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# FROGGY NEWS

BEST  
CELLARS  
Wines and Spirits



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# THE GREEN ISSUE

## “A Brief History of Organic Wines and Facts about Sulphites” - Insider News wine articles

Helping wine businesses to stay current on the international wine market, The Insider News ' wine articles feature key information and events about the world wine industry.

By Sabine Petzoldt, Team Leader, GWS

When the first organic wines appeared on the market in the 1980s, they were not considered comparable to traditional wines at similar price points and attracted few consumers beyond a small niche of people concerned about health-related issues.

Part of the problem with the first organic wines was that no sulphur dioxide was added. Sulphite or sulphur dioxide is used as a preservative in wines. It has strong antimicrobial and some antioxidant properties, which help to inhibit the growth of moulds and bacteria, stop oxidation (browning) and preserve the wine's natural flavour. Many consumers still believe that organic wines are "sulphite-free," but this is inaccurate.

Nowadays, there are only a few winemakers who add no sulphites at all and some doubts as to whether it is even possible to produce a wine without sulphites. Most winemakers and enology experts agree that a certain amount of sulphites must be added to prevent oxidation and bacterial spoilage, as well as to create a stable wine. However, technical developments in recent decades have made it possible to reduce the amount of extra sulphites added to the chemically inactive sulphites already present in wine as a natural by-product of the fermentation process.

So what is the big deal about sulphites?

Sulphite is a widely used preservative found in a diverse range of products such as dried fruits, bacon, orange juice concentrate, seafood, processed potatoes, cornstarch, caramel coloring and wine. For years now, sulphites have been

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criticized and regulated for their excessive use and latent health consequences. About 4% of the American population is considered to be highly allergic to sulphites, and many more people around the world have a low tolerance to sulphites. For example, products with the sulphite level of a typical commercial wine can cause headaches, cramps, skin flushing or heartburn in individuals who are sensitive.

However, when handled properly and kept to reasonable levels, sulphite agents are not intrinsically toxic to humans or to the environment. Therefore, American and European organic winemaking standards allow for the addition of strictly regulated amounts of SO<sub>2</sub>. Since organic wines contain only minimal amounts of sulphites, they are a wise choice for anyone with a sulphite sensitivity.

### What are organic wines?

Illogical, contradictory and often confusing international certification standards and regulations have created confusion about what constitutes an organic wine. Simply put, organic wines are produced exclusively with organically grown grapes. Organic farming is a method for growing and protecting grapes without the introduction of foreign substances such as pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, chemical fertilizers or synthetic chemicals. The use of chemicals in organic farming is strictly controlled by law and limited to a few harmless substances.

Almost none of what is available to the conventional grower is permitted. Only mined minerals, natural extracts and derivatives can be applied to the soil or to the grapes. The organic grower concentrates more on trying to grow a healthy vine, able to withstand pests and feed itself naturally, than on sheltering the vine from anything that might harm it. This means developing a healthy soil and a balanced ecosystem within the vineyard. It also means a lot of hard work, since, for example, grapes are handpicked in many organic vineyards rather than harvested with mechanical pickers. This ensures that only the ripest and healthiest bunches are picked with minimum stress and damage to the vine, fruit and soil.



### What about the quality of organic wines?

There are more good organic wines being produced today than ever before. In fact, a large percentage of the organic and biodynamic wines on the market are in the premium category. One theory for the outstanding quality of these wines is that organic vineyards have greater natural resistance to poor weather and diseases and therefore tend to perform better in poor vintages than do non-organic vineyards. Furthermore, organic methods yield the strongest, richest grapes possible with the fewest detrimental effects on the environment, and the resulting wines reflect the organic commitment to quality.

### The future of organic wines.

As consumers become increasingly discriminating about what they choose to drink, the demand for organic wines continues to grow. While this growth can be seen worldwide, it is especially significant in Germany, England, Switzerland, New Zealand, Japan and the United States. Just as the growing demand by consumers for organic foods has led grocery stores to expand their sections for organic fruits, vegetables, meats and other products in the past few years, the rising interest in organic wines is driving wine and liquor stores to respond similarly.

Proof that organic wines are capturing market share is confirmed by the tremendous success of the Wine Hall at "BioFach," the world's leading exhibition for organic products, including organic wines, held in Nüremberg. Altogether, 318 BioFach exhibitors presented the fruit of their organic winemaking expertise in February 2009. The largest representation was from Italy with 94 exhibitors, followed by Germany (81), Spain (53), France (42) and Austria (16).

