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Temperature fluctuations in transit found to have major implications for wine quality - new study



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Due to the increase in export volumes of South African wine over the past decade and the ever-more sophisticated quality awareness of buyers and consumers, the potential problem of temperature abuse in the shipment of wine needs to be monitored. A number of European wine importers are already requiring local exporters to monitor in transit temperatures.

This is according to Fouche Whitehead from Sensitech, local cold chain visibility specialists.

'Temperature plays a vital role in the winemaking process, including harvesting, fermentation, maturation and, very importantly, storage. Many producers are taking a much closer look at the effect of temperature fluctuations in transit - on quality and shelf life of their wine,' says Whitehead.

The negative effects of temperature fluctuations on wine quality were confirmed in a recent study by the KWV, aimed at finding a correlation between high temperature, temperature fluctuations and shelf life as well as a reduced organoleptic profile of wine.

The major factors influencing temperature extremes and fluctuations that wines in transit are subjected to, are position of the container on a vessel as well as the country of destination.

Temperature spikes are typically more pronounced during delays, and while a vessel is docked in harbour. These factors increase the risk to the producer/exporter, and reduce consistent quality as well as shelf life.

In the above-mentioned study, three samples of white wine were shipped to the UK with or without temperature protection, and were compared over time with each other, and to a control sample, stored at KWV, Paarl under stable conditions.

As is to be expected, the control sample that was kept under stable conditions, seemed to perform the best over time, and the wine shipped to the UK without any form of temperature protection, performed the worst. Furthermore, it must be noted that the temperature fluctuations in this test were not particularly excessive, and the negative effects in the case of extreme temperature fluctuations could be much worse.

The study also found that the wines that were exposed to larger and higher temperature fluctuations, were affected negatively on a sensory and chemical level.





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Says Whitehead: 'It is of great importance to ensure that our South African wine arrives at its destination in pristine condition and the transit temperature therefore needs to be monitored and controlled.'




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