

An Alternative for Every Decision

Spectrum of oak barrel alternative products grows wider and their uses more precise

By Andrew Adams

Fermentation? Hit it with dust, shavings or chips. Maturation? Bring in the staves, blocks, chips, rods or even balls.

Finishing?

Think blocks, chips or powders.

Winery suppliers these days offer oak barrel alternatives for every phase of the winemaking process, and each year new products and new toasts allow winemakers more options to use alternative products with greater precision.

One of the most common uses for alternatives is during primary fermentation, when oak powders or small chips are thought to provide color stability, help protect against oxidation and mask or even reduce the presence of green, vegetative flavors.

Seguin Moreau has developed a new barrel alternative designed to make such an addition easier and safer for cellar

Highlights

- The Oenofirst log by Seguin Moreau is designed to make oak chip additions cleaner and easier.
- Several suppliers are offering stave fan packs with new toasts.
- Pronektar is sorting its new Extreme line of staves by the level of tannin and other polyphenolic material in the wood.

workers. The company unveiled its Oenofirst product—oak chips and dust compressed into a log—at this year’s Unified Wine & Grape Symposium in January.

One log per ton

A single log weighs 4.4, pounds, and the supplier recommends 3 to 5 pounds of product per ton (or roughly one log per ton). The log can simply be dropped into a full tank, where it will dissolve in the must or during a pump over, or it can be dissolved in a tank filled with water or juice and then pumped into a tank or added at the crusher.

Marion Blanchet Ghiringhelli, Seguin Moreau’s barrel alternative sales manager, said that since Seguin Moreau was a bit late to the oak barrel alternatives game, the company is now focused on finding a competitive edge by developing unique products.

She said most companies offer a short list of alternative products such as shavings, dust or small chips for fermentation. In discussing alternatives with their winery clients, Ghiringhelli said Seguin Moreau heard such products could be a hassle. “For the cellar crew, it’s not always easy to use the product,” she said, adding that the team was inspired to “find a format that would be easier.”

The logs are available in French oak and come untoasted or as a mix of toasted and untoasted. Seguin Moreau claims the product helps draw out better aromatics, aids wine stability and mouthfeel, while also reducing vegetal aromas and tastes.

By adding logs, cellar workers are spared dumping bags of oak dust or chips that generate thick clouds of powder. Ghiringhelli said the product would be available in North America for harvest 2014.



Oak chips are compressed to form Seguin Moreau’s Oenofirst log.

She recommended that winemakers add the logs to a tank prior to the start of fermentation, giving the log a chance to dissolve when there is no cap.

The chips that make up the Oenofirst log are toasted in a convection oven and made with the same seasoned wood Seguin Moreau uses for its Haute Futaie French oak barrels. The logs are made through compression and don’t contain a binding agent. “We wanted it to be very clean, easy to use and bring only what it’s supposed to bring, which is oak,” Ghiringhelli said.

Also new on the fermentation side, French cooperage Canadell added an ultra fine oak powder to its lineup of fermentation products, which already includes a “tobacco” line of medium-plus toasted chips. Pickering Winery Supply, which is the North American agent for Suber Lefort, added its new XOVS Superfine Powder, a finishing oak designed to boost aromatics and/or help winemakers incorporate some final adjustments to their wines’ flavor profiles.

Oak Solutions Group has introduced chips in its Cuvee 1 and Cuvee 2 toasts, which previously were only available for staves. The company also recently released its XT-4 chip for flavor and structure that provides brown sugar, coffee and a “hint of sweet smoke” for whites and notes of smoky chocolate for reds. Kyle Sullivan, Oak Solutions Group’s director of sales, said the Cuvee and XT-4 chips are primarily used for aging and finishing,

although some wineries do use them during fermentation.

Precision stave technology

Pronektar, the alternatives line of Tonnelerie Radoux, is now offering an “Extreme” line of staves that are sorted with the company’s Oakscan system. Radoux already uses the system to gauge the level of tannin and polyphenolic content in its barrel staves and now is bringing that technology to its range of barrel alternatives.



