



South Africa's Wine Star: Stellar Organic Winery

Stellar Winery is located north of Cape Town on the road to Namibia. Situated in the only semi-arid Biosphere hotspot in the world in an area famous for its spring flowers, they are the largest producer of fine organic wines in South Africa.

The privately owned cellar makes use of the unique climate to produce modern, organic wines. Working closely with the organic farms, the Winemaker, Dudley Wilson, has built a reputation for producing innovative, award-winning wines such as the no-sulphur-added range, which occupies a unique niche in markets around the world.

Well-known for its innovation approach, Stellar has a number of "firsts" to its credit. It was the first organic vineyard and wine cellar to receive the highly sought after Fairtrade accreditation.



Fairtrade companies work to empower economically disadvantaged workers and ensure that a fair price is paid for the product along the whole supply chain. Both farm and cellar staff are transported to and from work. Families receive health care and the permanent services of a community worker. Workers receive free housing, electricity and water and all schooling and child-care facilities are subsidized. A percentage of the wholesale price of the wine is paid directly back to the Stellar

Fairtrade Workers' Trust. The Fairtrade umbrella bodies in the various export destinations supervise this process.

What is the Stellar Organic Winery Policy? They are committed to the principles of organic production and their dedication is shown by the following:

- No chemicals, pesticides or herbicides were used in the growing of any of the grapes processed in Stellar Winery.
- The winery is a processing facility and its task is to maintain the organic status of the grapes during the production of wine and to do so in an environmentally responsible manner.
- Where possible waste products are recycled or reused. Skins from the press are composted and plans to make organic grape seed oil are well advanced.
- Water usage in the cellar is audited. Water has the solids screened from it and goes through aeration and micro-organism treatment (EM).
- Chemicals for cleaning and for use in winemaking are kept to a minimum and alternatives such as steam are used where possible.
- Wine is at all times recognized and respected as a natural product and additions and manipulations are therefore kept to a minimum so as not to compromise the integrity of the farms, the cellar and its products. The organic policy is formally reviewed before the start of each crush, and is open to review on an on-going basis.

Stellar Winery is supervised by SKAL International, an organic inspection body, accredited by the Dutch Accreditation Council RvA, whose very strict production criteria must be met for organic certification.

About the Certified Organic Farms There are no compromises on ethics and production values, and the farms are kept and managed in as natural a state as possible. A walk through the vineyards bears testament to this; the leaves on the vines are healthy and species of insects are varied and abundant. A soil examination reveals masses of earthworms, all indications of a healthy ecosystem, unlike chemically treated soils that kill most living organisms.



WINE TERM

Ecosystem: An ecosystem, at a basic level, consists of an elaborate network of interconnected living organisms, where everything is connected to something else and acts on one another to maintain balance.

South African Wine: A Wine Unto Itself

What do the wines of North America, South America, Africa, and Australia have in common? For one thing, none of them are produced in Europe. You could say that they are the wine of “Not Europe.” The name most often used for “Not Europe” is New World Wines.

Europeans have been making wines for thousand of years. Where to plant vineyards, how grapes should grow, how dry or sweet a particular wine should be – these decisions were all made long ago, seldom vary and are often legislated. In other countries, wine making is an exciting work of art that is spirited and creative. Each winery owner makes the decision where to grow the grapes, what grape variety to plant, and what style of wine to make. Technically South Africa’s wines belong to the New World creative winemaking entity. Although the styles of these wines can be somewhat similar to Old World European wines, a subtle difference remains. The taste of a South African Cabernet Sauvignon maybe reminiscent of a French wine, but not quite, nor does it really resemble a New World red from California or Australia. South African wines lie somewhere between both worlds and are uniquely South African.

Cooler microclimates center around the southern coast, near the Cape of Good Hope, and in higher altitudes. Most other wine regions of South Africa is warm and dry, often requiring irrigation. As in other predominantly warm-climate regions, vintage are nearly always good in South Africa. The best wines in South Africa have been made from the 1986 vintage on.

What is Organic Wine?

Organic means that no chemicals, pesticides or herbicides were used in the growing of the grapes. Only compost and organic materials are used, with indigenous vegetation for mulching. In the cellar the maximum allowable quantity of sulphur dioxide is half that of conventional wines and certain chemicals are forbidden.

Organic wines can be affordable, delicious, and healthy alternatives to their non-organic counterparts. A bottle of conventionally produced wine may contain up to 250 different



chemicals. If you’re a wine connoisseur, a year’s worth of organic wine purchases would keep roughly two pounds of fertilizers and 50 grams of pesticides out of the environment (and out of your wineglass). If one in twenty wine drinkers decided to demand organic wine only, organic vineyards would increase by nearly 40,000 acres, resulting in the elimination of more than 3.3 million pounds of agrochemicals per year as reported in *The Green Book* by E. Rogers and T. Kostigen.

What Can We Do To Help OUR Environment?

As an individual, you probably can’t save the environment. It’s the little things that add up. Since you are buying organically grown wine, you are likely to be interested in becoming more environmentally friendly. Most of the big areas of focus involve waste, water, and energy that involve a detrimental impact on our planet of unknown proportions. Savings in each area has a measurable positive impact. Do what you can in each of the following areas: kilowatt-hours, landfills, e-waste, recycling, renewable resources, nonrenewable resources, plastic (composed mostly of petroleum), pollution, global warming, waste and junk, water, and paper.

The World, Red Wine, and Women

The Iowa Women’s Health Study, a research project conducted by Norwegian and U.S. scientists at the University of Minnesota in 2007, showed that red wine, apples and pears decreased the risk of heart-related mortality among post-menopausal women. A UPI report indicated that 34,000 women were monitored on their dietary intake and “various health outcomes” for nearly 20 years. Jack Heeger reports, “An apple, paired with a glass of red wine a day, will keep the doctor away”.

