



Homemade Amphorae

The ancient practice of making wine in amphorae has been gaining traction over the last decade. Recently, UNESCO placed the Georgian *qvevri*-based winemaking technique on its Intangible Cultural Heritage list. Closer to home, Oregon ceramicist, vigneron and winemaker Andrew Beckham started throwing his own amphorae after reading about Elisabetta Foradori, who uses the terra cotta containers for some of her white wines from Trentino. Beckham experimented with the clay composition, eliminating the typical barium (not food safe) and incorporating a higher percentage of grog (firesand), sourced from Sacramento,

California. He steered clear of lining his vessels with beeswax (it's costly and creates sanitation challenges) and instead focused on finding a firing temperature that would result in a vessel both porous and leak-free. Each amphora is thrown by hand, a process that takes about 20 hours on a pottery wheel complete with scaffolding; that's followed by five to six weeks for drying and close to 40 hours of firing. While Beckham has a long way to go before he can produce the vessels commercially, he's experimenting with the 40- and 60-gallon containers, using them for pinot noir and a skin-fermented pinot gris from his own vineyards. —C.G.