



Q: What is Clean Wine?

A: For some people a glass of red wine is an invitation to a roaring headache. After a few such episodes they banish wine from their tables. They think they are allergic to wine, or the sulfite in wine, when what really affects them is the histamines in red wine.

Yeast, both native and pure strain varieties, eat the sugar in the grapes and turn it into alcohol and all those wonderful wine flavors. The yeast produce histamines during fermentation to protect themselves from toxins in the juice and stress during their growth cycle. At Deerfield Ranch Winery, we triple hand-sort all of our grapes to remove anything you wouldn't feed to a baby. This reduces the toxins. We keep a clean fermentation environment, and monitor the yeast for stress. As the yeast multiply rapidly we regularly feed them organic yeast food and supply them with oxygen to keep them growing happily. These measures, to assure happy yeast in a clean environment, means they don't have to produce histamines to keep them safe, thus leaving very little histamine in the finished wine. Those who get headaches and have reactions to most wines can usually drink Deerfield wine.

We make wine with very low levels of sulfite. Elevated levels of sulfite may cause an allergic reaction such as breathing problems, hot flashes, red flush of the face, ears and neck, puffiness and hives. I'm very sensitive to SO₂ and have experienced all of these reactions. About 30 years ago, the Food and Drug Administration determined that about one percent of the population is allergic to sulfites and so required the "Contains Sulfites" label on wine. Sulfite is used to keep the wine from prematurely oxidizing during the barrel aging process and to protect it from excess oxygen pickup during bottling. SO₂ attracts the oxygen and becomes non-reactive (inert) SO₃. We don't release our wine until the low levels of SO₂, used for its antioxidant properties, reacts with the free oxygen picked up by the wine and is reduced to non-reactive levels.



Now you know what clean wine means. It explains why one day you drink a glass of wine and feel like you've had a bottle and then another day you have two glasses and feel fine. Deerfield wine lovers certainly know the difference.

PJ Rex is the winemaker's wife and cofounder of the Deerfield Ranch Winery. She can be reached at: pj.rex@deerfieldranch.com.

You can learn more about the many excellent and clean Deerfield wines at www.deerfieldranch.com.