MUST: DIY kit for supermarket “chateaus” of hybrid wines

Abstract

MUST is a DIY kit that simplifies the expensive science protocols used for grapes fermentation to allow everyone to test and explore the wine-possibilities of their local, supermarket grapes. It questions the current dogmas in winemaking and investigates possibilities of supermarket “chateaus”.

Introduction

The designed DIY kit supports home wine-makers or "direct producers" experimenting with grocery varieties like table grapes and “fox grapes”. These grapes are vilified and detested by the official wine industry and official wine science, including various national and international regulations, but still used in home-wines in large parts of rural Cyprus and the Balkans. (Meloni and Swinnen, 2012, p.6) The MUST project brings citizen science experiments to the fermentation movement to reflect upon the nationalist and colonial history behind the prohibition of unrecognized “cepagés” serving to preserve the French supremacy in the wine industry. (Sabbatini and Howell, 2014; Kingsbury, 2009, pp.259-261)

The DIY winemaking kit supports low-cost DIY solutions for urban winemakers that exploit science protocols for wine fermentation, analysis, monitoring and seek
authentic and unique flavors and aroma without the use of chemicals. (Katz, 2012; 2016, pp. 211-238)

Aligned with the wild fermentation movement, MUST positions itself against mass production techniques, wine standardization, and monoculture. By utilizing DIY collaborative methods, it enables sharing of information within the beginner’s wine production community and fosters citizen science communication. The rebellious and taboo-breaking supermarket wines attempt to create a new urban trend close to the homemade bread and pickles.

**Methodology and Experimentation**

MUST initial investigation questions were: Why is winemaking undervalued compared to other DIY practices like urban beer brewing or bread fermentation? While the obvious reason is that wine grapes are not available all year long (like malted barley for beer) could supermarket grapes compensate for them? How to develop low cost and simple solutions for such craftsmanship? Can winemaking adapt to the city thus become the new urban trend?

To provide a comprehensive understanding of home winemaking, MUST conducted ethnographic research in Crete and also conducted 2-3 hours interviews with winemakers from Czechia and Bulgaria. Based on these qualitative data and research of existing literature on winemaking (Jacobson, 2006; Goode and Harrop, 2013) several protocols were proposed and tested for DIY wine production. In the final phase, a DIY kit prototype was defined and designed.

The process of testing and development comprised diverse grape varieties, different sugar and flavor adjustments, as well as, variant fermentation procedures like yeast hibernation, etc. Subsequent evaluation by certificated sommelier helped to determine aroma and taste profiling strategy. Regarding wine enology, we researched analytical protocols for wine elements determination and simplified the protocols for the general public.

**Prototype**

Must is first of all a DIY kit for wine fermentation that supports citizen science cooperation, testing and experimentation. Merchandised as a set, the kit provides various levels of optimalisation corresponding with the consumer knowledge and needs:

1) DIY starter kit box with essential tools and manual describing how to make home made wine from A-Z containing key steps within days, wine sampling and analysis of must, as well as, aroma and taste profiling.
2) Fermentation assembly as a handcrafted trunk bar for home lab including workspace, shelving, and storage.
3) Optimalisation app collecting & analyzing data of key parameters of the wine process with recipes database and fermentation monitoring curve.

In the conclusion, it is relevant to say that MUST’s "chateaus” do not try to compare with standard quality wines. They rather present a new product of an alternative food culture, independent of rampant consumerism supporting projects for education and fun.

**Author Keywords**

urban winemaking; DIY practices; wild fermentation movement; citizen science communication; data sharing; biodiversity conservation
References:


