## winemaking



### **Winemaker Trial**

# Impact of Varying Intervals of Extended Maceration on Texas Mourvèdre

Wanting to create more complex layers in their single-vineyard Mourvèdre, William Chris Vineyards' Tony Offill and Chris Brundrett decided to experiment with various maceration times. The five-, 60- and 120-day macerations each offered unique aromas, flavors and textures, creating a more well-rounded, and interesting, final blend.

Stacy Briscoe

Stacy Briscoe is the assistant editor of Wine Business
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Tony Offill, winemaker for William Chris Vineyards, has been in the Texas wine industry for the past six years. During his tenure at Texas Tech University, Offill completed serval harvests in the Texas High Plains, where he developed a passion for winemaking and winegrowing. He has since taken his passion for the craft and has worked to enhance the quality of Texas wines throughout the state. Offill joined William Chris Vineyards in 2017.



William Chris Vineyards' co-owner and winegrower, Chris Brundrett, has been a part of the wine scene since college at Texas A&M University. He currently manages and farms vineyards throughout the state in partnership with William "Bill" Blackmon. In 2008, Brundrett and Blackmon formed William Chris Vineyards, one of Texas' most acclaimed boutique wineries. With a focus on the importance of each wine's sense

of place, Brundrett and Blackmon take pride in sharing "a piece of our world" in each and every 100 percent Texas-grown bottle of William Chris' wines.

**TRIAL OBJECTIVE:** This trial analyzes the sensory profile of Texas High Plains Mourvèdre that underwent an extended maceration for varying times.

**TRIAL DESCRIPTION:** A block of 21.84 tons of own-rooted Mourvèdre was used for the trial. The block was machine picked at 25.1° Brix, 3.86 pH and 197.4 ppm YAN, then separated into three lots. We explored varying extended maceration lengths before and wanted to examine the effect on sensory profile in a controlled experiment. Each lot was fermented to dryness, went through malolactic fermentation and then "locked up." Lot 1 (control) was pressed after five days from the start of alcoholic fermentation. Lot 2 was pressed after 60 days from the start of alcoholic fermentation. Lot 3 was pressed after 120 days from the start of alcoholic fermentation. Each lot was fermented in a 20 hL foudre.

Lot 1: Control, pressed five days after start of alcoholic fermentation

Lot 2: Pressed 60 days after start of alcoholic fermentation

Lot 3: Pressed 120 days after start of alcoholic fermentation

**TRIAL CONCLUSION:** The basic chemistry of each lot was surprisingly similar after the extended macerations were completed. Visually, lot 1 and lot 2 are similar in color intensity and hue. Lot 3 was predictably less vibrant in color intensity and hue, most likely due to binding of anthocyanins to fermentation solids. Lot 1 and lot 2 exhibit a fruitier nose; however, lot 3 exhibited a fuller, more rounded mouthfeel. Phenolic panels still need to be run on each lot to complete the experiment and have more comprehensive data.



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#### Winemaker's Post Mortem

#### Why were you interested in studying the effects of extended maceration on Mourvèdre? Was there any reason you chose this grape specifically?

Offill & Brundrett: We produce between 8,000 and 10,000 cases annually of Mourvèdre, both single-vineyard wines and larger-production wines appellated Texas High Plains. We were searching for the best expression of terroir in a more layered approach. We have experimented in the past with some two- to 50-day extended macerations and have been really pleased with the results. We feel using these methods to create blending tools can help coax out the soulfulness of a region.

#### Was there a problem you were looking to solve or a goal you wanted to achieve in conducting this experiment?

Offill & Brundrett: There wasn't necessarily a specific problem to solve; the trial was born out of a desire to produce a wine with more layers. Although regions with warmer climates, like ours, can grow styles that are fruit-forward and are ready to enjoy sooner than cooler climates, there are a few drawbacks. Producing wines with fresher, more aromatic components sometimes leaves more to be desired in the mid-palate and finish. With this trial we wanted to see if we could remedy those drawbacks, making a more rounded, full and more complete wine that would be great after one year or 10 years.

#### Describe how you set up this trial.

Offill & Brundrett: We had a 21-ton lot of Mourvèdre coming in from a single block, and we decided to look at multiple oak tank fermentations. We take a more formal approach in keeping these lots separate during èlevage rather than marrying them post-press in order to analyze ageability and mouthfeel.

### Did your team or colleagues have any input?

Offill & Brundrett: Our winemaking team has been working on some extended maceration trials for several years after tasting some very interesting work coming out of Lewis Wines, which is another company we work closely with. We felt like there was an opportunity to take a deep dive. Chris and Josh Fritsche, our previous winemakers, were always enthusiastic to make these trials a growing part of our program.

#### Did you encounter any complications during the course of the trial? If so, how did you address these issues?

Offill & Brundrett: Malolactic fermentation was a concern; but as we did not inoculate, it ended up not being an issue. Our biggest concern was bacteria. In the end, we ended up with no issues at all and smooth sailing from start to finish. Surprisingly, this was one of the easiest processes to manage in our cellar.

## What was the outcome? Were the results as you predicted or did anything unexpected occur?

**Offill & Brundrett:** The most surprising aspect was that there was virtually no change in pH the longer we macerated. We anticipated more changes in chemistry, which in the end proved not to be the case. Mouthfeel depth was improved more than we anticipated, which is positive.

# What were some of the winemaking lessons you learned? In light of this new information, do you plan to adjust your current winemaking methods? Why or why not?

**Offill & Brundrett:** We learned that we could use this across more of our varietal programs in order to add depth and mouthfeel with a bit more reductive strength. In addition, we would reduce volumes across the lots of extended maceration in order to make it a smaller percentage of the final blend so it's easier to thread.

## What were the reactions from your team or colleagues? Which wine did they prefer?

**Offill & Brundrett:** The feedback was mostly positive. The greenness on the 120-day lot was, and is, a bit challenging to blend. However, the positive attributes in mouthfeel far outweigh the aromatic components. Most of the team was skeptical about the 120-day maceration, but we held strong. In the end, we all liked the spectrum we got. It gives us some great tools to make a wine with a little more depth.

#### Do you plan to do a follow-up trial to re-test these results? Would you or will you conduct the same experiment with a different variety?

**Offill & Brundrett:** Yes. We plan on doing more dèlestage throughout fermentation, potentially a cooler fermentation and would also like to thread the extended macerated wines back into the control blends earlier to see how integration is impacted. We also have plans on doing similar trials in smaller lot Rhône varieties. **WBM** 

