



FEATURE

Green is the New Black

Whether you prefer red or white, these days it has to be green

Story by Kerry Newberry • Photos by Andrea Johnson

“Green is the new black,” declared editor Graydon Carter in the first green issue for *Vanity Fair*, May 2006. Two years later, and “green” is everywhere: from coffee to couture, bling to blogs, hybrids in Hollywood, to food and wine.

Hipster at heart, Oregon danced to the green beat long before *Vanity Fair* deemed it cool. Our Broadway may never strut the sleek Manolo Blahniks, but electric cars plugged in style years ago. Locally roasted Stumptown reigns over Starbucks any day. As for cocktails, forget the Cosmo and salute homegrown Pinot Noir.

Trendsetting green in vogue—via vines, biodiesel gas and in design—is Oregon wine. This spring, 30 wineries joined an initiative, collaborating with Governor Kulongoski’s office, the Oregon Environmental Council and the Oregon Wine Board to reduce their carbon footprint, striding toward neutrality. At this time, only a handful of wineries and vineyards around the world are carbon neutral, from the first, Grove Mill in Marlborough, New Zealand to the nearby Parducci Winery in California.

First steps will assess energy use, followed by calculating the carbon footprint for the winery/vineyard, then developing a carbon reduction plan. Wineries can reduce carbon emissions through conservation, switching to non-carbon-based fuels and using renewable energy sources.

A significant commitment, this speaks from an industry that is not a major emitter of greenhouse gases, yet directly feels the impact of climate change. The pledge is timely, as news headlines across the nation call on individuals and businesses for change, now. In addition to the carbon neutral pledge, wineries across the state have been quietly growing green for years, from biodynamic to biodiesel and solar power to Salmon-Safe.

Here are some key third-party certifications and initiatives greening Oregon, what the label means, plus a summertime sipper to uncork from each.

Oregon Tilth Certified Organic

Remember that one night you skinny-dipped? That was organic, or “Naked,” as Snoqualmie Vineyard labels their wine series made from organically grown grapes. Free of herbicides, pesticides and synthetic fertilizers—as nature intended—a number of Oregon’s vineyards are certified organic through Oregon Tilth, an internationally noted research and education organization, leading sustainable growing practices since 1974. From Croft Vineyards in Polk County to King Estate Vineyard in Eugene and points in between, Oregon Tilth is

wholly dedicated to certifying biologically sound and socially equitable agriculture.

Unlike organic vines, organic wine is not so simple. There are three types of organic wine, and from the consumer's perspective, this can be confusing. First, to be "USDA certified organic," 95 percent of the ingredients in the wine must be organic, and it contains no additives, such as sulfites or tartaric acid. Second, to be labeled "100-percent organic," all ingredients are organic and the wine is sulfite-free. (A note on sulfites: They do occur naturally in wine in small doses, but are often added to wine before fermentation in small quantities as a preservative to prevent oxidation and bacterial spoilage.) The third, most prevalent labeling is "made with organically grown grapes." This requires a minimum of 70-percent organic ingredients, and the wine may contain added sulfites. No matter which kind you pick up, you can be assured that the wine is made with a greener globe in mind.

Summer Sipper: 2006 Evesham Wood Vineyard Pinot Noir Le Puits Sec (\$35)

Savor this elegant Pinot with grilled salmon, a side of Gene Thiel's heirloom beets, at twilight—transcendent Oregon.

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)

Often wondered exactly what LEED means? Take a road trip to taste and tour green design across the Willamette Valley. First stop: a vibrant swath of wildflower cover crops, frisking atop the barrel cellar at Sokol Blosser Winery in Dundee. This living roof is an element of design earning the Sokol Blosser barrel cellar a Silver LEED Certification in 2002. The first winery granted LEED in the country.

Certified by the U.S. Green Building Council, LEED awards structures based on five building strategies: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials and resources selection, and indoor environmental quality.

Next turn: Stoller Vineyard and Winery, granted the first Gold Certified LEED winery in the nation, plus the first solar-powered winery in the Pacific Northwest.

Summer Sipper: 2007 Stoller JV Estate Chardonnay (\$20)

No oak and purely refreshing, pair a bottle with prosciutto, paté and the poetic view of Mount Hood from the winery.

Salmon-Safe

Nothing defines the Pacific Northwest more than the wild Chinook salmon, an icon disappearing. Founded in 1995 by the Pacific Rivers Council of Oregon, Salmon-Safe is a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring and maintaining agricultural and urban watersheds to ensure that salmon flourish.

Partnering with Oregon Tilth and LIVE, Salmon-Safe certified vineyards protect and restore watersheds that meet rivers where salmon spawn by growing cover crops to control runoff and preventing hillside erosion, plus curbing the use of chemicals, instead using natural means to control pests and weeds.

