

WINERY ENGINEERING ASSOCIATION NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION

HAWKE'S BAY | SEPTEMBER 17-18, 2014

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If you know of any colleagues who you believe would benefit by becoming a member of the WEA, application for membership can be made by either going to our website www.wea.org.au or contacting Trevor Leighton on 0417597 956 / trevorleighton@wea.org.au

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Why the Cleaning Temperature of Your Wine Barrel Cleaning Process Matters

By Murray McDonald - Director of Wine Barrel Cleaning

Wineries today are becoming more conscious of the impact their barrels can have on the wine making process. Depending on the size, budget and priorities of a winery, the way barrels are cleaned is something that can vary.

Traditionally, warm water pressure washers have been the most common way to wash a barrel. However, more wineries are moving away from this practice with key reasons including water savings and waste factors, brettanomyces concerns and the need for a more high temperature cleaning process.



The reason for a high temperature cleaning process is because the higher the temperature, the more ability the cleaning process has in sterilising and deep cleaning barrels, not just rinsing them.

The following are 3 key ways high temperature cleaning processes provide a deep clean as oppose to rinsing a barrel.

Sterilisation

Microbes and brettanomyces can only be effectively eliminated via high temperature cleaning.

Although water can be heated to quite high temperatures, such as 80 degrees Celsius, the water temperature then significantly decreases in temperature as it makes its way from the pressure washer to the barrel. Once hot water is in the barrel, it then continues to cool down, turning it into just warm water.

Finding a wine barrel cleaning process that traps heat and continues to rise in heat is a key way to ensure a wine barrel cleaning process is effectively killing any bacteria.

Another challenge with “warm water rinsing” as opposed to “high temperature deep cleaning” is that even if water is at a warm temperature, oak being a waxy wood actually repels water, making it hard for microbes to be extracted from deep inside the wood.

Dislodging tartrates

High temperatures are needed to dislodge tartrates. Temperatures of +100 degrees Celsius is recommended, however, any lower than this, and it can be difficult to remove the build up of tartrates.

The reason why tartrates require a high temperature cleaning process is because they need to be melted. Rinsing with warm water will only just be moving the tartrates around the barrel rather than removing.

Eliminating residual wine

When a barrel is washed with solely a water based method, it is only being rinsed not deep cleaned. A deep clean involves penetrating deep into the pores of the oak, and extracting the build up of old wine.

Although water may be seen to run clear when barrels are warm water washed, there is still residual wine trapped in the wood's elements. This build up of wine can alter the taste of the intended result.

When looking for a wine barrel cleaning process, ensure that the method chosen has the ability to reach all areas and crevices of a wine barrel, and can at least reach temperatures of +160 degrees Celsius. Although a particular method may sound like an ideal steriliser, it is only as good as the places it can reach.

Murray McDonald is Director of Wine Barrel Cleaning and specialises in the distribution of dry steam machines that clean, sanitise, detartrate and re-hydrate wine barrels. Through its division "Duplex Cleaning Machines", Wine Barrel Cleaning has had over 25 years experience in the distribution of dry steam machines. Wine Barrel Cleaning's machine manufacturers are fourth generation wine makers whose strong wine industry knowledge has been incorporated into the design and operation of its steam machines. Visit www.winebarrelcleaning.com.au

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Just a touch of gas?

By Don Allen

Gas & Applications Specialist with technical consultancy, "Gas with Panache". Publisher of "Gas Lines" newsletter and two technical wine books. Former editor of "Winepress" (1992-2012).

I was re-reading an article authored by Dr. Vince O'Brien and Dr. Dan Johnson of the AWRI ("Opportunities to improve winemaking profitability", Wine & Viticulture Journal, January/February 2012), where they were pointing out (in part) that the Australian wine industry was losing money because it was faced with overseas competition; competition now employing skilled winemakers, but enjoying much lower labour costs. That position (labour costs in Australia) is not about to change anytime soon, meaning the industry needs to cut production cost, improve profitability and redefine its approach.