

Homebrew a Potent Alcoholic Beverage in Less than 24 hours Using no Specialised Equipment

Brewmaster Bones

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So on Saturday at about 4pm I dissolved 3 tablespoons of white sugar into 500mls of hot water in a 1l glass measuring jug. I let it cool to body temperature and stirred in a packet of this NCP High Foam Superbrew Yeast I bought from Checkers. I covered the jug with a cloth and left it to do its thing. Well I checked on it like half an hour later and boy was it active. It had foamed right up to the top of the jug just shy of the cloth and it was clearly already time for me to add it to the juice I was planning to ferment.

I took my 5l empty plastic mineral water container and I poured in 2l of Liqui Fruit red grape juice and poured in my active yeast mixture, trying to stir in as much foam as I could and get it all in the container. I think I was worried about not getting enough yeast, well turns out that definitely was not an issue. I put the lid on and gave it a good shake and set it down to get going.

By about 7.30 it was really, really going. I don't have a bubbler so what I normally do is just ferment with the lid on and burp it a few times a day to let out the CO₂ and stop the container from exploding or the lid flying off and half the brew ending up on all four walls and the ceiling of whatever room I am brewing in. I burp it by loosening the cap just enough to let the gas hiss out and then tightening it again. You can tell when it needs burping because the container gets bloated out rock solid and rocks on it's base rather than standing square. Well this was already at the point that it needed burping like every half an hour. You could burp it, cap it and burp it again straight away, that's how active it was.

I was already worried about leaving it overnight. I thought, there's no way it's going to make it through the night without exploding.

By about 10 o'clock I could see I was not worrying for nothing. After leaving it for an hour, maybe an hour and a half without burping while watching some netflix, this stuff had already worked itself up into such a state that it was difficult to burp. If I opened it long enough to get all the gas out, half the brew was threatening to leave the container with it. Keep in mind this was 2.5l of liquid that was so saturated with gas it was way too much volume for a 5l container.

Anyway I had to put it in the sink while I burped it and tried to do it in steps, letting out little bits of gas at a time and giving it a few seconds to settle then letting out more gas. The problem was that in the time between micro-burps it was generating more gas than I'd let out. Eventually I just had to cut my losses and lose a little bit of the brew in order to let out enough gas to calm it down.

Needless to say, leaving it overnight with the cap on tight was not an option. What I opted to do was just leave it in the sink with the cap on loose enough to let out the air. I reckoned the internal pressure generated by the constant creation of gas would be enough to make it unlikely that much air would come in through the loose lid but at least the bottle would not explode while I slept.

By the time I woke up, it had calmed down a lot, but I could see it still got pretty frothy through the night, because there was foam around the outside of the bottle which I'd been sure to wipe up before I went to bed. I capped it properly and put it in a corner on the floor to continue my routine of periodic

burping.

By about 11, maybe 12 o' clock, I noticed it was hardly producing any gass at all any more. The bottle was yielding to the touch and the yeast were starting to fall out. The brew was clearing up towards the top and a sediment was forming at the bottom. I suspected stalled fermentation. There was no way it could have already fermented all the sugar in this time, it had been less than 24 hours.

Oh well, I guess there's only one way to know, I had to taste it. Well I was very surprised. It was completely dry, no sweetness at all and evidently plenty of alcohol volume. It smelled like wine. Very yeasty and quite sulfury wine, but still wine.

My plan was to top up the brewing vat with another 2l of sugar water over the course of a couple of days, I already had a litre of water with 4 tablespoons of sugar dissolved in it cooling on the counter. I had no intention of drinking any of that initial grape juice batch as is, but I was too curious about it so I set aside about 400mls to drink and continued with my initial plan with the rest of the brew.

Subsequent to adding the sugar water, the brew took off almost as enthusiastically as the previous night, the yeast stopped falling out and in fact those that had fallen out rejoined the party and I had to follow the same strategy as I did the night before of leaving it in the sink with the lid loose.

Today is Monday and this morning I added the last liter of sugar water. It's been fairly active most of the day and now at about 9pm it is beginning to calm down. It already smells a lot better than it did on Saturday. Much less yeasty, more like a nice champagne smell and the sulfur smell is mostly gone. Overall I'm very impressed with this yeast. I've never used super market brewers yeast before and I did not have high expectations. It comes with no instructions and I likely used a lot more than I needed to, hence the rapid results. I'm not sure yet if I will leave it capped overnight or do the sink, loose cap thing just for safety's sake but if it continues to behave the way it has done, I suspect by about mid-day tomorrow it will have fermented all the sugar and the yeast will begin falling out again.

As for the 400ml that I set aside, I'd planned to leave it in the fridge to clarify, but I confess I did not have the patience. When I drank it, about a centimeter at the top had cleared, enough to convince me that if I left it for a few hours, maybe overnight it would have cleared completely.

Don't let me lie to you, it was pretty vile. Very yeasty and quite bitter. Beverages of this sort definitely benefit from a longer brewing time and at least a few days to settle, but it definitely kicked. I got drunker than expected and had started to nurture a headache before I even went to bed and woke up with a hangover. I never get hangovers. I can drink a lot and not get a hangover. I think the combination of the high yeast content and probably a bunch of fusel alcohols and other junk from the fast fermentation and no stabilisation time helped to contribute to it, but overall it was a fun experiment and I never would have believed it possible to ferment such a potent alcoholic beverage in less than 24 hours using only supplies obtainable from a normal super market.

Overall I am impressed with this yeast. I've never used super market brewers yeast before and I did not have high expectations. It comes with no instructions and I likely used a lot more than I needed to, hence the results I got. I suspect that once this is all fermented out, stabilised, bottled and aged that it will be quite a drinkable prison wine style brew.

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