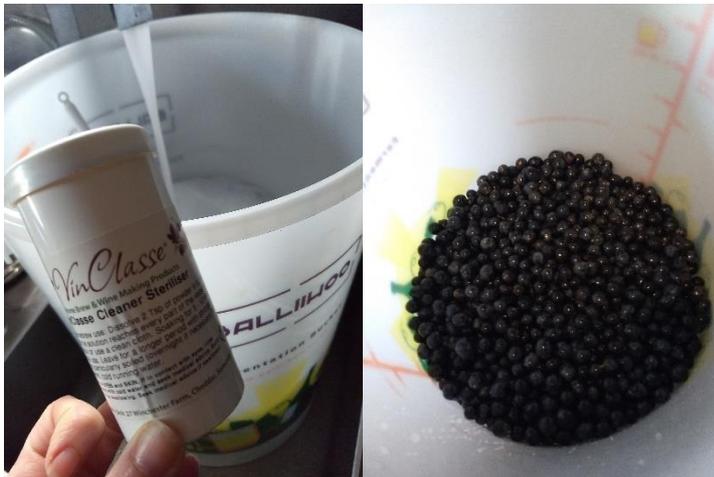


## A Few Pics from Claire's Wine-making Adventure:

The starting point: a trug full of tasty but pippy grapes from the walled gardens



After sterilising all the equipment, the first job was the most time consuming and tedious. The grapes were sorted to remove the imperfect ones and all (well ok then, most) of the tiny, little stalks and then washed.



The grapes were then crushed. I found that a potato masher didn't work very well so went in with my (clean!) hands. You could, of course, use the traditional method of bare feet but I opted out of that one! If I did this again I would wear gloves as I found the liquid to be an irritant on my skin and it was tingling for hours afterwards (not to mention being slightly purple stained).



Once I had extracted as much juice as I could I added Campden tablets and left for 24 hours, very loosely covered. The Campden kills off any natural yeasts present (of unknown variety and quantity) allowing much better control of the fermentation, lowering the risk of spoiling the wine.

After 24 hours the juice was measured with a hygrometer to determine how much sugar to add. Sugar is needed to feed the yeast and will be turned into alcohol. For a dry wine (that I am aiming for) you need enough for the yeast to complete fermentation with very little left over to sweeten the wine. After stirring in the sugar and yeast nutrient and allowing it to dissolve, a sachet of yeast was sprinkled over the top. The bucket was then covered and left to start the fermentation process for 8 days (with daily stirring). Note for white wine all the skins and pips would be strained out before this step and for rosé they would be removed after 2 days. For red wine it just all goes in – easy!



8 days later: The next batch of equipment is sterilised. The “must” is strained into a demi-john. I used a sieve and a muslin and made a bit of a mess, I think just a sieve is fine for the majority and use a muslin to squeeze out the remains of the juice from the grapes, if necessary. The demi-john should be full, with just a small air gap. It is then fitted with an airlock (half filled with water) and left in a warm place (I have used a seedling warming mat!) to ferment for 8 weeks. I had some juice left over so tried to use an old milk carton as a make-shift demi-john. This resulted in a bit of a mess when it sprayed juice everywhere in the night (sorry no pics of that!) so has now been relegated to becoming red wine vinegar.



If all goes well the wine will be ready to bottle in mid-January and for drinking 6 months to a year after that!