



How to Tell If a Wine Is Corked

Corked wine is something we've all heard of, but you may not know if you've ever actually encountered it. We're going to break down what it means when a wine is 'corked' and what you should do when you buy a corked bottle.

Let's start with what isn't corked wine:

- It's not the pieces of cork floating around your wine or a cork covered in little white crystals. These crystals, which are called tartrate, are a natural by-product of some wines and are totally harmless.
- You also can't tell if a wine is corked from smelling the cork itself.
- Another fun fact is if the bottle you opened used a screw cap or synthetic cork to form the seal, it can't be corked.

So what is a corked wine? Or breaking it down further, what is corked wine smell & what is corked wine taste? A corked wine is one that has been contaminated with cork taint, and this contamination gives off a very distinct smell and taste. Cork taint occurs in a small percentage of all natural corks available in the world, with recent studies finding that only about 5% of wines with natural corks are actually corked.

While drinking corked wine is not harmful to your health, it does ruin the experience, and you should always return the bottle if you believe it is corked.

How does cork taint occur? Since cork is a natural substance, little microorganisms often like to eat it, either while it's still part of the tree or after it's been turned into a wine cork. In small instances, these airborne fungi come in contact with the cork and create a substance known as TCA, a nasty chemical compound that ruins the wine the second the wine in the bottle comes in contact with it.

Corked Wine Taste & Corked Wine Smell

So how do you know if a wine is corked? Corked wine gives off a smell that is similar to a dank moldy basement, a wet newspaper or a wet dog. When you actually sip the wine, a typical corked wine taste will be flat and dull, exhibiting no fruit characteristics. Some people also say that corked wine tastes astringent.

Interestingly, scientists, doing what scientists do, have actually uncovered a way to extract the TCA out of the wine, thereby removing the cork taint. This involves a process of letting the wine soak in a pitcher with a wad of plastic wrap for about 15 minutes and then pouring the wine into a new vessel, leaving the plastic wrap behind. The researchers that discovered this trick at UC Davis claim the TCA bonds to the plastic wrap and removes the cork taint from the wine, but we say why bother with this trick; life's too short to drink bad wine and you should simply return the bottle. Any wine store that won't accept a return on a corked bottle is a wine shop you should not patronize!

Source: VinePair Inc.