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HOME
ABOUT
WINE 101
FOOD & WINE PAIRING LINKS
SAMPLE POLICY
CONTACT INFO

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What's New? Natural Bordeaux! #Winophiles

Posted by [foodwineclick](#) on January 15, 2021 · [21 Comments](#)



SO much tradition in Bordeaux. Can there be anything new under the sun?

Winophiles Dig for What's New in Bordeaux

January 2021 brings our French Winophiles group back to Bordeaux, looking around for something new from the region. We have lots of great ideas, just look at the list of links farther down in this post!



Yes, a candle is still the best means of watching for sediment

Bordeaux Fame and Tradition

The Bordeaux wine region is perhaps the most famous in the world. As such, it isn't exactly a hotbed of innovation or revolution. We can't blame them, the top wines from the region were exalted for the World's Fair in the Classification of 1855. Ever since, those top wines have maintained their reputations and prices and today, they dare not take a big risk on something new and different. The approach is to make the absolute best tasting wine possible, the winemaker is seen as something of a chef, using selections among several grapes, multiple plots, different barrels for "spice" to craft a wine of elegance, ready to age nearly indefinitely.



Even in the difficult climate, some Bordeaux châteaux have embraced organic and biodynamic techniques

Organic, Biodynamic and Natural Wines – in Bordeaux?

The larger world of wine consumers have a growing interest in foods and wines relying on fewer chemicals, organic, biodynamic and even natural wines fit the bill. Bordeaux has several challenges with these approaches. First and foremost – the region has a maritime climate, it's only a few miles to the Atlantic ocean, plus the Gironde estuary, Garonne and Dordogne rivers run through. It can rain anytime all year. This is a nightmare for organic viticulture, since synthetic chemicals aren't allowed and even the allowed traditional treatments are strictly controlled in how much can be used. Even so, some of the highest ranking wineries have transitioned to organic or biodynamic viticulture. It's not easy, but consumer interest is strong and winemakers find the results are worth the effort.

Natural Wines – Taking Non-Intervention to the Extreme

Natural wine is a topic which generates high emotions on both pro- and con- sides. Stepping away from the arguing, here are the key features embraced by most practitioners

- Certified organic or biodynamic viticulture
- Hand harvest
- No sulfur dioxide applied to the grapes until bottling
- Native yeasts
- No nutrients, corrections, acidification, tannin additions, no harsh mechanical interventions
- Intent is nothing added, nothing removed.
- No or minimal sulfur dioxide at bottling

After all that work in the vineyard, natural winemakers throw all the (chemical) tools to reduce risk, speed progress and allow corrections to be made in the cellar – away. Rather than hands-off, this is highly involved winemaking. Scrupulous attention must be paid to cleanliness in the winery and the wine's development must be carefully watched. Winemakers who are committed to this approach believe this is the truest expression of the vintage and the place.



The Amoreau family at Château le Puy make very traditional Right Bank Bordeaux wines that happen to be natural wine.

Natural Wine in Bordeaux: Chateau le Puy

Château le Puy has been farmed by the Amoreau family since 1610. Humorously described as being chemical-free forever, they explain it was because they were “cheap”! In any case, they have been committed to a minimal intervention approach since long before it was popular. They are Demeter certified and have been farming biodynamically since the 1960's. They stopped adding sulfites or any other additives to their wines since at least 1990. Today, they add a small amount at bottling to ensure long term stability. The amount they add is well below the allowed limit for biodynamic wines and is sufficiently low to qualify for their wines to be presented at Isabelle Legeron's Raw Wine fairs.



Château le Puy Francs Côtes de Bordeaux "Emilien" 2016 (*locally \$60* or online [here](#)) 13%abv
85% Merlot, 7% cabernet franc, 6% cabernet sauvignon, 1% malbec and 1% carménère, matured in oak barrels and casks for 24 months.

Eye: medium garnet

Nose: medium plus intensity aromas of ripe blueberries, blackberries, black plums, clean earth, pine needles, dried leaves, a bit of barnyard, balsamic vinegar.

Mouth: dry with medium plus acidity, medium plus velvety tannins, medium plus body, medium alcohol and a long finish. Medium plus intensity flavors of ripe blueberries, blackberries, black plums, clean earth, pine needles, dried leaves, a bit of barnyard, balsamic vinegar.

