



Volume 14, No.17 (published by the Wine Gallery Bozeman, MT) April 18, 2018

### What's new in the Grapevine this week?

- **Earth friendly wines for Earth Day**
- **Reading a wine label**
- **Upcoming events**



Every day should be Earth Day but this Sunday is the day we honor Mother Earth on the calendar. It seems everyone is looking at lowering their carbon footprint and raising consciousness levels about what comes out of and goes back into the environment. Right here in the Gallatin Valley we have Field Day Farms, Amaltheia Cheese, Thirteen Mile Lamb and Wool, Sabo Ranch, Gallatin Botanicals and many other outfits who promote sustainable agricultural practices. Local restaurants, grocery stores and farmers' markets are good outlets for these good food growers and we support them whenever we can.

In the wine business, sustainability and good stewardship of the land go hand in hand with good grapes and good taste in wine. Sustainable viticulture,

organic farming and biodynamic methods all focus on less pollution, fewer chemicals and less environmental impact.

Sustainable viticultural practices are being embraced by many Northwest winegrowers and producers. These growers limit the amount of pesticides, fertilizer, water, chemicals, and fuel used in the vineyard and the winery. The objectives are to maintain high quality while protecting the farmer, the earth and our society at large. They hold a holistic view of the vineyard and support biodiversity, vineyard stability and public health. Wines from the Northwest are almost all produced by sustainable methods at the very least. They also have smaller carbon footprints and in my humble estimation, they are some of the best wines in the market

This group may take occasional or temporary measures to control pests that might invade other vineyards or crops but they do so only as a last resort. Further, they may spray a fast biodegradable weed killer **once** a year instead of running a tractor up and down the rows **ten times** a year to control weeds. In any event, they look at the whole picture before taking any action that may harm the environment and they pick the method with the least dire consequences.

Organic vineyards are certified as such by governmental bodies. They do not use chemical fertilizers, or any insecticides, fungicides, pesticides or any other “-cides”. Fertilization is done with compost and manure and water is never allowed to run off.

“Organic wines” fall into several classes:

**100% Organic Wine** - Wine that is produced with grapes that are certified 100% organically grown and do not have any added sulfites.

**Organic Wine** - Wine that has at least 95% of its ingredients from certified organic sources. Organic wine may have an additional 100 ppm of sulfur dioxide added to them.

**Wine made with Organic Grapes** - Wines that have at least 70% of the grapes from organic sources. These wines may have sulfur dioxide added as well.

Biodynamic growers also see the vineyard as part of the whole earth but strive to make it self-sustaining. Grape pomace (the stuff left after the grapes are crushed) may be fed to goats or cattle and the manure from the livestock goes back to the vineyard soil. Biodynamic practices are similar to organic methods but are sometimes less than “scientific”. For example, a cow horn full of manure is buried in one corner of the vineyard under a full autumn moon and it somehow ensures fertility and productivity for the following year’s harvest.

Tiffany has made up a list of sustainable, organic and biodynamic vineyards and wineries. She has also put together a display of “earth friendly” wines. Ask to see it the next time you are in the store. Better yet, buy a good, environmentally friendly wine on Earth Day and toast Mother Earth.

### **How to read a California wine label**

The mantra of real estate buyers everywhere -- "location, location, location" -- is almost as important for wine buyers. While certain foods and beverages carry a general notation of their origin, like Montana beef and Scotch whisky, wine can narrow the notion down to the precise plot of land where the grapes grew.

Governments in virtually all winemaking countries have made it illegal to cheat consumers by putting misleading information about a wine's origin on a label. For instance, a lawsuit in California prohibited a bulk winemaker whose grapes and winery were in the Central Valley from using the word “Napa” on his label.

Most wine producers are honest, of course, but it's still important to know what you're buying. The front label of most U.S. wines carries the name of the grape variety along with an appellation (place name), which refers to the legally defined American Viticulture Area (AVA) in which the grapes were grown. In general, the more specific the appellation, the better you can expect the wine to be.

Here's what the most common terms on American-made wines mean:

**California:** If a wine label says "California" on the front it means the grapes could have been grown anywhere up and down this gigantic state. In effect it often indicates that a high percentage of the wine comes from cheaper Central Valley grapes that make less concentrated, less interesting wines.

**Coastal:** Be careful with this increasingly popular term. Many of the wines are great values, but "Coastal" is not an AVA and doesn't mean a thing, legally.

**Counties, valleys:** Specific terms such as Napa Valley, Sonoma County and Willamette Valley are almost always a good sign. They mean that at least 85 percent of the wine was made from grapes grown there.

**Towns, districts:** If you see a town name like Oakville or a district name like Carneros it means even more specialization, better odds for high quality and an inevitably higher price.

**Vineyard designations:** The individual property where the grapes came from, like Gary's Vineyard or Pisoni Vineyard, is the finest geographical distinction a winery can put on a bottle. This is usually a good sign of quality and a chance to experience what the French call *terroir*, the taste of a place.

**Estate bottled:** Another good sign of quality. It means that the wine was made from grapes grown in vineyards owned (or leased for the long term) by the winery itself, not grown by an independent farmer or another winery.

**Produced and bottled by:** This is one of the best phrases to see in fine print on a label. It means that the winery itself actually crushed the grapes, fermented the juice and put the wine into bottles. The only thing better in this regard is "grown, produced and bottled by," which is basically the same as estate bottled. Other phrases, such as "vinted and bottled by" and "cellared and bottled by" can mean the winery bought the wine from another vintner, maybe blended it and aged it a bit -- maybe not -- then bottled it.

## Upcoming events

**April 26<sup>th</sup>-- Marie-Eve Gilla**, founder and managing partner of **Forgeron Cellars** in Walla Walla will be here **April 26** to present her current wine releases. Marie-Eve was here a few years ago and gave one of the best winemaker presentations I have ever witnessed. I can't imagine this year's event would be anything less. As for the particulars of the evening-we are going to alter our usual format a bit to accommodate a Thursday night wine function. Our start time will be **6:00 PM** with Marie-Eve doing a short presentation for each of the wines. Since we are at the **Food Studio**, we plan to have a curated line-up of cheeses, charcuterie and French canapes that will focus the flavors of the wines and highlight pairing possibilities.

The cost for tickets is a mere \$39. You may reserve seats by calling us at 586-8828 or by e-mail at [bozemanwinegallery@gmail.com](mailto:bozemanwinegallery@gmail.com).

**April 27<sup>th</sup>—The Bozeman Noon Rotary** will be presenting a wine and craft beer tasting at the Holiday Inn on Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup>. Hors d'oeuvres, a "cork pull" and an Instant Wine Cellar Raffle will highlight the evening. To get tickets go to <http://bozemannoontrotary.org/event/7th-annual-wine---beer-tasting-fundraiser/>. The tickets are \$30 each or 4 for \$100.

**May 16<sup>th</sup>-- Annual Extraordinary Wine Tasting.** Winemakers, executives and winery owners will be on hand to give up close and personal information on over 50 wines. Bring your notepad and pencil, there will be plenty of great wines at great prices to stock you cellar for summer.

The cost for tickets is a mere \$49. You may reserve seats by calling us at 586-8828 or by e-mail at [bozemanwinegallery@gmail.com](mailto:bozemanwinegallery@gmail.com)