

What is "bottle shock?" How can you tell if a wine has it?

"Bottle Shock" is a reaction that occurs in wine immediately after corking, resulting from oxygen being absorbed during the bottling process. This small amount of oxygen introduced during this process will not usually oxidize or ruin your wine, but rather in the long run it helps during the maturation process.

Bottle Shock is characterized by muted or disjointed fruit flavors in the wine. The wine may have a flat flavor and aroma, and may sometimes be accompanied by an off-putting odor. Bottle Shock can also be caused if sulfur dioxide is added during the bottling process, also affecting the flavors and odor of the wine.

Bottle Shock is a temporary condition and your wine will need time to get over the shock of being transferred. The wine must rest and recover, working inside the bottle to reach a new equilibrium.

There are no solid rules for how long the wine should rest in order for the Bottle Shock to dissipate. Some sources say a few days of rest will cure Bottle Shock. Others state that Bottle Shock dissipates within a few weeks.

The amount of time required for the wine to rest will vary depending upon the variety of grape, vinting process, wine style, cellar conditions, size of bottle, etc. While many variables affect the equilibrium process, usually after 8-12 weeks, the Bottle Shock will subside.

If your wine is heavy with tannins, the Bottle Shock recovery time may be even longer. Jack Keller states that "two months is long enough, but I give Pinot Noir three just because it is PN and doesn't act like other wines."

Bottle Shock is also sometimes referred to as "Bottle Sickness", which more often refers to the condition resulting from shaking the wine causing any settled solids to stir up and to cloud the wine. Fragile wines shaken in travel can get bottle sickness.

References:

- International Recipes Online - <http://www.internationalrecipesonline.com/>
- Epicurious - http://www.epicurious.com/drinking/wine_dictionary
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