

FOOD & WINE

WHAT TO DRINK NOW

Everything's Gone Green

Great organic, biodynamic, and regeneratively farmed wines

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THERE'S NO QUESTION that grape growers and winemakers—and wine lovers, for that matter—lean toward concern for the environment. Sustainable viticulture, despite the fuzzy nature of that term, is almost de rigueur; the number of wineries growing grapes organically increases every year; and more rigorous approaches like biodynamic and regenerative agriculture are more popular than ever, too.

The problem for wine buyers is that wine labels are utterly baffling in this regard. The U.S., E.U., Australia, and practically everywhere else all have different regulations about what “organic” means; there are dozens of different certifications and programs for sustainability and environmental friendliness of one kind or another; and, of course, there are categories like “clean” wine, which are more marketing plays than specific winemaking philosophies.

Here is a little distilled clarification on the terms. **Sustainable agriculture** is basically an approach with three main pillars: environmental protection (particularly in terms of conserving natural resources), social equity (workers' rights and fairness), and economic viability (you aren't sustainable if you go out of business). **Organic farming** concentrates on inputs and practices, prohibiting most synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, as well as the use of genetically modified seeds or crops. **Biodynamic agriculture** is more about removing the need for inputs by building life or vitality within the ecological whole of the farm—the vines, but also the soil, the local flora and fauna, and so on. (There's a somewhat controversial spiritual/astrological aspect to it as well, but that's a rough baseline.) **Regenerative agriculture** combines the tenets of organic farming with the broader aspects of sustainability: It doesn't allow for synthetic inputs, and it also promotes practices that help with carbon sequestration, biodiversity, and soil health, among many other goals.

But how do you know who's doing what? One solution is to visit the vineyard and talk to the proprietor to find out how they actually grow their grapes. Or visit the website and see what specific information you can find. Or look for the term “organically grown grapes” on the label, or the Demeter seal (the governing body for biodynamics), or one of the many sustainable certifications. Or, lastly—and I actually like this solution a lot—try one of the wines recommended here, because I already vetted them for you. When in doubt, an environment-obsessed wine editor is a handy thing to have around.

Sparkling



2018 IRON HORSE OCEAN RESERVE (\$59)

Sonoma County's acclaimed sparkling wine producer Iron Horse upped its sustainability game when it launched this green apple-scented cuvée. Five dollars from every bottle goes to Mission Blue to help establish marine protected areas.

White



2021 DOG POINT MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC (\$25)

Dog Point, with the largest certified organic vineyard in New Zealand, also brings in 2,500 sheep over the winter to control grass and weed growth. (Admittedly, sheep are not hard to come by in New Zealand.) And the wine is one of the country's best Sauvignons: zesty, grapefruity, and entirely refreshing.

Rosé



2021 MARIETTA CELLARS OVR ROSÉ (\$19)

Scot Bilbro's vines at his McDowell Ranch in Mendocino are farmed organically, and some have been for a long time: Portions of the vineyard were planted in the 1880s. This transparent ruby old-vine rosé suggests fresh strawberries and cherries.