

WINES & VINES

Treasure in Winery Trash

California company offers presses to extract valuable grapeseed oil from pomace

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Napa, Calif.—Wineries may soon be finding a small treasure in the waste they now pay to discard. [Food & Vine Inc.](#), a Napa-based company that specializes in grapeseed oil and related products, is introducing presses that wineries can use to extract valuable oil. The company also plans to process the seeds, sell consulting services and market the oils for wineries.

Valentin Humer, founder of Food & Vine, says the process has both economic and environmental benefits. Wineries currently either pay to get rid of their pomace or compost it. In either case, they're discarding a valuable part of the grape.

The seeds can be used for cold-pressed grapeseed oil, press cake, grapeseed flour and grapeseed lignan, all of which useful for healthful food products. Grapeseed oils are high in essential fatty acids and contain high amounts of vitamin E. They can be used to fortify numerous products and provide extra nutrients in fresh food sources that lack essential fatty acids, antioxidants and fiber.

All grapeseed oil has a high smoke point (485°F), making it excellent for cooking. Cold-pressed oils have characteristic aromas and flavors that make them ideal for drizzling over foods and for uncooked applications, much like extra virgin olive oil. Cold-pressed grapeseed oil has a golden/green color with a buttery taste and an aroma reminiscent of the wine crush. Humer is currently selling small quantities of the cold-pressed oil at \$19.95 per 250ml retail. He plans to introduce 200ml bottles priced at \$9.99 at the Jan. 16-18 Winter Fancy Food Show in San Francisco. Wineries are expected to ask a premium for oils from their own vineyards sold under their own brand, however, as they now do for olive oil.

In Europe, the cold-pressed grapeseed oil Humer has been importing retails for some \$20-25 per 250ml bottle, which he says translates into \$30-40 when imported to the U.S. The company has been pressing small quantities in California, but expects to be pressing at its facility in Napa in 2 weeks.

The process requires a modest capital investment for equipment to separate and dry the pomace. Smaller wineries can air-dry their seeds and use a small, entry-level press for production. Pressing is currently under way in California. According to Humer, "A small winery can get started with an entry-level, single-head press for an investment of \$5,000, utilizing its own grapeseeds. This can process approximately 100 pounds of seeds per day (and) will yield approximately 600 liters of grapeseed oil in six months."



He continues, “With a full-size, double-head press starting at \$17,000, a mid-size winery can process up to 80 pounds of seeds per hour, processing 180 tons of grapeseeds in a six-month time period, yielding about 12,000 liters of grapeseed oil.”

A small winery using its own grapeseeds can get started with an entry-level, single-head press for an investment of \$5,000, says Valentin Humer, founder of Food & Vine.

Additional equipment costs will depend on volume and how automated a winery cares to be. The process can be as simple as drying grapeseeds on a clean concrete slab or as technical as using a fully automated tumble-drying and separating facility.



A larger winery could invest in infrastructure to separate the seeds from the pomace, then dry and store them for the open grapeseed market or start its own production. A dryer and seed separator costs more than \$100,000, but the remaining skins and stems can be converted more easily to compost and will be more valuable compost without the seeds, Humer says.

A ton of grapes is about 26% pomace (572 pounds), which produces 68 pounds of dry grape seeds and 3 liters of grapeseed oil. The yield varies from 5% to 16% of the dry grape seeds, depending on the lot and variety.

For 4,800 tons of grapes, the yield is 15,000 liters of oil and 135 tons of presscake, which can be turned into grapeseed flour as a food supplement as well as 600 tons of dry skins and stems for extraction of antioxidants as well as compost and other uses.

Food & Vine was started by Humer in 1990 to extract and market grapeseed oil, and it is popular in parts of Europe. After running into financing and other roadblocks to producing the oil from California grapes, it began importing the oils under the Salute Santé brand and has built a business marketing that product.

Ironically, one of the companies Humer earlier approached, Upper Valley Waste Management owned by the Pestoni family, did start extracting grapeseed oil from the pomace it collected from wineries, but abandoned the process. “It’s tricky to make grapeseed oil for food,” Humer says.”

Food & Vine Inc. will be exhibiting in the Golden State Food Machinery booth (E-4) at the [Unified Wine & Grape Symposium](#) in Sacramento, Calif., on Jan. 26-28. The presses are available now.

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