Oak Solutions' usage calculator can determine the appropriate addition of Cuvee chips.

Martin McCarthy, Radoux's sales and marketing manager, said the system enables winemakers to make precise adjustments to the flavor profile of their wine because they know the exact nature of the wood they're using.

The Extreme “délicat” staves contain low amounts of polyphenols and are best used to provide some vanilla and spice notes. Staves with a medium level of polyphenolic material are classified as “complexe” and provide structure, oak aromatics and grilled and roasted notes.



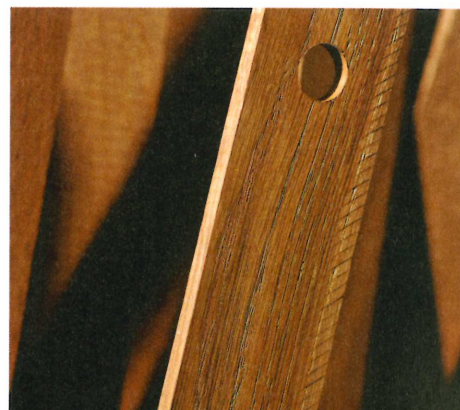
Xtraoak's Xtrachêne Sticks have the same thickness as a Bordeaux barrel.

The “intense” line of staves has the highest concentration of tannin and other polyphenols and provides more mouthfeel and strong oak aromatics.

McCarthy said the new line of staves has generated some keen interest from winemakers, and the challenge has been to get enough sorted staves into production to meet demand.

New toast and other options

Creative Oak, the barrel alternatives division of Cork Supply, is offering two new



Tonnelerie Radoux recommends its Xtreme Staves be fixed in tanks for even extraction.

SURPRISES

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convection toasts: vanilla and caramel. Staviv is now offering winemakers the chance to make custom fan packs with a blend of different toasts or with untoasted staves to create an effect similar to the untoasted heads of barrels. Xtraoak offers a similar option in its fan packs.

Xtraoak, or Xtrachêne as it is known in France, also produces Stick 22.90, which is a different shape than a traditional oak stave. The company claims Stick 22.90, which is 2.2 cm by 2.2 cm and 90 cm long, provides more extractable flavors and tannins. The sticks can also be bundled together with a Xtradiamond Kit and placed into a tank.

Oak Infusion Spiral offers a few multiple-toast packs that feature blends of different toasts for specific applications like its French oak Burgundy blend with light, medium and medium-plus toasted spirals.

Anne-Claire Lelievre, key account manager for Nadalie Add-Ins, said the company is developing a new toast similar to its "special" toast but more suitable for white wines. She said the new toast enhances the fruit while bringing a softness and roundness to the wine.

Quercus Concepts introduced a new fan pack of staves it's calling Prestige, which

is intended for Pinot Noir. Sales manager Attila Oross said the pack is designed to round and lift the wine with only minimal oak aromatics. "We are also offering new Chardonnay fans designed to frame the underlying fruit while striking a balance between sweet notes and roasted oak aromatics," he said.

One challenge with small alternative products or even fans is that to work with large volumes of wine, cellar workers have to go through the laborious process of handling pallet loads of fan packs or bags of chips.

Innerstave is looking to make high-vol-

ume wood chip treatments easier with its "value bag."

Alicia McBride, the company's general manager, said instead of dealing with dozens of 50-pound sacks, winemakers can simply order one or two value bags. The 1,000-pound bags are truncated and can be moved with a forklift. McBride said they are a good option for tanks with capacities of 70,000 gallons and up.

With so many barrel alternative products on the market today, the question doesn't seem to be *if* wineries are using alternatives but *what type* of alternatives they need and want. **W&V**



Each fanpack from Quercus Concepts contains 22 square feet of oak planks.



Innerstave offers three types of oak chips as well as staves, blocks, cubes and flour.