Wine industry experts predict continued growth for organic wines despite tough economic times. Although it is unlikely that sales will continue to experience double-digit growth, experts believe that the sector will continue to expand because we are living in an increasingly health-conscious society. This point of view was confirmed by a research survey conducted by the National Restaurant Association in the United States, which identifies organic wine as one of the "hottest drink trends for 2009."

# Now Drinking

## Sokol Blosser 2007 Dundee Hills Pinot Noir

*From the start, the Sokol Blossers were aware of the impact that farming and wine production would have on the environment. Before it was popular, the winery did everything it could to give back to the land. Today, the second generation of Sokol Blossers continue this 'good to the earth' policy through certified Organic farming, sustainable business practices and low impact packaging. In fact, in 2002 Sokol Blosser became the first US winery to receive LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certification.*

Following the principles of The Natural Step, Sokol Blosser pursues environmentally friendly practices in all phases of their business. Their commitment to the earth will continue as long as the winery is in operation.

50% biodiesel is used in farm tractors and trucks.

no-waste, energy efficient crossflow filter is used on white wines.

Recycle everything they can, from office paper to pallet shrinkwrap.

The use unbleached paper products for labels, wine boxes and gift bags is practiced whenever possible.

In 2006, a 24kW solar array was installed in the vineyard and provides 30% of their energy needs.

Their estate has been certified by Salmon-Safe as a vineyard that protects and restores salmon habitat.

They are part of the Governor's Carbon Neutral Challenge and report carbon emissions through the Climate Registry.

They farm their estate vineyards organically and received full USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) organic certification in 2005 and are certified through Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Vineyard plantings of lavender, yarrow, rudbeckia, and Russian sage help to provide habitats for beneficial insects and expand the vineyard ecosystem.

Their underground barrel cellar, built to US Green Building Council standards, became the first winery building in the country to earn the prestigious LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification.

**Wine Notes:** The 2007 Dundee Hills Pinot Noir is delicate and elegant - soft, supple, harmonious, and already showing layers of complexity. Flavors and aromas are of mocha, black cherry, and raspberry, and our distinctive Jory soil forest-floor earthiness is beginning to show through. It's drinking beautifully now and should age well and develop additional complexity for at least the next five to ten years.



## Wine and Recycling

### Some creative ways to recycle your empty wine bottles!

What do you do with your empty wine bottles? Past being the odd candle holder every now and then, most of my own make it into the bin only to await their fate at the local dump. Here are a few ways to not only do your part on saving the environment but also add a bit of pizzazz to your home!



This industrious crafter could build a unique lighting solution that is sure to be a show stopper and conversation starter.



A few simple items from the hardware store and you have yourself a creative outdoor torch.



Creative angled cuts with a glass cutter and you have yourself a decorative vase.

**Drinking wine will reduce your carbon footprint! How? Wine promotes agriculture, and that's a good thing - because leafy crops absorb carbon.**

# Food & Wine Pairing

For: Bonterra Organic Vineyards 2009 Chardonnay

## Butternut Squash Soup by Cathy Lowe

### Ingredients

- 1 (2 to 3 pound) butternut squash, peeled and seeded
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 6 cups chicken stock
- Nutmeg
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

### Directions

Cut squash into 1-inch chunks. In large pot melt butter. Add onion and cook until translucent, about 8 minutes. Add squash and stock. Bring to a simmer and cook until squash is tender, about 15 to 20 minutes. Remove squash chunks with slotted spoon and place in a blender and puree. Return blended squash to pot. Stir and season with nutmeg, salt, and pepper.

### Also Try:

#### Wine Flavors

- Green apple
- Baked apple
- Pear
- Lemon zest
- Vanilla
- Crème Brulee

#### Food Affinities

- Toasted almonds
- Mild soft ripening cheeses
- Fresh sage
- Tarragon
- Orange zest
- Lemon zest



## Events

### Best Cellars Wines and Spirits attends Vin Expo 2011

Held every two years in Bordeaux France, Vin Expo is the largest most prestigious international event for all professionals in the wine and spirits business. It is the one place where all the movers and shakers in the industry gather to meet face to face with importers, wholesalers, sales agents, buyers for retail and specialist stores, liquor chains, hotel managers and restaurateurs from all over the world. Spread over 95,000 sq meters or just over 23 acres, this years expo showcased the products of 2,400 exhibitors from 44 countries. Over the course of 5 days our Sales Supervisor Amber Roos and her assistant Alison Cook met with various suppliers where they were able to catch up on the latest trends, try new products and taste the latest vintages of current wines. With updated portfolios in hand, rest assured that Amber and Alison have made some wonderful new selections which will be making their arrival to our cellars in the coming months.



Drinking wine from a magnum is the more carbon-friendly choice since the glass-to-wine ratio is less.