How do I bottle my wine?

So you are ready to bottle your wine? Great. Bottling wine is very easy to do, but there are a few things to know to make sure your wine will last for a long time. First, here’s a list of everything you’ll need to bottle your wine:

- Fermtech AutoSiphon*
- About 30 750 ml Wine Bottles
- About 30 corks
- Potassium Metabisulfite
- Bottle filler
- Plastic Plunger Corker
- Metal Double Lever Corker
- Gilda Compression Hand Corker
- Floor Corking Machine
- Italian Floor Corking Machine

*Optional; The AutoSiphon makes it easier, but you may also use a racking cane and siphon tubing.

You’ll also need one of the corkers pictured below.
For more information, see our PDF titled, “What is the difference in the corkers that you offer”?

Sanitizing
Sanitization is always important in making sure your wine stays the best it can be. Midwest recommends sanitizing your bottles with a potassium metabisulfite solution. While sodium metabisulfite is a little cheaper, it can leave a residual sodium aftertaste. Make sure that all of your bottles are clean before you use them. If there is any form of mold, or stuck on residue, that you cannot get out of the bottle, then do not use the bottle. It doesn’t take much to make a good wine go bad. You can either use a bucket filled with sanitizer to submerge the bottles, or you can use a funnel to pour the solution from bottle to bottle to sanitize them. Alternately, you can use a bottle rinser (sulfiter). Any of these three ways will work well to prepare your bottles for filling.

Corks
We won’t get into the different types of cork here (see our PDF titled, “I see there are different corks available, why?” for more information), but if you use standard corks then you might want to treat them first. You want
to use two bowls that fit inside each other for this. Mixing bowls work well. Fill the larger bowl with water and metabisulphite. Add your corks, and place the smaller bowl on top to help weigh down the corks. The metabisulphite will kill any bacteria that may be in the corks. Plus, it makes the corks very slick, which makes them easier to insert into the bottle. We would recommend soaking the corks for about an hour before use.

**Bottles**
For most people, the type of bottle you use comes down to personal preference. Yes, the shape of the bottle can apply to one style of wine versus another, but in most cases, you won’t be storing the wine long enough for the shape to be an issue. Use whatever bottle you like. Many believe that colored bottles do work better for red wines, as the color will help to prevent the wine from fading when exposed to sunlight. For more information, see our PDF titled, “Is there anything to using a certain color or shape of bottle with my wine?"

**Bottling**
Take your Auto-Siphon and attach the siphon tubing to the end of the racking cane (or just use your racking cane and siphon tubing as you normally would). Now attach your bottle filler to the end of the siphon tubing. Before you insert the Auto-Siphon into your carboy, pull it into the upper position. Now place the bottle filler into your first bottle, and depress it on the bottom of the bottle, then start your siphon.

**Note:** While some winemakers transfer their wine into a bottling bucket before bottling, Midwest recommends against this, as this may expose your wine to oxidation and may also stir up some of the sediment.

Now simply keep the bottle filler pressed to the bottom of the bottle and let the wine fill all the way up to the top of the bottle. Once you remove the bottle filler the wine will leave the proper headspace to store the wine. You want the wine to be about 1 to 1½” below the bottom of the cork when it is inserted. Bottle fillers are designed to displace just enough wine that once pulled out you are at the perfect height. This works on any type of bottle that you will use.

Once the bottle is filled you can set it off to the side, or go ahead and insert the cork. It doesn’t take that long to fill all of your bottles, so leaving them open to the air for a little bit isn’t going to hurt anything. Keep doing this procedure until all bottles are full. You will usually get 26 - 30 bottles out of each batch of wine.

Inevitably, you’re going to end up with a partially filled bottle of wine. We suggest giving the wine a try and see what you think. It will be young & edgy, which will mellow out, but you will get an idea of how the flavor is going to turn out. The more wines you make and the more times you try this, the better the feel you will get for how your wine is going to taste.

**Hint:** A new bottling technique is to use an argon gas blend that will help preserve your wine better. A lot of people use a product called Private Preserve to do this. A little shot of the gas will help push out the air left in the bottle and help prevent oxidation for a longer period of time.