



Rotten Egg Smell in Wine

When your wine must develops a *rotten egg* smell it means that there is an excessive amount of hydrogen sulphide present as a result of problems in winemaking or vinification.

Hydrogen sulphide is a sulphur-based compound which is also sometimes known as *mercaptan*. If present in excessive amount it will be detected easily by its unpleasant aroma. Yeast can produce minute amounts of hydrogen sulphide that most times cannot be detected. These minute amounts of H₂S are not harmful to your wine. Juice quality can also be a source of hydrogen sulphide because of the presence of sulphur from the application of sprays late in the growing season.

The key to getting your wine must back into condition is to detect the problem early. After detection the problem can be corrected by aeration. Rack your wine several times allowing plenty of splashing to occur. Aeration can speed up the oxidation of the wine so you need to weigh a potential oxidation problem against the severity of the H₂S problem. Allowing the hydrogen sulphide problem to continue unchecked will result in your wine being spoiled.

Several things can cause a hydrogen sulphide problem to occur in your wine.

1. Using fruit which has been treated with a sulphur-based mildew or fungus inhibitor;
2. The presence of fruit skins in the must from fruit treated with a sulphur-based inhibitor;
3. Wine allowed to set on the lees for too long a period of time;
4. Excessive additions of sulphites;
5. Yeasts will always produce hydrogen sulphide (but in very, very small quantities).

A second way of reducing the presence of hydrogen sulphide compounds is to sulphite your must (100mg/L) and then filter the must to remove the sulphur. Repeat this procedure in approximately 2 to 3 months.