pineapple and discard. Chop off the skin and remove the core. Put them in the fermentation vat with "some water and some sugar." Leave it loosely covered for 3–4 days, then strain, and serve over ice. Tapache is full of pineapple flavor, a bit tart, a bit sweet, cloudy, a bit bubbly, and has enough alcohol to be interesting. You'll probably get some B vitamins from the yeast too. It's refreshing drink for a party on the patio.

Tapache is a primary fermentation with wild yeast making the alcohol. Since results from using wild yeast can be unpredictable, I adapted the recipe to something beginning winemakers can do with ease. And it's ready to drink while you're waiting for your other projects to mature.

To make one gallon, use a whole pineapple—including the meat, OR just the skins & cores from two pineapples. How's that for recycling? Make sure the pineapple is ripe: color doesn't matter much, but a center leaf should pull out easily. I used a hydrometer to get the specific gravity up to 1.090—about 1-3/4 to 2 pounds of sugar (up to 4 cups). Add one crushed Campden tablet and a gallon of water. Cover loosely and wait 24 hours so the SO₂ from the Campden tablet can kill off the wild yeast.

After 24 hours, add a packet of winemaking yeast. Keep vat in a warm (room temperature; not in the garage), dark place, and stir once or twice daily to keep the floating mass wet. My batch was drinkable at 3 days and I served it on day 4 with 7% alcohol by volume. Before that, it tastes like very sweet pineapple juice. Start with at least a pound of sugar and adjust to taste before serving. It is likely to foam up if you add sugar, so your vat should have at least 25% free space.

If you have any left over, rack it to a jug with an air lock to complete fermentation into a clear wine. It develops quite a tang by day 5.

If you want to start off making a pineapple wine to bottle, add pectic enzyme (pectinase) according to package directions to the primary fermentation. It aids in juice extraction and later clarification. Also add yeast nutrient (1 tsp.) and tannin (1/4 tsp) per gallon. Putting the fruit in a straining bag aids in its removal and you can press the bag easily to extract all the juice. If you sweeten the wine after completion (up to 4 oz. of sugar by weight per gallon) to bring out the fruit flavor, be sure to add sorbate stabilizer before bottling, along with a dissolved Campden tablet. It may need racking again after bulk aging for 2 months.

A variation uses brown sugar or *piloncillo* (crude brown sugar pylons available at a Mexican grocery), a broken stick of cinnamon, and 3 cloves in the primary fermentation. Remove the solids by straining before serving over ice (or at racking). Add fresh fruit slices if desired.