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Ask Dr. Vinny

Hello there! I'm Dr. Vinifera, or "Vinny" for short. [Ask me your toughest wine questions](#), from the technical aspects of winemaking to the fine points of etiquette. I hope you find my answers educational and even amusing. Looking for a particular answer? Check my [most-asked questions](#) and [my full archives](#). You can also follow me on Twitter: [@AskDrVinny](#).

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Do you have a question for Dr. Vinny? Ask it here...

Dear Dr. Vinny,

When I visit Italy, France, Spain, I can drink wine all day and never get a hangover. I wake up refreshed and ready to start all over again. Is it because of the preservatives or sulfites they put in wine to ship over here? Please let me know if the winemakers make wine differently to ship to the United States.

—Bill W., Hackettstown, N.J.

Dear Bill,

Poor sulfites. They get such a bad rap. Sulfites are naturally present in many things we consume, including wine (it's a byproduct of fermentation). Most winemakers also choose to add some additional sulfites to wine for protection against oxidation and bacterial spoilage. This is a good thing, especially if you've ever been anywhere near an open bottle of spoiled wine. It can be ugly.

The laws of the country where a wine is sold govern its label. And here in the U.S., labeling laws require the mention of sulfites in wine. Wines from all over the world contain sulfites, but if you drink them outside the U.S., they won't mention it on the label. It's confusing, and it leads people to believe that there's a different set of wines sold abroad. As an aside, you may notice that U.S. wines exported to Europe usually have the Surgeon General's warning covered up. They think it's silly overseas.

About 1 percent of the general population is sulfite-sensitive (as are about 5 percent of asthma sufferers). If you're looking to avoid sulfites, check out organically made wines, which won't have any *added* sulfites, although they'll still have trace amounts. But don't blame sulfites for any headaches or hangovers. Sulfite reactions are like a bad asthma attack, or they might result in hives, not headaches or hangovers.

—Dr. Vinny

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