



# new leaf

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## Organic Wine

There is an increasing presence of wines with organic claims on store shelves fueled by demand from wine consumers who want organic alternatives to conventional wines. While the first organic wines were generally not considered to be that good, times have changed and it is now possible to find good quality organic wine. The labeling of domestically produced organic wines, however, which is regulated by the USDA's National Organic Program, can be somewhat confusing for first time buyers.

*The Organic Consumers Association is a grassroots non-profit public interest organization campaigning for health, justice and sustainability. It represents over 850,000 members, subscribers and volunteers, including several thousand businesses in the natural foods and organic marketplace.*

*A special thanks to the Stapleton office for putting together this month's content. Information used with permission from The Organic Consumers Association.*

[www.organicconsumers.org/Organic/OrganicWine.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/Organic/OrganicWine.cfm)

### Labels

- **100% Organic** – Wine must contain 100% organically grown grapes, include information on the label about the agency that certified the product and not contain any added sulfites. It may include the USDA organic seal.
- **Organic** – Wine must contain at least 95% organically grown grapes, include information on the label about the agency that certified the product and not contain any added sulfites. It may include the USDA organic seal.
- **Made with Organic Grapes/Organic Ingredients** – Wine must contain at least 70% organically grown grapes and include information on the label about the agency that certified the product. It may contain added sulfites and it cannot include the USDA organic seal.
- **Some Organic Ingredients** – Wine is made with less than 70% organically grown grapes and cannot use the USDA organic seal or any other reference to organic contents.

### By the Numbers

Sulfites further complicate the subject of organic wine. Sulfites are added to wine because they act as a preservative, preventing oxidation and spoilage. Sulfites also keep white wines from changing color. Some sulfites occur naturally as a result of the fermentation process. In the United States wines with added sulfites may not display the USDA organic label, even when the grapes are 100% organic. Added sulfites are allowed in certified organic wines made in other countries such as Italy and France.

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