Observations: A very nice wine, typical of wines from the Côtes de Bordeaux in that it is drinking very nicely right now, no need to let it age for a long time. A bit rustic due to the barnyard and balsamic, but very enjoyable for those who like that slightly funky earthy character.



Duc des Nauves Vin de France 2018 (*locally \$28* or online [here](#)) 12.5% abv

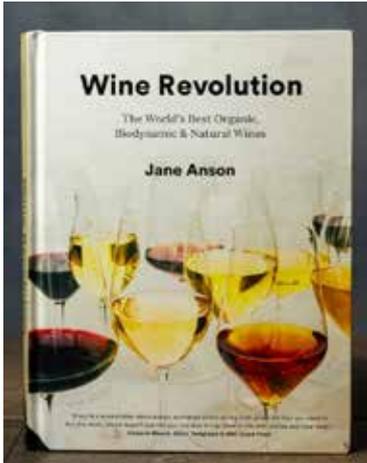
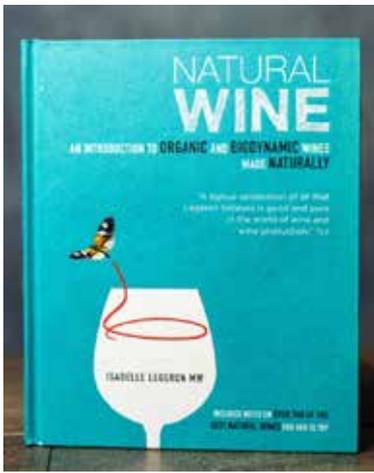
The Amoreau family acquired this nine-hectare vineyard in 2006, and immediately began employing biodynamic practices (Duc des Nauves is certified biodynamic as of the 2015 vintage). Planted to 70% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc, and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, In the cellar, Duc des Nauves is both fermented (spontaneously, of course) and aged in cement, and bottled without filtration after one year.

Eye: medium ruby

Nose: medium intensity aromas of ripe blueberries, blackberries, black plums, clean earth, a bit of barnyard initially but it blows off after an hour or so.

Mouth: Dry, medium plus acidity, medium plus chalky tannins, medium body, medium alcohol, medium plus savory finish. Medium intensity flavors of ripe blueberries, blackberries, black plums, forest floor, rosemary.

Observations: Not quite as much intensity or complexity as the flagship wine, this is still very enjoyable, clearly showing a traditional approach.



Curious about Natural Wine – in Bordeaux and Beyond?

Isabelle Legeron MW (Master of Wine) is the best known vocal proponent for natural wine worldwide. She wrote an excellent book on the subject, [*Natural Wine*](#). She explains the ethos of the whole concept, the agreed techniques and supplies a good list of wineries to investigate all over the world. In addition, she organizes a natural wine fair, [*Raw Wine*](#), which has grown to a large fair drawing an international audience of both winemakers, buyers and enthusiasts. The Raw Wine website includes a searchable list of wineries that show at Raw Wine. Isabelle's fair isn't for the "zero sulfur at all costs" crowd, the fair has guidelines and requires wineries to post the figures. The searchable database is a great way to find wines to try, Château le Puy is [here](#), and their Duc des Nauves is [here](#). You never know who you might run into while searching this [list](#).

If you're interested in top quality low intervention in general (organic, biodynamic and natural), Jane Anson's [*Wine Revolution*](#) is an excellent resource. Jane is a respected writer for Decanter and other media, and Wine Revolution profiles wineries worldwide pursuing these techniques. If you're not quite ready to plunge into natural wines, Jane covers an extensive list of organic and biodynamic winegrowers.



We enjoyed our wines with coq au vin (rouge). I always double the onions and mushrooms. How about you?

Winophiles Tackle What's New in Bordeaux

And you thought there was nothing new going on in Bordeaux! Take a look below at all the great ideas from our French Winophiles group. Join our chat on twitter: Saturday, Jan. 16 10-11 am CST at [#Winophiles](#). See you then!

