

# THE NATCH BATCH

## WHAT'S NATURAL WINE ALL ABOUT?



Cameran Diaz really screwed up my day. I was about to send another campaign for my weekly mail shot email until I read the hilarious nonsense in Rolling Stone magazine. I was energised by this *wine gaslighting* and felt that I needed to reply.

To be clear, I have no beef with Cameran and I do not have a beef with celebrity wines, they can be a great bit of frivolity. Norton and SJP's wines are both dreadful - really awful shit. I have not tasted Kylie's wine (contraversially named 'Kylie') and Brangelina actually own one the world's best Roses. I have a problem with Mick Hucknell making a wine but that's personal. We stock Sam Neill's Pinot Noir and it is fantastic.

What I do have a problem with, is Diaz further muddying the waters of an already complicated and tetchy subject - natural wine. I also object to this *wine gaslighting*. The new Diaz wine deserves credit for their marketing, nothing else. They say that they want to create a new level of transparency in wine, yet the give only the country of origin on their label, and not the region. They are not even letting on what varieties they use. They are also lying when they say they will not add anything they do not need to AND they don't even use natural yeast. In short, there wine is a lot less 'natural' than a lot of the 'commercial wine' as they term it, that they apparently threw out in disgust. The label on their white wine suggests that it will pair perfectly with 'your favourite meal'. Mine is beef and guinness stew Cameron - will it go well with that?

It is exactly this sort of stupid shit that gives so called natural wine a bad name. Lots of people have pre-conceived notions of natural wine, organics and bio-dynamics. It sometimes feels as though half of the wine world is vehemently opposed to the idea of so called natural wine, and the other half is blindly asking for it without any real understanding of what they're asking for. Years ago in Melbourne I was approached on the shop floor by someone asking for a wine that was 100% natural. She went on and on insisting that the wine have no chemical or additives whatsoever or she would be violently ill. When I asked her what food she was having with it, she replied (without a hint of irony); a Chinese take away. The reason for all of this confusion is that there is no actual definition for natural wine (see my repeated use of the term 'so called natural wine'). The Natch Batch 6-Pack is a great way to delve into so-called natural wines. The following notes should go some way towards helping you understand so-called natural wines. If any stone is left unturned please feel free to contact me.

"SHE WENT ON AND ON INSISTING THAT THE WINE HAVE NO CHEMICALS OR ADDITIVES WHATSOEVER OR SHE WOULD BE VIOLENTLY ILL. WHEN I ASKED HER WHAT FOOD SHE WAS HAVING WITH IT, SHE REPLIED (WITHOUT A HINT OR IRONY):

"CHINESE TAKE AWAY"

Rory - STSWine

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# WHICH CAME FIRST, THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG?

The chicken example is as good a starting point for helping understand the difference between wines. A normal cheap supermarket wine off the shelf is the equivalent of a normal bottom shelf chicken: it will taste vaguely like chicken and will do the job. Despite being cheap it is probably making someone somewhere a lot of money due to its questionable methods of production and sub-standard products. An organic or bio-dynamic wine is the equivalent of an expensive free range chicken that you get from a good butcher. It has had a good life, it's way more expensive to produce and it tastes way, way better. It is more expensive to cultivate and is produced by specialists that ply their craft for the love of it more than for the money. Finally a (so called) natural wine is the equivalent of a live, breathing chicken. It may well be the best of the three, but to you need to expertly kill, pluck, butcher and cook it. Mess it up and it will be a disaster.

Too many winemakers these days are attempting to kill, pluck and butcher their wines and they are simply not up for the task. Chemicals help stabilize the wine, Chemicals are necessary. Did you know that sulfites are a natural by-product of fermentation? What's the big deal?

## SULFITES ARE A BY PRODUCT OF FERMENTATION. WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

The main problem with so called natural wine is that there is no legal definition and anyone can call their wine natural or write it on the bottle. Steps are being taken to change this, but for the moment there is free rein and it is frankly like the Wild West.

**ORGANIC WINE** is a more concrete proposition. The paperwork, conversion process and expense are great. There are a set of rules governing all stages of production, though some will suggest that the rules do not go far enough to create unadulterated wines, it is a good starting point. Perhaps most importantly in terms of a return on investment for the producer, they get to carry that EU organic symbol on the bottle.

**BIO-DYNAMIC WINE** is more an holistic approach to farming. Based on the principles of Rudolph Steiner, the Austrian sociologist, it follows a range of philosophies from the sensible and very reasonable (maintain the natural ecosystem and biosphere of the vineyard with natural predators for pests and weeds etc) to the wacky and cosmic (harvesting according to the moon's cycle!). It is also certified and as such, goes further than organics (as it takes account of soil condition etc).

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# WHAT'S WITH THE ATTITUDE?

**Question:** why do people scoff at organic and bio-dynamic wines?

**Answer:** because of so called natural wine - it's lack of meaning and people's real or perceived bad experience with it.

If you have had a so called natural wine that smelt mousy, you will have a bad experience and your suspicion or contempt of so called natural wine, but remember - it is the fault of the wine maker, not the wine.

