



Negative Attributes/Flavor Defects

WINEY

Winey is the flavor of oil made from olives that have undergone aerobic fermentation, meaning that the fermentation occurred in the presence of oxygen. This happens when the olive's skin has broken thus exposing the pulp to air; oxygen causes the sugar molecules to convert to acid, much like when grape juice is converted to alcohol. The winey defect is also described as vinegar, acid and sour as these are characteristics are also associated with the olive's aerobic fermentation.

The winey defect used to be more common before modern mills replaced hydraulic presses. This was due to the use of mats (upon which the olive mash/paste was spread) that had not been properly cleaned, causing fresh olive paste to be exposed to the acetic acid, ethyl acetate and ethanol that had already developed.

Detecting Fusty/Muddy Sediment:

Despite the name winey, often the aroma is often described as yeasty, vinegary or reminiscent of nail polish remover (or paint thinner). Winey can be difficult to detect because the aroma molecules dissipate into the air as soon as the tasting glass is uncovered.

Preventing Fusty/Muddy Sediment:

- Check olives prior to milling and remove damaged olives with punctures to the skin. (Note that sometimes fruit fly damage can promote the winey defect.)
- Ensure that handling prior to milling does not cause damage to the olives.
- Mill cleanliness is imperative; ask your miller about cleaning protocols.
- If using a hydraulic press, make sure mats are properly cleaned or use new mats.

True Story – An Unfortunate Experience:

A producer poured his oil at an event and realized that something was amiss; a trained taster told him that it contained the winey defect. He opened another bottle from the same case, and that oil was fine. Afterwards he realized that three of the twelve bottles in the case were winey but the rest were not. As they had all been bottled from the same tank at the same time, this was perplexing. Finally, the cause of the defect was traced to the bottling line which had 4 spigots; there was a piece of olive pulp lodged into one of the spigots which had fermented, causing the defective winey flavor to spread into every fourth bottle of oil.

Food for Thought - Consider the Consumer Experience:

If a consumer tasted a winey oil they would most likely think not that it was defective (because that vocabulary is not well-known), but that somehow you produced an oil that tasted like a vinaigrette. But this is not what a fresh oil is supposed to taste like, and more and more consumers have become knowledgeable about acceptable vs. non-acceptable flavors in extra virgin olive oil.