

IBMP IN GRAPES VINEYARD MANAGEMENT AND HARVEST DECISIONS

Determination of IBMP (2-Isobutyl-3-methoxy-pyrazine) in grapes can be used to monitor “herbaceous / green bell pepper” aromas during ripening, and evaluate “aromatic ripeness” at harvest.

ETS clients have used grape analysis of IBMP for three years to study the effect of climate and soil conditions, vineyard management practices and harvest date on herbaceous characters in wine. IBMP is generally considered undesirable in Cabernet. IBMP “grassy” notes in Sauvignon Blanc, are a stylistic choice and may or may not be desirable.

VARIATION BETWEEN VINEYARDS AND EVOLUTION DURING RIPENING

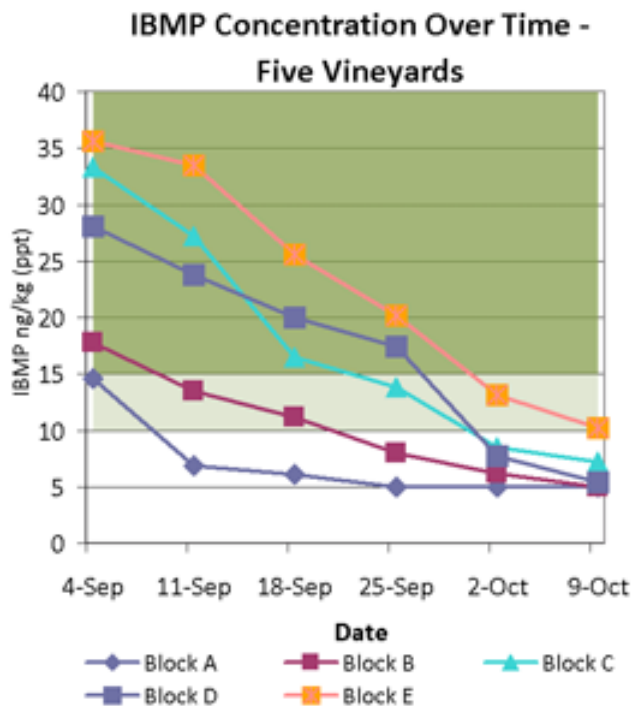
IBMP in grapes decreases with maturity, but differences between vineyards, or even blocks within a same vineyard, can be quite substantial. The chart to the right shows the evolution of IBMP levels in Sonoma County Cabernet Sauvignon during Harvest 2008. Levels measured in early September were as high as 35 ng/kg (ppt). Levels declined at all sites but the rate of decrease was variable. By early October most vineyards had reached levels in the low ppt range and only Block E was potentially “herbaceous”.

The rate of IBMP decline is vintage-dependant. It is possible that during a cooler vintage, all of the blocks with IBMP above 25 ppt in early September could still have worrisome levels of IBMP at harvest.

HARVEST TOOLS

The disappearance of IBMP has been a useful indicator of “aromatic ripeness” for grapes. In red winemaking, IBMP levels at harvest are highly consequential. Research has shown that virtually all the IBMP present in grapes ends-up in finished red wines, regardless of winemaking practices.

Data obtained from multiple vintages can be used to monitor the impact of vineyard variables and can become a powerful tool for fine tuning long term vineyard management practices.



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