



## VINTNER'S CELLAR - *Kawarthas Premium Wines*

999 Lansdowne St. W., Peterborough (at The Parkway)

(705) 741-3767 [www.vintnerswines.ca](http://www.vintnerswines.ca)

Tuesday to Friday: 9:30am – 6pm, Sat: 9:30am – 4pm

Sunday/Monday: Closed

# **SULFITE IN WINE FACTS**

Potassium Metabisulfite is a stable source of sulfur dioxide in wine making. The use of sulfur compounds is not a recent innovation. The great Dutch shipping empire popularized the use of sulfur in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by refusing to ship any wines not treated. They insisted on sulfites because sulfite treated wines were the only ones that survived a long sea voyage without turning into vinegar.

Sulfites work by releasing free sulfur dioxide, which inhibits yeast, mold and bacteria. It does this in two ways: one, it kills some of the organisms outright, and two, it blocks the surviving organisms' ability to reproduce. If your wine making equipment is physically clean and you've rinsed it with a sulfite solution, nothing will grow on it.

Sulfites are also added directly to wine after fermentation to help prevent oxidation. Oxidation in wine follows the same pattern that you see in the cut edge of an apple - the wine turns brown and takes on a flat "cardboard" taste. Sulfur binds with the oxygen in the wine and prevents this damage.

Many people worry that they may be allergic to sulfites. True sulfite allergies are very rare. It's more likely that they have a histamine reaction to red wine, or that they have been overexposed to sulfites in the past. In the 1970's restaurants would douse their salad bars with 2000 PPM (parts per million) sulfite solutions in order to keep the produce fresh. Mixing with food acids, such as dressings or vinegar, would cause the salad to release clouds of sulfite gas, provoking unpleasant reactions.

Some facts that might clear up any misunderstanding about sulfites:

- Sulfites are a recognized food additive. Their use is controlled by the federal government.
- All commercially available wines contain sulfites, even those labeled "Kosher" or "Organic". The legally allowable amount is 70 PPM.
- Nearly all dried fruits and meats contain sulfites.
- **The amount of sulfite Vintner's Cellar provides with its kits will result in a level between 35 and 50 PPM in a finished wine.**

Sulfites are produced by all grape based wines naturally during fermentation, up to a level of about 10 PPM. Even with no addition of outside sulfites, wines will still contain them.

This is not to say that sulfites are totally benign. People with asthma or emphysema should avoid inhaling sulfite powder or the gas that comes off the prepared solution. It can act as a bronchial constrictor, aggravating any breathing problems. Also, adding extra sulfites to wine is of no benefit, as it can spoil the flavour, giving it a "burnt match" smell. It's important to follow directions for sulfite additions. The correct amount is included with the wine kit.

The upshot of sulfite use is this: without sulfites you'd have to be very careful to keep all of your equipment sanitary and you'd still have to drink your wine quickly, before it spoiled, probably within one or two months.