Summer Sipper: 2007 Ponzi Arneis (\$19)

Toast to this ancient Piemonte varietal, with ripe Bartlett pears, late summer sun and bocce.

LIVE (Low Input Viticulture & Enology)

Co-founded by Ted Casteel of Bethel Heights Vineyard in 1997, LIVE is a non-profit organization providing education and third-party certification for vineyards through the International Organization for Biological Control. The program marries the three tenets of sustainability, encouraging agricultural practices that are economically viable, socially supportive and ecologically sound.

Since inception, the program has evolved, increasing certified vineyard acreage each year—currently over 3,000 acres—and creating key partnerships. LIVE is the most used certification agency by Oregon's vineyards and collaborates with Salmon-Safe, an organization dedicated to restoring and maintaining healthy watersheds.

Summer Sipper: 2007 Apolloni Vineyards Willamette Valley Pinot Gris (\$14)

Unwind under winking stars with this crisp white wine made by Indie winemaker Alfredo Appolloni; a bright, citrus, pear seduction.

Rainforest Alliance: FSC Certified Cork

After you twist, push and then pop the cork out of your next bottle of vino, think about the story of that slender stopper. The cork versus screwcap debate twists on, but recent efforts by the Rainforest Alliance and FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) hope to change that. In the 1990s, world wine production surged, and in an effort to keep up, quality cork production appeared to go down. Wineries sought alternative closures for bottles to alleviate “corked” wine—the moldy, musty smell caused by the chemical compound TCA. In turn, the global demand for wine corks dropped by 20 percent between 2000 and 2005.

Enter the World Wildlife Fund. In a 2006 report titled “Cork Screwed?” WWF asserted that wine corks are not only the most profitable use for cork, but are vital to sustain the industry and the livelihood of more than 100,000 people. Key words to keep in mind when you uncork: renewable resource, biodiversity hotspot, rural jobs, majestic Mediterranean landscapes, social sustainability, threatened ecosystems.

The Rainforest Alliance joined forces with FSC, the international group promoting responsible forest management and granting a stamp of approval to forests meeting social, economical and environmental guidelines. In 2005, the Rainforest Alliance and FSC certified the first cork forest, offering a guarantee to wineries that the cork is good.

Willamette Valley Vineyards pioneered as the first winery in the world to use these sustainable stoppers from FSC- and Rainforest Alliance-certified cork forests. Now, that’s a story.

Summer Sipper: 2007 Willamette Valley Vineyards Pinot Gris (\$15)

Here’s a classic white to sip with smoked salmon; barefoot and seaside.

Demeter Certified Biodynamic

Au natural meets mystique, or naked grapes plus cosmos. In a world with dwindling mystery, there is no doubt biodynamic farming intrigues but also delivers. (See Wine 101 on page 14.) The practice and the certification process are an equally rigorous undertaking, like marriage. The skinny: A Demeter Certified Biodynamic farm meets all the standards of an organic farm, plus additional agricultural methods unique to biodynamic farming. Similar to naturopathy, the farming is proactive, views the farm as one holistic system and emphasizes soil health and fertility. Techniques include botanical teas, compost preparations and an astrological calendar to determine the most conducive times for planting, spraying and harvesting.

Demeter USA, based in Philomath, is the only certification agent for biodynamic farms, processors and products in the United States and recognizes two distinct levels: biodynamic wine and wine made from biodynamic grapes. Both wines must be made with 100-percent biodynamic grapes, but biodynamic wines have more restrictions, prohibiting common manipulations such as yeast and enzyme additions, acidity adjustment, tannin addition, oaking and chaptalization.

Additionally, GMOs (genetically modified organisms) are forbidden, as well as diammonium phosphate, gelatin, polyvinylpyrrolidone (a synthetic material used to clarify wine), blood and sturgeon swim bladders. A biodynamic wine also must source from a single vineyard.

Summer Sipper: 2007 Resonance Vineyard Yamhill Carlton G3 White Wine (\$19)

A Demeter Certified Biodynamic wine, sip this rich and aromatic taste of Indian summer as an aperitif. The fruit is pure and versed, with 75 percent from gnarly old-vine Gewürztraminer, planted in 1981.

Oregon Certified Sustainable

It’s easy to get lost in the aisle of a wine shop, pondering producers, translating labels, seeking sustainable. In an effort to reach green-minded consumers, the Oregon Wine Board created an umbrella platform and certification program: Oregon Certified Sustainable (OCS). Launching in late 2008, any wine certified by LIVE, Demeter, Oregon Tilth, Salmon-Safe or Food Alliance (a nonprofit that certifies farms, ranches and food handlers for sustainable practices) will be able to carry the OCS label. The desire: a unified logo, easily translating environmentally friendly farming and production to consumers, and highlighting that, for Oregon producers, green is not a trend but a lifestyle. ♦

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