

Raise a glass to mother earth: Eco-friendly wine

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Everyone is trying to be green today, from driving a hybrid car to eating organic produce or switching on energy-efficient light bulbs. The next step to protecting the Earth could be green wine. But would you drink it? Winemaker and restaurateur Joe Bastianich talks about organic wine:

Many people want to live a green lifestyle, and drinking wines that are organic and natural can be one of the more enjoyable ways to do this. "Organic" is not a simple term. The overall concept is that wines are made naturally with no chemicals, in a biologically sustainable way. But organic wines are now being made all around the globe, from the United States and Europe to the southern hemisphere. In fact, a growing number of producers practice some form of natural grape growing and winemaking because they believe these methods make better wine.

In French, terrior means dirt, earth, soil. In a wine context it refers to the complete natural environment of wine; the temperature, climate, soil. The term terrior is used when explaining the sensation a wine gives. This is pivotal in understanding wines, because where a wine comes from has everything to do with what it tastes like. The weather, geography, soil type, and climate all impact the taste profile of a wine. Reisling from the Finger Lake region of New York will taste very different than a Reisling from the Alsace region of France, and therein lies the beauty.

Making wine the biodynamic way will soon become an industry standard. Many winemakers do it now just because it's the right thing to do. Any good wine is going to have a high value, but not using chemicals will increase the cost of it. Seek out wines that are naturally made and avoid those that are manufactured or created. It's really worthwhile because at the end of the day organic wine is about making better wine.

If you want to buy organic or biodynamic wine, here are some bottles to look for:

Italy

Movia Lunar, 2005, Slovenia \$25

The Movia family is well known for being pioneers in their field. Their respect for biodynamic principles extends beyond their abstention from chemical inputs; this family actually follows the cycles of the moon when harvesting and vinifying these fine wines.

New World

Chono Carménère, 2005, Central Valley, Chile \$10.99

Chono's Alvaro Espinoza worked alongside Jim Fetzer, inspiring him to return home to his native Chile and convert his father's vineyard using the biodynamic principles he learned while abroad.

Michel Torino Torrontes Don David Reserve, 2006, Cafayate Valley, Argentina \$14.99

Since the 1990's, the Michel Torino Estate began practicing "Zero Farming" techniques, in which organic material from the soil is used to farm the vineyards, and "zero" chemical inputs are added to the earth and it is not tilled.

France

Les Baux de Provence Rose Mas de Gourgonnier, 2006, les Baux de Provence, France \$13.99

This wine is only lightly filtered out of respect for traditional and natural processes: as a result, you can actually see a deposit or sediment floating about the bottle. The label on the back of the bottle bears the phrase "Made with Organically Grown Grapes."

Clos de la Coulée de Serrant Contrôlée, 2002, Savannières, France (Nicolas Joly, Propriétaire-Viticulteur) \$79.99

This bottle is made by the father of the modern Biodynamic movement, Nicolas Joly, using organic and biodynamic methods." On the back label, it defines "Biodynamie" as "A minimalist energy management system of strictly herbal and compost soil enhancements."

This winemaker is both certified sustainable per live, which stands for low input viticulture and enology, as well as certified "Salmon safe."

Ceago, Sauvignon Blanc, 2006, Mendocino, CA \$18

Ceago, Cabernet, 2006, Mendocino, CA \$32

Organic and Biodynamic winery certified by Demeter.

China Bend Proprietor's Reserve Foch, Washington State, \$35

China Bend winery approaches winemaking with the attitude that “wine is food.” These wines are also sulfite free.

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