

WineFashionista

What to sip for Earth Day



There was a time, not long ago, when the word organic on a wine label meant a bottle best avoided. Thankfully, today the word is no longer a dirty word. We look for wines made naturally, from organically, biodynamically or sustainably grown grapes. With Earth Day just around the corner, what better time to celebrate the abundance of green, earth-friendly wines.

Throughout California, many wineries are farming their vineyards in environmentally responsible ways. How to find these wines? One program I'm keen on is Sustainability in Practice (SIP) Certified. When you see the SIP Certified logo on the label, it tells you that growers and wineries adhere to a host of requirements that promote healthy vineyards as well as the well-being of the folks who grow and make the wine. You'll find Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir of course, but you'll also find some off-beat varieties such as Picpoul, Falanghina, Lagrein and Tannat. Here are eight great bottles to try.

Bubbles: McIntyre Vineyards NV L'Homme Qui Ris, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$42)

This creamy, toasty traditional method sparkling wine is balanced with zesty, lemony acidity. L'Homme Qui Ris means the man who laughs; you'll be smiling while sipping this 100% Pinot Noir sparkler. Grower and winemaker Steve McIntyre is a leader in sustainability in this wine region.

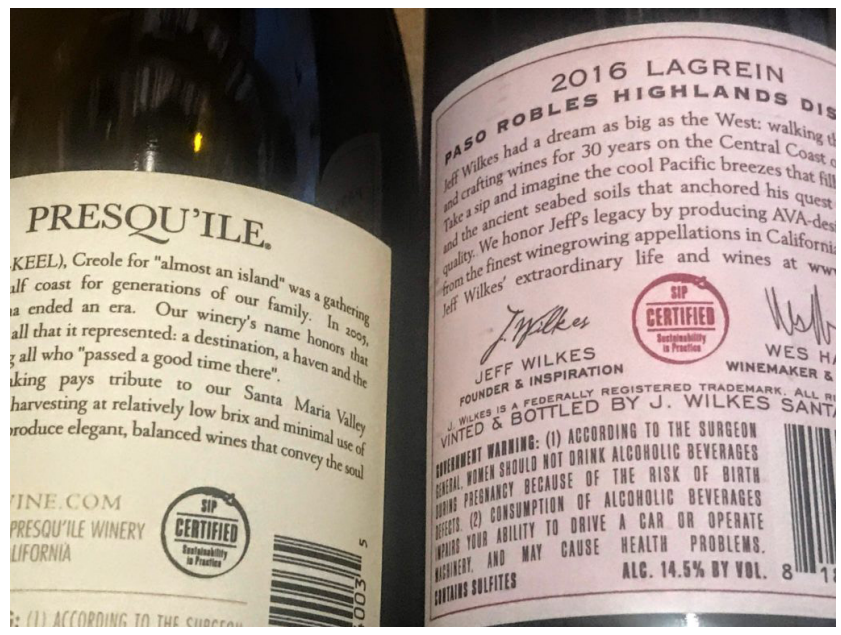
Crisp white: Halter Ranch 2017 Picpoul Blanc, Adelaida District, Paso Robles (\$28)

Picpoul, a French variety from the Rhone Valley, is a lip-stinger (picpoul translated), with tart citrus and stony minerality. A perfect match for oysters, this aromatic wine features tropical fruit and citrus aromas and flavors.

Go-to Chardonnay: Presqu'ile 2016 Chardonnay, Santa Maria Valley (\$44)

This wine growing region in Santa Barbara County produces some exceptional Chardonnays, such as Presqu'ile's. There's plenty of acid and minerality along with lemon and green apple notes and a crisp yet juicy finish.

Interesting white: Wrath Wines 2016 Falanghina, Ex Dolio, Monterey County



Pronounced fah-lahn-GHEE-nah, this Italian variety, in the hands of winemaker Sabine Rodems, is a white wine made like a red wine. Fermented on the skins, this wine has a coppery orange hue. Rich apricot, honeysuckle floral and honey scents the glass, and the bone dry wine coats the mouth.

A lesser known region Pinot: 2016 Tolosa "1772" Pinot Noir, Edna Ranch, Edna Valley, (\$68)

After sipping this fruity, spicy and earthy crowd pleasing Pinot, you will become a fan of Edna Valley wines. The Pacific Ocean winds cool this region, making it perfect for elegant wines with plenty of acidity. When the bottle is empty you'll wish you had more.

An exotic variety to know: J. Wilkes 2016 Lagrein, Highlands District, Paso Robles (\$30)

There's not a lot of this Italian red variety grown in California, and this is boutique winery J. Wilkes' first effort. This wine is a mouthful of ripe black cherry and blackberry, with savory sage and cedar flavors.

Drink an All-American red: Ancient Peaks 2016 Zinfandel, Santa Margarita Ranch, Paso Robles (\$20)

You can't beat the price on this robust, fruit forward zin with dense, jammy blackberry and black cherry fruit. It's smoky and peppery, with lots of herbal sage, and has great balance and acidity for a Zinfandel. Made with grapes from the winery's Margarita Vineyard.

A deep, dark red: Oso Libre Bendición 2014 Estate Mourvedre, Adelaida District, Paso Robles (\$80)

You may know Mourvedre as one of the three grape varieties in GSM blends, but here it is, on its own, in all its unabashed glory. This earthy and savory wine has plenty of plummy fruit, a soft mouthfeel and a spicy finish.