

# Organic wines & sulfites

The following was written by  
*The Organic Wine Company*

The public often equates organic wines with sulfite-free wines. This is inaccurate. We want to apologize for the confusion surrounding this issue and try to clear it up for you.

**I. AN ORGANIC WINE IS FIRST AND FOREMOST A WINE MADE OUT OF GRAPES WHICH WERE GROWN ORGANICALLY . . . I.E. WITHOUT PESTICIDES, HERBICIDES, FUNGICIDES, CHEMICAL FERTILIZERS OR SYNTHETIC COMPOUNDS.**

Look for that specific statement on the label. If you do not find it, chances are that this wine's grapes were sprayed just like carrots, apples and lettuce.

French organic labels display the little logo of the agency which certified them. You will easily translate the three words 'sans produits chimiques' into 'without chemicals'.

**II. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A SULFITE-FREE WINE.**

Sulfites are a natural by-product of the fermentation process i.e. fermenting yeasts present on all skin grapes generate naturally occurring sulfites in amounts ranging from 6 to 40 parts per million (ppm). Therefore, looking for a sulfite-free wine is like looking for a milk-free yogurt.

Sulfites are found in many kinds of food products such as eggs, fish, and dried fruits, in amounts ranging from 6 to 6000 ppm. Your body produces 1000 ppm sulfites daily.

**III. "CONTAINS SULFITES"**

You will find this statement on most wine labels today because of a Federal regulation (passed 1/1/87; effective 1/1/88) which requires that wines containing more than 10 parts per million sulfites bear that mention.

Since, as explained above, most wines will contain more than 10 ppm naturally occurring sulfites, most vintners must print "contains sulfites" on their labels.

**IV. ORGANIC WINES & SULFITES**

Sulfite-free wines do not exist

But wines low in sulfites or free of added sulfites do.

Let us explain:

Sulfiting agents have been a part of the wine-making process for centuries. Oenology professors concur in saying that it is, at best, extremely difficult to make a consistently stable wine without adding sulfites to those naturally present.

Because sulfiting agents, when properly handled, are not intrinsically toxic to humans or to the environment, and because they are essential in order

to obtain a consistently stable wine, European organic wine making standards allow for the addition of strictly regulation amounts of natural sulfites. (Natural sulfites = sulfur, extracted from the earth, then heated and mixed in a pure water solution).

French organic wines can be called "low-sulfites" wines because they usually contain 1/3 to 1/2 fewer sulfites than non-organic wines and are free of any other commonly used wine additives.