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Ask Barry Waite...

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Ask Barry Waite is a feature for answering some of the New York Wine Analytical Lab's most frequently asked questions.

Dear Barry Waite:

I have a 2009 Chardonnay I made this year that tastes unlike any Chardonnay I have ever made or tasted and I don't mean in a good way. I know it is 100% Chardonnay, but it taste like it has some strange but fruity aromas and flavors. Can you help me with this puzzling dilemma?

Signed, Funky Fruit in Fredonia

Dear Funky:

Thank you for your question. First, it is always easier and more accurate if I can smell and taste your wine. Sensory analysis is gratis to New York State Wineries at the New York State Wine Analytical Laboratory. That being said, I believe from your description that you are describing a non-Saccharomyces yeast fermentation. Spoilage yeasts such as Kloeckera and Zygosaccharomyces like low temperatures and Saccharomyces do not. If you encourage the growth of Kloeckera you will also end up with a wine with a high acetic acid content and a fruitiness that does not come from the grapes, but instead from acetic acid esters. Starting fermentation temperature for white wines should be 20 degrees C (68 degrees F) and for red wines 30 degrees C (86 degrees F). I believe your wine was fermented by non-Saccharomyces species giving it the fruity esters and non-varietal aromas and flavors.

If you any questions that you would like to ask Barry Waite please forward care of bkq1@cornell.edu

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