

Degassing and Stabilizing Wine

The Process

When it is finished fermenting, wine requires 2 steps before it can be aged and bottled. The first step in the process is called stabilization. During stabilization substances are added to first kill the yeast and then prevent further growth of yeast. Potassium metabisulfite is added first, killing any active yeast in the wine. Next, Potassium sorbate is added, preventing any further growth of yeast. It is important to remember that potassium metabisulfite may be added by itself but one must never add only potassium sorbate. If used solely, potassium sorbate will be consumed by the yeast and produce a volatile compound which has the scent of rotting germaniums. At this point, the wine is ready to be degassed. In degassing, a wine whip or degassing rod is placed into the must. The whip/rod with attached to an electric drill bit to add further convenience. The drill is then turned on and the wine is degassed for approximately 2-6 minutes until all of the carbon dioxide is released from suspension. It is important to spin fast enough to agitate but not so fast that oxygen is introduced to the wine. A good rule of thumb is to spin just until a vortex is formed. At this point your wine is ready to be aged for an extended period of time without risk of either contamination or further fermentation of the wine.

Why Degas your Wine?

- Suspended CO₂ prevents a wine from becoming clear
- Remaining CO₂ often arouses yeast giving your wine a yeasty character
- Remaining CO₂ gives wine an unpleasant acidity
- Traditionally still wines, especially red wines, have the incorrect mouth feel when still carbonated

Why Stabilize your Wine?

- When stabilized, your wine will not undergo any more changes
- Stabilized wine has a longer shelf life than un-stabilized wine
- Stabilization prevents any wild yeast from potentially ruining your wine
- Stabilization prevents any reactivation of yeast leading to bottle bombs or fizzy wine
- If you make sweet wine, stabilization is the only way to retain the sweetness

Steps

1. Add Potassium Metabisulfite at the rate of $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon per six gallons of wine
2. Add Potassium Sorbate at the rate of $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons per gallon of wine
3. *Optionally a Clarifier may be added at this point*
4. Assemble and Sanitize wine whip or degassing rod
5. Insert whip/rod into carboy and spin for 30 seconds
6. Change stirring direction and spin for an additional 30 seconds
7. Once 2-6 minutes have passed, stop stirring the wine
8. Remove rod, re-insert bung, and leave for at least 1 week before bottling or racking

