



Note to Clients regarding filterability:

Course filtered / unfiltered wines:

The NTU meter is used to give an indication of the filterability of wines not going through sterile or pre-sterile filters. For wines with an NTU reading over 50 VinPro have determined that these are more than likely to block the Rockstopper (40micron absolute) filter. This determination is from experience with a large number of wines over the last few months since the meter has been available. This experience has included wines with an NTU >50 blocking the Rockstopper. Blocking a filter is dependent a range of factors and it is acknowledged that using a simple NTU scale is flawed – but is the best we have at the moment. Thus we will continue to monitor the research and can update our guidelines as more information comes to light.

One factor we do have control over is the volume of wine being bottled – and we do know that we can successfully filter small volumes of wine with a higher NTU. Thus the current guideline includes that we will bottle a wine with an NTU between 50 and 75 through the Rockstopper if it is less than 1000 litres in total volume. Any wine outside these guidelines will need to be pre-filtered through a lenticular filter using the SUPRAdisk 900 (8–20µm nominal). While slightly finer than the Rockstopper, the Lenticular has more surface area than the Rockstopper and thus significantly less prone to blockage.

The Lenticular filter carries an extra charge of \$150 as a setup cost. The cost of the filter cartridge is covered by VinPro. Note that a wine that has gone through Lenticular 900s is probably technically “filtered” – but this needs to be confirmed.

You may ask why the Lenticular is not used as a matter of course instead of the Rockstopper? The Lenticular filter cartridges cost about \$800 each and have a limited lifespan. Also, the nature of the cartridge is such that a minimum of at least 15 litres of wine is “lost” in the filter per bottling. The Rockstopper is a simple screen and does not hold any wine. It is also easy to clean and reuse almost indefinitely. It is sterilised every morning using approximately 90degC hot water. The negative of the Rockstopper is its small surface area and is thus more prone to blockages.

For wines with an NTU greater than 50 and where a winemaker is set against using the Lenticular filter then we can offer the “mesh screen” option alone (in this scenario the Rockstopper is removed from the line). The mesh screen is a course screen that will not “polish” any wine and is designed simply to protect the filler from large debris. This mesh has two layers – an external screen with 1mm holes and an internal mesh of 200 µm. As with the Rockstopper, a wine that has gone through this mesh can still be accurately labelled “unfiltered”. This process is not recommended by VinPro and does not accord with best industry practice as particles large enough to be visible in the wine can pass through. If a wine producer requests this option then a waiver needs to be signed that means the client accepts sole responsibility for any resulting wine quality issues should they occur.

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Sterile filtered wines:

For sterile filterability – the guidelines are similar to the above except – rather than a simple NTU test – the wine is put through a filterability test. The test result used is 1.20 to pass for sterile filterability. Similarly for volumes less than 1000 litres VinPro will sterile filter up to a filterability index of approximately 1.25. The exact cut-off is also influenced by the flow rate observed during the test. At all times best judgement is used in an attempt to meet the client's requests while not putting VinPro equipment to undue risk. Outside of these levels VinPro will require the wine to go through a Lenticular pre-filter using the SUPRADisk 80 filter cartridges (1–1.5µm nominal).

These cut-off numbers are as a result of experience over many years and many wines. VinPro are continuing to collect data points and reserve the right to alter these numbers in the future as more information comes to light.