

Why are there sulphites in my wine?

SULPHUR FACTS:

- Sulphur is essential to life and the 8th most prevalent element in the human body.
- Average adult daily dietary intake is 900 mg.
- Sulphites occur naturally during the fermentation process. So all wines contain sulphites.

HEALTH ISSUES:

- Elemental sulphur in small doses is not toxic but derivatives, such as Sulphur dioxide gas found in wines, may be toxic in higher concentrations.
- Sulphur dioxide may irritate a sensitive asthmatic's airway eliciting bronchospasm and an asthma attack - just as various other airborne irritants might.
- Asthmatics aside, nearly 1% of the population has a hypersensitivity to sulphite. Exposure for them can result in a serious anaphylactic type reaction – while having no effect on the rest of us. By the time they are adults, these individuals are well aware of their sensitivity.
- Red Wine Headache (RWH), often wrongly attributed to sulphites, is most likely from histamine-like compounds associated with tannins, not found in white wines.
- Do you get RWH? Try a gamay, Beaujolais (Bergamais), or an unoaked pinot noir. Also, some RWH sufferers advise that Valpolicella and Chianti do not bother them.
- Allergy to Sulfa drugs has no connection with sulphur sensitivity.

WINE & SULPHUR:

- Likely used for a thousand years now, a royal decree officially approved sulphites for use in German winemaking in 1487.
- Almost all modern wineries use sulphur in various stages of their wine making.
- For centuries old world winemakers have been burning sulphur to coat the inside of oak barrels with the sulphur residue before putting their wine away for aging, a fact often forgotten by their diaspora.



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- It is sprayed on the vines to protect from common diseases. It is sprayed on fresh picked fruit to suppress or kill wild yeasts and bacteria. It is used as a sanitizing rinse for vessels and equipment.
- The finished wine is infused with sulphur dioxide to prevent malo-lactic, acetobacter (vinegar), and other bacterial activity, and as an antioxidant to preserve colour and flavour.
- Without the addition of sulphites, many great wines could not age long enough to become great.
- Because red wines contain tannins, which are natural preservatives, they are infused with less sulphite than white wines.

ORGANIC OR VEGAN WINE?

- All wine contains sulphite occurring naturally from the activity of the yeast in the fermentation process, from 10 to 30 ppm.
- Sorbate, Bentonite, gelatin, and egg or fish by-products for stabilizing or clarifying, may be used without being listed on the label. They are all generally regarded as safe for all.
- Ontario and Canada have no standards to certify wines as organic.
- Standards for organic certification exist in Europe and the U.S. but are confusing. Usually certifying organically grown grapes not organic wine, they may still allow the addition of sulphite up to 100 ppm.
- Certifications do exist prohibiting any addition of sulphite. Maximum sulphite allowance of non-certified commercial wines in the U.S. is 350 ppm!

WINEMAKERS:

- All our wines are fish and animal by-product free, (vegan wine)
- We do recommend the use of antioxidants/preservatives and routinely add sulphite and sorbate.
- However, we are happy to decrease or eliminate in-store use of sulphite and sorbate in dry wines at your request. Please understand that our sweetened wines must have both sulphite and sorbate added.

