FAULTS AND CURES

Fault	Cause/Prevention	Detection	Cure
Acetaldehyde	Formed during fermentation – oxidation product of ethyl alcohol.	Sharp, penetrating odour – greenish	Acceptable in Sherry/Madeira
Acetification	Acetobacter attacks alcohol and oxidises it to acetic acid and ethyl acetate via acetaldehyde. Exclude air (cannot exist in absence of oxygen). Use good fruit. Avoid high temperature ferment/low alcohol.	Vinegar smell and taste. Sour acid taint. Possible peardrops – ethyl acetate. Oily film on surface.	None. Could try sulphiting and then re-fermentation, if fermentation not complete
Amyl acetate	Ester formed from amyl alcohol and acetic acid. Lack of nitrogen leading to de-animation. Adequate nutrients in must.	Pear drops/nail varnish if pronounced.	None
Bacteria – Acetobacter (cocci) or lactobacilli	Need air. Inhibited by sulphite, acid, heat or alcohol. Can cause malolactic fermentation – ruins sweet wines.	Test for bacterial haze by boiling or adding sulphite – will clear.	Bacterial haze – sulphite. Fine filter
Bitterness	Epsom salts, quinine, excess tannin. Avoid pith, stems, stalks, stones and pips. Remove sediment.	Astringency is dryness in mouth caused by tannins. Aftertaste on back of tongue. Almond flavour.	Treat excess tannin with gelatine
Caramel/Cooked	Brown sugar, treacle, raisins, inferior grape conc or heating sweet wines.	Toffee odour/flavour	None
Cheesy	Lactobacilli	Savoury, meaty or cheesy flavour	Sulphite might work
Chill haze	Insoluble proteins formed when chilled	Haze clears to some extent when warmed.	Sulphite, fine, filter
Cork	Impurity, infection, disintegration of cork	Bitter, mouldy, woody flavour	None
Diacetyl	Produced by certain types of yeast/bacteria. Sulphite prevents.	Butterscotch or buttery smell, bitter taste	Further ferment
Ester	Formed by reaction between acid/alcohol. Ethyl acetate indicates acetification – see above.	Boiled sweets?	
Flowers of wine (Candida Mycoderma)	Wild yeast attacks wine and converts alcohol to carbon dioxide and water. Caused if wine lacks acidity and alcohol.	Powdery white film on surface – breaks up when moved.	Treat with sulphite, rack or filter
Geranium	Action of lactic acid bacteria on sorbic acid. Use sulphite before sorbate.	Smell	None – possibly charcoal
Pectin haze	Avoid cooking fruit. Use pectolytic enzyme. Don't squeeze pulp. Wash skins of fruit	Mix with meths – globules form	Pectolytic enzyme
Starch Haze	Unripe fruit, overboiled veg, cereals. Parsnips need frost.	Iodine test – blue/black colour	Amylase – converts to maltose and dextrin

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Protein haze	Bentonite in must. Smooth ferment.	After bottling	Bentonite
Gum Haze	Soak plums in hot water		None
Hydrogen Sulphide	Hot ferment or interrupting ferment with sulphur dioxide or leaving on lees.	Bad eggs	Sulphiting and racking. Aerating or copper
Maderised	Heated and oxidised – over oxidation in old wines. Left in sun, dried fruit, oxidised grape conc.	Brown colour. Cooked taste. Woody	None
Mouse	Yeast infection or lactic acid bacteria. Acetamide? Low acid. Failure to rack.	Aftertaste. Add bicarbonate.	Sulphite and rack. Charcoal
Oxidation	Oxygen reacts with alcohols to form aldehydes. Exposure to air, lack of sulphite, repeated racking.	Smell of acetaldehyde (sherry). Tastes flat and green.	Re-ferment if not too bad.
Peppery	Bacterial decomposition of glycerol		May disappear with age
Ropiness	Bacterial disease – lactic acid.	Viscous, oily with jelly like rope or clots	Sulphite, aerate and rack, or pasteurise. Fine and use quickly.
Tourne disease	Bacterial disease (lactic acid) converts sugar into mannitol. Occurs in sweet wines, low in alcohol and acid.	Flat and sour – bitter taste. Silky sheen when swirled	Dose with tannin and sulphite, fine and filter (if not too far gone)
Moulds	Poor fruit, lack of sulphite, exposure to air.	Bitter taint	Sulphite, but throw away if bitter
Infection	Inadequate sterilisation. Delay in starting ferment. Allowing too much air exposure		
Decayed vegetation	Resting on pulp		Rack, aerate and sulphite.
Green/woody	High levels of malic acid. Caused by unripe fruit, stems and stalks.	Excess acidity, sour.	Fine with gelatine?
Medicinal	Low acid and tannin	Flat taste, soft, flabby and insipid	Add acid or treat with charcoal
Metallic	Use of non stainless steel	Metal flavour, hazes or darkening when exposed to air.	Citric acid clears iron. Fine with gelatine, filter
Rubbery	Organic compounds of sulphur		Sometimes disappears with age
Autolysis	Decomposition of dead yeast cells. Delay in racking.	Marmite, musty bqt & flavour	None
Sulphur	Excess sulphite.	On nose, catches in throat.	Shake well and leave.