

What Is Sediment in Wine and Is It a Bad Thing?

Most importantly, no, sediment is not a bad thing. Sediment is a common distillate of the components in wine, formed under perfectly normal conditions.

Though it may taste somewhat bitter or acidic, sediment doesn't in any way indicate that the wine is bad. The reverse is actually true; sediment can be a mark of quality wine.

A wine experiences some interesting chemical changes throughout its creation and aging.

Sometimes, crystals form because particles in the wine are too heavy to stay in suspension in the liquid – a process referred to as the wine “throwing sediment.” This is a common occurrence, and most wine drinkers have happened upon these little particles in their wine at some time or another. The

sediment simply forms over time in the bottle.

Most wines that are meant to be opened within a few years of bottling don't throw sediment, notes The Ktchn. And because modern winemaking often includes such processes as clarifying, fining and filtration, everyday wines are not likely to develop sediment. Sediment in a wine is really an indication of a fine wine, one that was minimally processed and that has spent some time in the bottle.

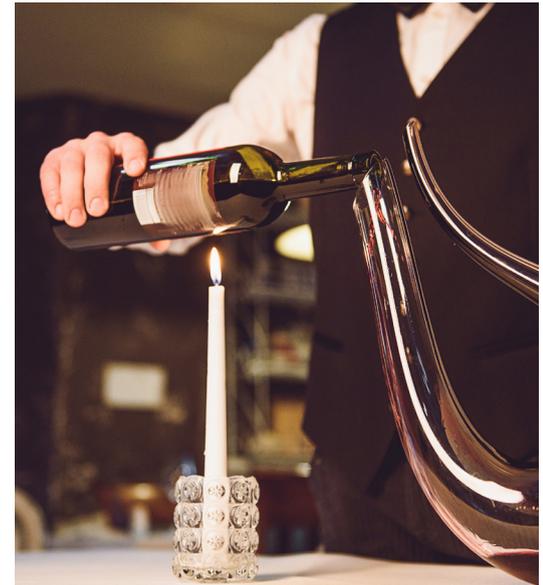
Wines can throw various kinds of sediment. Red and white wines both throw tartrates (particles from the grapes themselves that don't break down) as small crystals. Additionally, red wines throw tannin sediment. And you'll always find sediment in an aged bottle of vintage Port or Bordeaux.



Wine sediment forms over time in the bottle.

The first particles to settle in the wine are composed of dead yeast cells. These can add wonderful flavors, but are generally removed before bottling. Winemakers who plan to age their wine significantly in the bottle often intentionally leave sediment in the wine to produce unique and complex flavors. In this case, the sediment is a sign of the fineness of the wine.

Over time, different compounds in wine settle in the bottle. Depending on how the wine is shipped and stored, sediment can either be undisturbed at the bottom of the bottle, or mixed in, producing a gritty, cloudy wine. Decanting works great for re-



In the traditional method of decanting, the wine is poured with the neck of the bottle over a light source, such as a candle. This allows the person pouring to watch for the line of sediment approaching the neck and stop pouring before any sediment is poured into the decanter.

moving the sediment, but it's not always effective for a wine's cloudiness.

Though sediment won't harm you, no one wants a mouthful of grit. The Juice recommends leaving the bottle upright for a couple of hours before you intend to serve the wine, to enable the particles to settle to the bot-

tom. Decanting or straining the wine through fine muslin material will also keep you from getting grit in your glass.

To sum up: Sediment in your wine is good! It's a sign of craftsmanship, careful handling and minimal processing of the wine. So, drink up!



Sediment crystals on a cork.