Thiol levels in young 2016 fresh and fruity Chenin blanc wines

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Background

Thiols associated with positive aroma aspects (3MH and 3MHA) are compounds susceptible to degradation especially by oxidation. This means that (1) very young wines contain a higher amount of these compounds, that decreases with time; (2) the aroma attributes associated with these compounds will be at their highest in very young wines.

Young Chenin blanc wines (2016) were analysed for thiols (GC-MS at Vinlab, Stellenbosch) and evaluated sensorially by a panel of 15 experts using CATA.

What do consumers see? What does thiol analysis show? What do experts say?

Analysis of information given on back labels and tasting notes showed general attributes associated with fresh and fruity Chenin blanc wines.

3MH varied between 189-1649 ng/L (average 664 ng/L) and 3MHA between 26-936 ng/L (average 288 ng/L). The values are especially high for 3MHA, which is more prone to degradation than 3MH.

What do experts say?

• Some of the more prominent attributes are associated with thiols (guava, grapefruit, passion fruit, tomato leaf) but they are present regardless of the level of measured thiols.

• The overall attributes for the wines are very similar to the attributes for the wines with highest and lowest thiol levels. Even in very low concentrations, thiols can strongly influence wine aroma.