

# THE HUFFINGTON POST

THE INTERNET NEWSPAPER: NEWS BLOGS VIDEO COMMUNITY



Ari Bendersky is the co-creator of the iPhone app [foodie](#)

Posted: April 27, 2010 04:59 PM

## Great Wines for Beyond Earth Day



We all want to do our part to help the planet (except maybe that guy who just tossed his McDonald's bag out his car window) by changing out lightbulbs, using non-toxic cleaning chemicals and eating more locally grown food. We don't just have to be good on Earth Day. Every day should be Earth Day. And you can add drinking certain wine to your do-gooder checklist.

Many wineries from France to California to New Zealand have been growing grapes more sustainably and using organic or biodynamic methods to maintain their vineyards. If you're concerned about the food you put into your body, you'll likely appreciate that organic growers do not use pesticides and other harmful chemicals throughout the wine production process. Both organic and biodynamic growing allows for more natural elements to flourish. And while selecting a 100 percent organic wine may not be as easy as, say, finding a bottle produced with organic grapes, which only requires 70 percent of the grapes be organic, more and more are popping up.

Biodynamic agriculture, which follows the lunar cycle and was birthed in 1924 by Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner, has proven, well, fruitful, for many wineries around the world that have turned over their vineyards from traditional growing to biodynamic farming. It might sound hokey, but I've seen the proof and it's pretty impressive.

The following wines are great for toasting to your everyday Earth Day, so you can drink guilt-free—and get extra points if you clean up after the jerk who ate at McDonald's.

[Beckmen Vineyards](#) broke ground on its Purisima Mountain Vineyard in 1996 in Los Olivos, Calif., overlooking the Santa Ynez Valley outside Santa Barbara in a prime location for growing fantastic Rhone varietals. Ten years later, Beckmen began converting the 365-acre, 1275-foot-high hillside property for biodynamic farming—and they haven't turned back. What resulted is possibly some of the most robust, layered and balanced red wine to come out of California. Their latest two releases, the 2007 Block Six Syrah (\$48) and the 2007 Purisima Mountain Vineyard Grenache (\$48) are both pleasers with lots of personality, red fruit, spice and body. You can hold onto both for a number of years or drink now ... but be sure to decant to allow them to open.



Last year, I attended an intimate seminar in the private dining rooms at [Spiaggia](#) in Chicago by [Alois Lageder](#), one of Italy's most respected and renowned producers from the northeast Alto Adige region. In 1996, the winery's low-energy-consumption building that houses the winemaking facilities was completed and since then they've worked toward using alternative energy sources, including radiant low temperature ceiling heating and solar collectors for hot water. Then, in 2004, Lageder began converting the 155 acres at his namesake vineyards when he realized how biodynamic farming could help improve grape yields. I saw firsthand the pictures of the dry soil prior to conversion and how full and rich the fields became once they let nature do what it does best. The result is some beautiful whites like Pinot Bianco, Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio and Moscato and reds, like the indigenous Lagrein, which produces spicy, tannic wines with bold green pepper and blackberry notes. Look for their first fully biodynamically certified white, the 2008 Beta Delta Chardonnay/Pinot Grigio, a slightly dry sipper with hints of white cherry and pineapple.

[Nicolas Feuillatte](#) is France's No. 1 Champagne producer (No. 3 globally) and on April 13 I had the fortunate opportunity to join their winemaker, Jean-Pierre Vincent, at [Japonais](#) to taste through their five sparkling rose wines, which was a major treat. Often a blend of Pinot Noir, Pinor Meunier and Chardonnay, they ran from pale pink (the non-vintage rose) with soft watermelon and strawberry notes to deep velvety red (the Palmes d'Or rose 2003), offering gorgeous cherry and raspberry notes. While the grapes aren't produced organically, the winery has moved into a more sustainable way of doing business. Feuillatte uses 100 percent green energy and, between 2001-2008, reduced its electrical consumption by nine percent. They've also had a 72 percent reduction in using polypropylene packaging, opting instead to use cardboard and reusable metals.

New Zealand's [Brancott Vineyards](#) recently entered into a partnership with [Blue Ocean Institute](#) and its chef Barton Seaver to step up efforts toward helping sustain sealife and the oceans. Brancott, a founding member of Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand, has a stake in the preservation of ocean life as its wines, especially the balanced acidity and minerality of its Sauvignon Blancs, pair well with seafood, especially the oily and rich salmon. Brancott has reduced the use of chemical spraying in their vineyards, replacing it with biological means to deter pests, including the reintroduction of falcons (which had disappeared from their natural habitat decades earlier) on the property to drive away other birds that feed on ripening grapes.

And when you're looking for a decent sipper either for a party or one that can last you weeks after opening (yes, you read that correctly), have I got a wine for you. [Bota Box](#) wines are great for a number of reasons: One, they come in six California varietals (Chard, Pinot Grigio, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Shiraz and old vine Zinfandel); two, each 3-liter box holds the equivalent of four wine bottles and cost \$18.99 (at [Binny's](#)); three, the box can be resealed with their innovative FlexTrap system, which keeps light and air from getting in; and four, the packaging is 100 percent recyclable and is made from non-bleached recycled paper containing 100 percent post-consumer fiber. Their transport reduces greenhouse gas emissions because the packaging is 35 percent lighter than glass.

So whether you feel like you did your part on Earth Day or if you want to make a difference all year, pick up these wines and know you're making a difference—even if you're getting drunk in the process.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ari-bendersky/great-wines-for-beyond-ea\\_b\\_546844.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ari-bendersky/great-wines-for-beyond-ea_b_546844.html)