

ASK A Vintner

As a local winery, Studio Vino conducts regular tasting, wine making and bottling events. During our events, many questions relating to wine are frequently posed. Wine enthusiasts, whether they are just beginning their education or they've had several years of training, always ask good questions. Folks have been curious about things such as wine making techniques, differences in grapes, tasting etiquette, proper food/wine pairings, pros & cons of packaging and naming conventions of wine styles... just to name a few.

We'd like to use this column to address these questions and more. We encourage you to submit your questions to Studio Vino to further our value to you as our readers. As we continue, we'll answer your questions along with related links and other relevant tidbits.

Our aim is to help educate, bring awareness and clarify uncertainties around wine and all of its many related topics. General knowledge of wine doesn't require years of study...it can come simply through curiosity, openness to trying new wines and ability to ask questions.

That being said, let's move to our first question...

I have an allergy to sulfites, is there a sulfite-free wine?

To begin, actual sulfite allergies are quite rare (less than 1% of the population). The specific symptoms of a sulfite allergy vary widely from a severe anaphylactic reaction to asthma, abdominal symptoms, eczema or headaches. Often when a wine drinker complains of a headache and falsely accuses the sulfites. While no one is exactly sure what causes red wine headaches, it is likely that tannins, histamines or some other naturally occurring substance that is more prevalent in red wine than in white wine is the culprit... and not the sulfites.

In response whether there is a sulfite-free wine, actually, there is no such thing. There are, however, wine makers (vintners) who produce wine with "no added" sulfites. Sulfites are a natural byproduct of the fermentation process, as the fermenting yeasts present on all grape skins generate naturally occurring sulfites.

Wine makers most often add sulfites, in varying degrees, to preserve freshness, stabilize their wine and prevent oxidation. Most vintners agree that it is necessary to add sulfites – it's just a question of how much and what specific type.

If you know you have a low tolerance for sulfites, you may find that drinking organic wines would be a good choice. Organic wines, while not completely sulfite-free, are made from organically grown grapes with no added pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, chemical fertilizers, or synthetic chemicals, including sulfites added to stabilize and preserve wine.

For more information:

<http://www.appellationnyc.com/sulfites.htm>

<http://waterhouse.ucdavis.edu/winecomp/so2.htm>

http://www.grapevinecottage.com/Pages/AR_sulfites.html

<http://www.ecowine.com/sulfites.htm>

Have a wine-related question?

Please submit to:

winequestion@studiovino.com

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