
Natural, Organic & Biodynamic Wine

“NATURAL” Wine:

- General, broad reference to wines made in low-tech, non-interventionist style, e.g....
 - Low or no use of chemicals in vineyard
 - Native yeasts used in fermentation
 - Low or no use of sulfur in winery
 - No chemical or technical “adjustments” to the final wine
- Technically, zero regulations about what can/can’t be declared “natural”

“ORGANIC” Wine:

- *Organic* defined by USDA National Organic Program (NOP) as a product that uses no pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, genetically modified organisms, or ionizing radiation
- To be labeled as organic in US, must be inspected and approved by USDA
- TTB, USDA and NOP labeling laws for wines sold in the US:
 - *Organic*: at least 95% organically produced ingredients and NO added sulfur allowed (or less than 10 ppm)
 - *100% Organic*: 100% organically produced ingredients and NO added sulfur allowed (or less than 10 ppm)
 - Additional approved labeling: USDA Organic seal; “Certified Organic by ____”
 - *Made from organic grapes*: MUST note “contains sulfites”
 - Is it a problem if “made from organic grapes” can also include up to 30% *non-organic* grapes or “other ingredients”?
 - Is it a problem if many wines are made *entirely* organically yet with sulfur and so can’t be labeled organic when sold in US?
 - In the EU, wines with up to 100 ppm of sulfites can be labeled organic

“BIODYNAMIC” Wine:

- Biodynamic agriculture is a sustainable system proposed by Rudolf Steiner that involves using natural preparations in the field and following the lunar calendar for viticulture/vinification steps
 - Natural preparations are all organic, herb-, root- or animal-based products
 - Lunar calendar suggests fruit/flower/root/leaf days corresponding to certain tasks such as picking, pruning, racking, bottling
- Many producers practice biodynamics but are not certified (expensive process)
- Major certifying body is Demeter; certified wines can carry seal on their label

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1) Afros Loureiro '10 - Vinho Verde, Portugal

- Vinho Verde's first biodynamic estate, headed by Vasco Croft, a Steiner disciple
- Afros' philosophy is "whole eco-system" and creating a "symbiotic relationship between the vine and the environment"
- 100% Loureiro grape, one of the approved varieties for Vinho Verde region

2) Denavolo Catavela Vino Bianco '11 - Emilia-Romagna, Italy

- Biodynamic vineyards planted on limestone soil at 1,500 feet
- Also very "natural" winemaking style: skin-fermented "orange wine" from local Ortrugo grape with Malvasia and Marsanne

3) La Clarine Farms Syrah & Mourvèdre Rosé '11 - Sierra Foothills, California

- Vineyards planted at 2,700 feet in Sierra Foothills east of Sacramento
- Practices biodynamic principals; was certified though hasn't renewed; now in favor of a "do nothing" approach
- No sulfur at harvest; foot stomping; no new oak; only act when absolutely necessary
- Philosophy is to "throw out preconceptions" and "embrace surprises"

4) Domaine Marcillet Hautes-Côtes de Nuits '10 - Burgundy, France

- Organic viticulture though doesn't qualify as 100% organic for US labeling
- Focus on low yields and "natural, sensible" winemaking incorporating some modern and some traditional winemaking techniques
- 100% Pinot Noir from the Hautes-Côtes de Nuits in Burgundy region

5) Venus Dido "La Universal" '09 - Montsant, Spain

- Husband and wife winemakers René Barbier Jr. and Sara Pérez from Priorat region, focusing here on a more "elegant" and "feminine" style—hence the name "Venus"
- Very strictly natural (but not certified organic/biodynamic) viticultural practices
- Blend of mostly Garnacha with Syrah, Cabernet and Merlot, fermented in cement and used oak barrels

6) Clos Ouvert Carmenère Cauquenes '09 - Maule Valley, Chile

- Organic, old vines; gentle, low-intervention winemaking and old oak barrels
- Made by two Frenchmen focused on finding "terroir" in Chile
- 100% Carmenère, an old Bordeaux variety that's gaining fame in Chile

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