

## **GREEN WINE GUIDE**

### **What is Organic Wine?**

Following the recent creation by the USDA of a National Organic Program, an organic wine is now defined as "a wine made from organically grown grapes and without any added sulfites". By this unfortunate restriction, the vast majority of what you and I have been calling organic wines must now be referred to as "wines made from organic grapes" (or organically grown grapes), as they are allowed to contain up to 100 ppm of added sulfites.

While we support the effort of some winemakers to explore avenues to eliminate the use of sulfur dioxide, the truth is that wines without added sulfites are very few in number and very unstable in quality, giving the public a negative perception of what an Organic wine can be! The wine industry has therefore the dubious honor of being the only one that cannot call its product "organic" even though it is made with more than 95% of organic components. [With the higher permissible level of 100ppm SO<sub>2</sub> present in the wine, the percentage is still 99.99% organic!].

### **100% Organic**

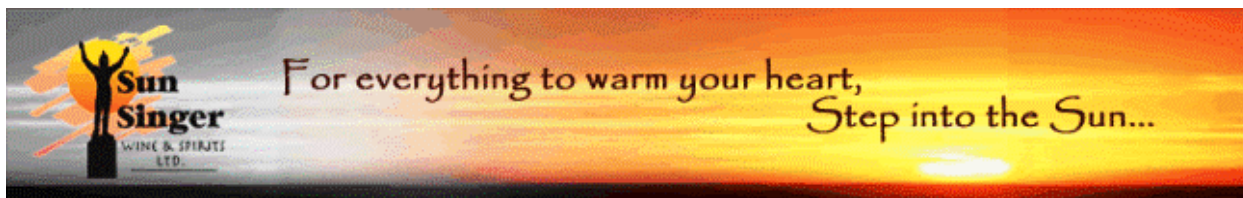
For a wine to be labeled "100% Organic" and bear the USDA organic seal, it must be made from 100% organically produced ingredients (in other words, the grapes must be grown organically), have an ingredient statement on the label, and give information about who the certifying agency is. A wine in this category cannot have any added sulfites. It may have naturally occurring sulfites, but the total sulfite level must be less than 100 parts per million.

### **Organic**

To be labeled "Organic" and bear the USDA organic seal, the wine must be made from at least 95% organic ingredients, have an ingredient statement on the label where organic ingredients are identified as being organic, and give information about who the certifying agency is. Again, a wine in this category cannot have any added sulfites, but it is allowed to have naturally occurring sulfites below 100 parts per million. The nonorganic 5% must either be a nonorganically produced agricultural ingredient that is not organically available or another substance like added yeast.

### **Made with Organic Ingredients - Made with Organic Grapes - Organically Grown**

To claim any of these statements, a wine must be made with at least 70% organic ingredients, have an ingredient statement on the label where organic ingredients are identified as being organic, and give information about who the certifying agency is. A wine in this category may not bear the USDA seal. It may contain added and naturally occurring sulfites and the total must still be under 100 parts per million. The 30% of nonorganic ingredients must be nonorganically produced agricultural ingredients that are not available in an organic form or another substance.



### **Some Organic Ingredients**

This category is for products that have less than 70% organic ingredients. It cannot bear the USDA seal nor have information about a certifying agency or any other reference to organic content.

### **Biodynamic Wines**

Biodynamic principles take the organic approach a step further by making sure that the growth of the grapes is in tune with the larger environment. Using homeopathic sprays, herbal preparations and lunar cycles, soil fertility is increased and vines are protected from pests and diseases.

Biodynamic farming techniques utilize the vineyard's natural resources to cultivate the highest quality grapes possible without the use of pesticides, fungicides, herbicides, synthetic fertilizers, growth stimulants or GMOs. A vineyard that is certified biodynamic meets and typically exceeds the standards and regulations for organic certified farming.

### **LIVE**

LIVE, Oregon viticulture industry's Low Input Viticulture and Enology label was put in place to ensure that Oregon vineyards remain disease-free, as they have been historically, while limiting the use of chemical pesticides. LIVE wines are certified by the International Organization for Biological Control therefore allowing to be internationally certified sustainable. LIVE promotes planting of species appropriate to local conditions, reliance on beneficial insects, fungi and plants, and increased biodiversity ([www.liveinc.org](http://www.liveinc.org)).

### **Salmon Safe**

Salmon Safe is a Northwest eco-label for agricultural practices that restores watershed conditions to allow salmon to spawn and thrive. It works in partnership with LIVE to promote runoff control, planting trees near streams and utilizing integrated pest management. Vineyards are inspected by an independent contractor (often an organic certifier) to ensure compliance with both LIVE's and Salmon Safe's standards (for a list of wineries, see [www.salmonsafe.org/wine/winelist.cfm](http://www.salmonsafe.org/wine/winelist.cfm)).

### **Vegan wines**

Winemakers, both organic and conventional, are not obliged to declare on the label when they use animal by-products as fining agents to clarify wine. These include egg white (to brighten red wines), casein (a milk protein to make wine taste softer), gelatin (removes bitterness) and isinglass (derived from fish). A vegan wine, on the other hand, uses no animal products whatsoever.

### **SULFITES**

Although one percent of the population suffers from sulfite allergies (and five percent of asthma sufferers react to sulfites) if you or your partner are allergic, low-sulfite organic wines from the U.S. may be your best choice. All wines contain some sulfites naturally, but European organic wines have added sulfites to levels of between 40 and 80 parts per million (ppm). As noted above, USDA organic regulations do not allow sulfites to be added to certified organic wines, putting American organic wine levels between 10 and 20 ppm. U.S. wines made with organic grapes must have sulfite levels of less than 100 ppm. Conventional wines, however, range from 80 to 120 ppm and higher.