



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, DEES

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.