Common Winemaking Faults and Flaws

Flaws

- Flaws are a mistake made in the winemaking process that leads to a property in the wine that is not characteristic of the varietal.

- Stylistic Choice vs. Flaw

- Imbalance Flaw
  Acid vs Sugar, Oak Levels, Alcohol Level

- Visual Flaws
  Haze, Sediment, Effervescence, TA Crystals, Floaters, Lack of Color Saturation

- Aroma/Bouquet Flaws
  Lack of Aroma, Non-varietal aroma, Over-oaking

Faults

- Faults are often a microbial or chemical reaction within the wine in some part of its life that significantly alters a wine, eventually leading to the point of spoilage.

- Oxidation Faults
  Acetaldehyde – oxidation of Ethyl Alcohol smells like sherry, or old apples, browning
  Causes: headspace, low sulfites, poor corks, bacterial contamination

  Acetic Acid – Vinegar
  Causes: Acetaldehyde, Acetobacter bacteria react with ethanol, Fruit Flies

  Ethyl Acetate – Nail Polish Smell
  Oxidation of Acetaldehyde and Acetic Acid
  Causes: headspace and bacterial contamination

- Sulfur Faults
  Hydrogen Sulfide – Rotten Eggs Smell
  Causes: lack of yeast nutrients, yeast stress, sulfur sprays, yeast bi-product, high temps

  Sulfur Dioxide – Burnt Match Smell
  Causes: over sulfating, wild yeast

  Complex Sulfur Faults- Mercaptans, DMS, DES, DMDS, DEDS
  Causes: Hydrogen Sulfide reacting with Ethyl Alcohol
• **Microbial Faults**
  
  *Brettanomyces – Barnyard, Horse Saddle, Antiseptic Ointment, Band-Aids, Bacon, Clove*
  
  Causes: Spoilage yeast cells that are incredibly dangerous and difficult to eliminate. Most often found in contaminated barrels, winery cleanliness, resistant to acid and SO2.

  *Geranium Taint – Fresh cut geranium leaves*
  
  Causes: Reaction of potassium sorbate with Lactic Acid Bacteria in the presence of Ethyl Alcohol.

  *Refermentation – Fizzy wine, popped corks*
  
  Causes: Yeast or microbial fermentation of residual sugar.

• **Other Faults**
  
  *Cork Taint – Wet basement, wet old newspaper, mildew*
  
  Causes: strain of trichloanisole on cork (cork taint); mold that contacts chlorine and wood.

  *Heat Damage – Cooked fruit smell, brick red color, similar to oxidation*
  
  Causes: leaving wine in a hot car, in the sun, etc.