

# SUSTAINABLE WINEMAKING TERMS



Here's a breakdown of what you need to know to get you through.

## Organic

What is it? Organic wine is simply wine that has been made using grapes grown and farmed through organic methods.

What does it mean? The exact regulations for organic farming differ slightly from country to country. However, the general premise is that there are no synthetic herbicides, pesticides or fertilisers used on the vines. There is often also a concerted effort to promote biodiversity through the way the farm is managed.

*Extra reading: European Commission's Organic Farming Info (If you're brave).*

## Biodynamic

What is it? Biodynamics is more than just a farming practice – it's a philosophy and way of life for those who practice it. Based on principles set out by Rudolf Steiner in the 1920s, it is a 'holistic, ecological, and ethical approach to farming'.

What does that mean? Biodynamics treats the farm as an integrated living organism made up of various interdependent elements including plants, animals, soil, people, and the 'spirit' of the place. It includes specially prepared composts, teas, and sprays to help promote certain processes in the vineyard and increased soil fertility. These treatments, as well as planting and picking, are done to coincide with the phases of the planets and the moon. Not an easy one to get your head around, but those who practice biodynamics swear by its efficacy.

*Extra reading: Biodynamic Principles and Practices – biodynamics.com*

## Natural

What is it? Tough one. While there's no official definition for what natural wine is, it's generally considered to mean wines made with minimal intervention and no additions or corrections.

What does that mean? Again, not easy. Tends to be a case of not doing rather than doing. Whether it's vineyard or winery intervention, commercial yeasts, added sulphites, sugars, fining or filtering – makers of natural wine tend to steer clear of the lot. Their ambition is to drive and deliver the most 'pure', unvarnished expression of the grapes possible.

## Sustainable

What is it? Again, no universally agreed definition for what constitutes a sustainable wine, though there are several bodies which certify sustainability (e.g. ecocert, developpement durable, ISO 14001 / ISO 14004 – a few more mentioned here). The idea, however, is one that goes beyond the farming practices in the vineyard. The aim is to produce wine and run a business in the most socially responsible way possible.

What does that mean? Sustainable winemaking is all about attempting to mitigate the potential negative effects of wine production, from the vineyard through to the winery and business operations. Examples of this might include an emphasis on reusing water, reducing the carbon footprint of the winery, reducing shipping costs and cutting down on packaging, as well as being a socially and economically responsible influence in the wider community. It's an idea that resonates with the modern-day consumer, but a movement that's got a little bit under the radar thus far in the wine industry.

## Vegan

What is it? Wine that's made without the use of any animal products.

What does that mean? "How can a wine not be vegan?" – one of those questions that always crop up when you see a wine labelled up as being vegan. Isinglass (from fish bladders), Gelatin, Albumin (egg white) and Casein (milk protein) are actually quite common in winemaking as a means of stabilising wine during a process called fining. This involves removing all the unwanted sediment and dead yeast that might unsettle the final wine. They're not in the wine, but they are used in the process. Fortunately, Bentonite (a volcanic clay), PVPP and other non-animal products can be used as alternative fining agents which do the same job of clarifying the wine, without leaving any unwanted traces of animal products.