# OK! TIME TO TRY A SO CALLED NATURAL WINE!

Many people ask me for a so called natural wine so they can try it to see what the fuss is all about. If you drink wine, particularly from Station to Station Wine, you will have tried so called natural wine already.

Most of the wines we stock are so called natural wines. Many, many, MANY producers are organic but not certified as they don't want the expense or paperwork. Most wine makers worth their salt will exercise at least some of the principles of bio-dynamics.

# IF YOU DRINK WINE, PARTICULARLY FROM STATION TO STATION WINE, YOU WILL HAVE TRIED SO CALLED NATURAL WINE ALREADY.

Domaine de la Romanee Conti, the world's most expensive wine at auction and release is a so called natural wine. Alvaro Palacios, Spain's most important wine maker who makes wine in Bierzo, Rioja and Priorat - all natural. The new wave American wine movement is all so called natural wine. Isole e Olena and some of the great estates of Tuscany, practically all of Beaujolais - ALL SO CALLED NATURAL WINE!

If it looks like shit, and it smells like shit, then it's gotta be shit! If your wine is marketed to you specifically as a natural wine, approach with caution. Writing natural wine, or marketing yourself as natural wine is in fact a con that doesn't mean anything and more often is to cover up shortcomings.

Calling your wine a natural wine is like Kanye West calling himself a presidential candidate. It's silly and only done because he can, nobody will stop him. It doesn't mean anything. There is no substance there. It is all nonsense.

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**SO CALLED NATURAL WINE** has done a great service in that we are now looking more closely at what is in wine, how it is made, how it is sourced. You can buy organic wines for a pittance now in supermarkets the same way you can buy wagu beef in Lidl.

The key is simply to scrutinise your wine more. Shop with people who care about what they are peddling and ask the question - demand the story. Who is this wine maker and what is he trying to achieve.

**THE NATCH BATCH 6-Pack** contains 6 so called natural wines in that they offer varying degrees of outside the box wine making. They are interesting, funky and vibrant. Enjoy!

## CARL KOCH OPP NAT PET NAT

A sparkling white wine from the Rheinhessen region of Germany. Made from Riesling. Pet Nat / Pétillant naturel are made in a manner that predates the so-called "traditional method" used in Champagne (and for most other sparkling wines). Rather than induce a second fermentation in the bottle to create the bubbles, makers of pét-nat simply bottle the wine before the initial fermentation has ended. Wines are easy going and delicious, and throw interesting flavour profiles. ORGANIC, BIODYNAMIC. **STSWine**

## D. DES AMIEL SOUS LE MANTOU ORANGE

Under the Orange coat is the blend of two grape varieties working wonderfully. Fruit and power on the one hand, freshness and lightness on the other hand, more accentuated than in the previous vintage. It balances perfectly, ending with a little bitterness.

Under the Orange coat comes from vines grown organically and biodynamically. Maceration for several weeks gives it its color and intensity. The juices are vinified separately then assembled and aged for 12 months in casks.

Under the Orange coat allows original and famous pairings with spicy, sweet and sour dishes (*you never know what to drink with sweet and sour, don't you?*), smoked fish..

Aymeric and Jordan Amiel live in Montblanc, a small village located between Narbonne and Montpellier. Their family has lived there for over 500 years and the vines have been present there for several generations. When they settled, they immediately chose organic then biodynamic (*Ecocert & Demeter certification*), their 17 hectares being spread over 10 hectares of vines and 7 of spaces freely dedicated to biodiversity.

**BBN**

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## ARNOLD HOLZER INVASION OF TASTE

How could you not dig this? Made as an 'orange wine', that is, with a bit of skin contact, the variety is Muller Thurgau, a hybrid variety made in a lab. The spectrum is lightly orange and a great introduction to the style. Check the label though, it used to have the full 'space invaders' motif till Atari slapped a cease and desist on him. He clapped back at them on the new label. **STSWine**

## VINILO BLANC UCO VALLEY

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**WINE ENTHUSIAST**

## EL MOZO HERRIGOIA RIOJA

Before Rioja Crianza Etc became a thing, farmers would cruise their vineyards picking ripe fruit, bung it all together and let it do it's thing - this really is old school Rioja. A field blend of Red and white grapes, made via carbonic maceration (same method as Beaujolais). This is vinified from several micro plots, stainless steel matured, all organic. RAGING fruit purity and acidity, this is an incredible Spring and Summer red, universally popular, fresh and gluggable. **STSWine**

## BAROU PETITE COLORADO SYRAH

The Barou Vin de Pays Syrah "Petit Colorado" is from 20 year-old vines grown on decomposed granite soils on the high plateau overlooking the Rhone, just above the AOC Saint-Joseph. "Dark red/purple color. Aromas of ripe cherry and blueberry with herbal, minty notes. Ripe and fresh on the palate with crunchy red fruits and discreet tannins. The wine is aerien. Drink within 2 to 3 years, serve with a charcuterie board or in summer, slightly chilled, as an accompaniment to grilled meats" says the Barou website. We say yummy, lush and delicious and a sensational value!

**CHAMBERS STREET USA**

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