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BSG HandCraft	(800) 999-2440	bsghandcraft.com	X	X		X
BSG Wine Division I Napa	(707) 252-2550	bsgwine.com	X	X	X	X
Barrel Builders Inc.	(707) 963-9963	barrelbuilders.com	X			X
Barrels Best - The Vadai World Trade Enterprise Barrels/Wine LLC	(626) 289-8250	vadaiwinebarrels.com	X	X	X	
Bayard Fox Selections	(707) 812-4554	bayardfoxselections.com	X			X
The Boswell Co.	(415) 457-3955	boswellcompany.com	X		X	X
Bouchard Cooperages	(707) 257-3582	bouchardcooperages.com	X	X	X	X
Brick Packaging LLC	(231) 947-4950	brickpackaging.com	X		X	X
Canadell Inc.	(707) 731-2607	canadell.com	X	X	X	X
Carolina Wine Supply	(336) 677-6831	carolinawinesupply.com			X	X
Charlois Cooperage USA	(707) 944-1371	denisandsons.com	X	X	X	X
Creative Oak	(707) 746-5704	creativeoak.com	X	X	X	X
Demptos Napa Cooperage	(707) 257-2628	demptosusa.com	X	X	X	X
Eaton	(800) 656-3344	eaton.com/filtration	X			
Enartis Vinquiry	(707) 838-6312	enartisvinquiry.com	X			
ëvOAK (Oak Solutions Group)	(707) 259-4988	oaksolutionsgroup.com	X	X	X	X
Fine Northern Oak	(952) 935-9631	finenorthernoak.com	X	X	X	X
GW Kent Inc.	(734) 572-1300	gwkent.com	X			
Gusmer Enterprises	(559) 485-2692	gusmerenterprises.com	X			
Heinrich Oak Alternatives	(707) 738-8670	heinrich.com.au	X	X	X	X
IDL Process Solutions Inc.	(604) 538-2713	idiconsulting.com	X	X		
Innerstave LLC	(707) 996-8781	innerstave.com	X	X	X	X
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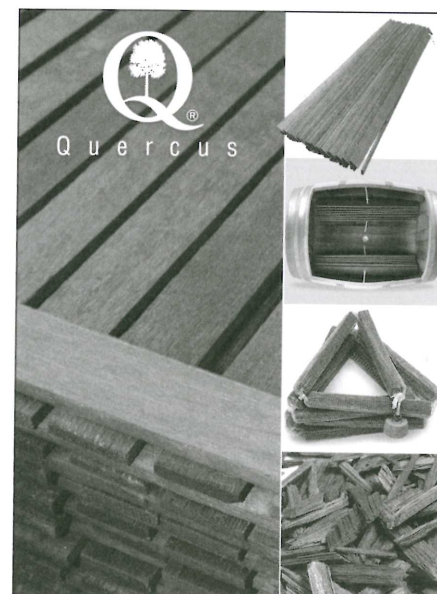
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Laffort USA	(707) 775-4530	laffortusa.com	X			X
Leroi	(707) 508-5006	leroibarrels.com	X	X	X	X
Moxon Oak	(209) 224-5353	moxonoak.com	X		X	X
OC Inc.	(740) 947-4159	oakchipsinc.com	X	X	X	X
Oak Add-Ins (Nadalie USA)	(707) 942-9301	nadalie-usa.com	X	X	X	X
Oak Infusion Spiral by The Barrel Mill	(800) 201-7125	infusionspiral.com	X	X	X	X
Oak Plus (a division of Innerstave LLC)	(707) 996-8781	innerstave.com	X	X	X	X
Oak Solutions Group	(707) 259-4988	oaksolutionsgroup.com	X	X	X	X
Oenosylva	(707) 224-2377	oenosylva.com		X		
Pacific Winemaking LLC	(503) 419-7942	pacificwinemaking.com	X			
Pickering Winery Supply	(415) 474-1588	winerystuff.com	X	X	X	X
Presque Isle Wine Cellars	(814) 725-1314	piwine.com	X			
Quality Wine Barrels Cooperage/ Meza Barrels Co.	(805) 481-4737	qualitywinebarrels.com				X
Quercus Concepts	(707) 775-7065	quercuswood.com	X	X	X	X
Reliable Cork Solutions LLC	(203) 681-7743	reliablecorksolutions.com	X			X
Rich Xiberta USA	(707) 795-1800	xiberta.com	X			X
Seguin Moreau Napa Cooperage	(707) 252-3408	seguinmoreaunapa.com		X	X	X
Stavin Inc.	(415) 331-7849	stavin.com	X	X	X	X
Toneleria Nacional/Mistral Barrels	(707) 996-5600	mistralbarrels.com	X	X	X	X
Tonnellerie Berthomieu	(707) 224-2377	tonnellerie-berthomieu.com			X	
Tonnellerie de Jarnac	(707) 332-4524	tonnellerie-de-jarnac-16.com				X
Tonnellerie Radoux USA	(707) 284-2888	radouxcooperage.com	X	X	X	X
Vivelys USA - Oenodev Inc.	(707) 546-2213	vivelysusa.com	X			
Xtraoak/Xtrachêne	(707) 836-9742	xtraoak.com	X	X	X	X

