

Pauper's Port

by Sandy Burke (AWO News # 16)

The first wine I ever made was from elderberries in Ireland, as a teenager some 50 years ago. It was probably the Sambucus Nigra, the commonest variety that grows throughout Europe as far east as Siberia. The appearance of the bush, leaves, fruit and flowers are all very similar to Sambucus Canadensis and it is probably the source of the dried berries and flowers that we find in wine supply stores.

I grow **elderberries** in my garden and compete with the birds for the crop. I pick the bunches or clusters as they ripen, stripping them from the stems and freezing them. I use a yeast with a good alcohol tolerance, such as EC 1118 but a true pauper would use some of the residue from another batch of wine. The truly thrifty might use cane sugar all the way but I switch to corn sugar for the final additions as I prefer it for the residual sweetness of SG 1020. Ports on sale at the LCBO range in sweetness from 5 to 13 on their sweetness scale.

I would not use less than 3 lbs. elderberries per gallon, my present batch contains 9½ lbs. in an eleven litre carboy. If you are a little short on elderberries, flesh it out with apple juice which is fairly neutral or some other fruit that may enrich. Elder flavour will predominate, anyway.

During primary fermentation the berries deposit a sticky substance that does not wash off the primary container or the stirring spoon.

After 5 to 7 days remove the pulp, add more sugar and continue to ferment in primary and finally move to carboy for later stages.

The gummy substance will have deposited as a ring on your primary fermenter and your stirrer and is easily removed with naphtha gas, and possibly other solvents, but lacquer thinner or acetone in particular should NOT be used as they may damage the hard clear plastic of the syphon tube. The main thing is not to get it inside the carboy or siphon hose.