Yeast – Stuck Fermentation

Fermentation seems to have stopped, but the hydrometer reading isn't where it should be. For beer this is generally around 1.025 and for wine greater than 1.000. This situation is generally referred to as a "stuck fermentation" and can have a couple of causes. The simplest cause and probably the most common is temperature. A significant drop in temperature, which is common during the cooler months of the year, can cause the yeast to go dormant and settle to the bottom of the fermenter. Asking yeast to perform below or at the lower end of the optimal temperature range can result in a prolonged, sluggish fermentation (more than a week for ales, more than three weeks for lagers and wines). If cool temperature is the case, move the fermenter to a warmer area, wrap a blanket around it or a Brew Belt (maintains a constant 24 degrees C) and roust (stir up) the yeast getting them back in suspension. Adding a teaspoon of Yeast Nutrient is an added incentive for the yeast to 'get back to work'. This will often fix the problem.
The same problem exists if the fermentation temperature gets too high. Cooing down the fermentation may result in the yeast becoming active therefore allowing the fermentation to finish. .

The second most common cause is weak yeast and/or under-pitching. Low volumes of healthy yeast will often not be up to the task of completing fermentation. Dry yeast users should always rehydrate rather than just sprinkling the dry yeast on top. A yeast starter is recommended for all types of fermentation, but critical for high gravity worts (above 1.048), lagers, and meads. The solution in the under-pitching situation is add more yeast along with a teaspoon of Yeast Nutrient.