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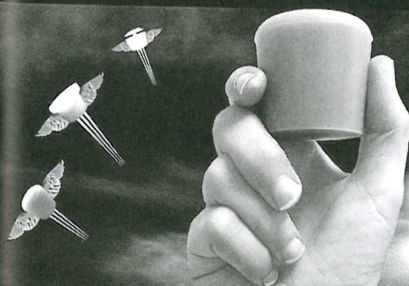
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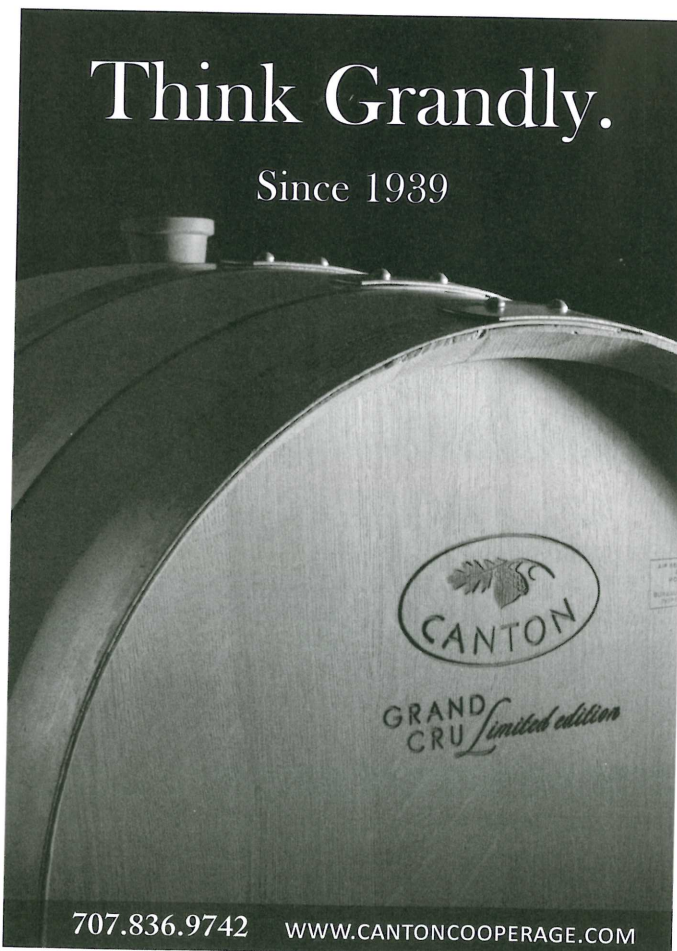


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