- Susannah at Avvinare shares "[Cru Bourgeois – A Closer Look At Chateau Labadie](#)"
- Wendy at A Day in the Life on the Farm shares "[Chateau Haut-Pougnon with Mediterranean Stew](#)"
- Terri at Our Good Life shares "[Hearty Seafood Chowder with a Special Bottling from Chateau Tour de Bonnet](#)"
- Allison and Chris at Advintures shares "[Fronsac: Out of the Shadows of Bordeaux](#)"
- Linda at My Full Wine Glass shares "[This Francs Côtes de Bordeaux lets the fruit shine through](#)"
- Camilla at Culinary Adventures with Camilla shares "[Croissants aux Framboises + Chateau Sabliere Beausejour 2016](#)"
- Gwendolyn at Wine Predator shares "[For a Special Evening at Home: Bordeaux's Sweet, Sparkling, Savory Surprises](#)"
- Lynn at Savor the Harvest shares "[Sustainability, Adaptation and Oenotourism Evolve in Bordeaux](#)"
- Lauren at The Swirling Dervish shares "[Are Dry Wines the New Sweet Spot for Sauternes?](#)"
- Nicole at Somms Table shares "[Faux Fancy Bordeaux](#)"
- Lisa at The Wine Chef shares "[Learn About Cru Bourgeois Wines: What's New and Why You Should be Drinking Them](#)"
- Jeff at Food Wine Click! shares "[What's New? Natural Bordeaux!](#)"



Filed under [French Winophiles](#), [Wine](#)

Comments

21 Responses to "What's New? Natural Bordeaux! #Winophiles"

culinarycam says:

[January 15, 2021 at 12:18 pm](#)

So true what you said about Château le Puy. I remember explaining 'organic' to a friend who had just immigrated from Ecuador. She was astounded. "In Ecuador we farm organic because we're poor. Only the rich farmers can afford chemicals." Thanks for hosting this month. Sorry that I was off in left field a bit.

Reply

▪
foodwineclick says:

[January 18, 2021 at 6:53 am](#)

Thanks Camilla. I like being reminded how practical farmers are!

Reply

advinetures says:

[January 15, 2021 at 3:22 pm](#)

Another insightful article and loved the resources you provided as this is a topic that really deserves research to understand the challenges and points of view both for and against. We've found that discussions around Natural wine certainly make for lively ones depending on personal views!

Reply

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foodwineclick says:

[January 19, 2021 at 3:45 pm](#)

Thanks Allison and Chris. If you really want to understand from the vineyard and winemaking side, Britt and Per Karlsson's book on Organic, Biodynamic and Natural Winemaking book is very good and even-handed.

Reply

Linda Whipple, CSW says:

[January 16, 2021 at 7:07 pm](#)

Love the comment about being too "cheap" for chemicals. I also tasted a Francs Côtes de Bordeaux and found it highly drinkable right now. Thanks for the topic – learned a lot!

Reply

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foodwineclick says:

[January 19, 2021 at 3:45 pm](#)

The Côtes de Bordeaux wines are a great place for good quality and value. Thanks Linda!

Reply

Gwendolyn Alley aka Art Predator says:

[January 16, 2021 at 7:12 pm](#)

Agreed the RAW wine website is such a great resources! Love the event in 2019, and look forward to attending again in the After Time. PS I'm not big on onions so they are always halved in recipes and with mushrooms we usually sue all that we have!

Reply

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foodwineclick says:

[January 19, 2021 at 3:46 pm](#)

That's the nice thing about cooking, you can always add or subtract according to your own taste.

Reply

Nicole Ruiz Hudson says:

[January 17, 2021 at 1:28 pm](#)

That coq au vin look amazing and such a cozy scene with the wines and the fire! Great info on organic, biodynamic, and natural wines in BDX. I think I'll have to check out these books.

Reply

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foodwineclick says:

[January 19, 2021 at 3:46 pm](#)

Thanks Nicole!

Reply

theswirlingdervish says:

[January 17, 2021 at 1:49 pm](#)

I'm slowly dipping into the natural wine pool and like what I've found. Eager to try more bottles from Bordeaux, given the challenges faced by vigneron in this region. Great topic this month!

Reply

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foodwineclick says:

[January 19, 2021 at 3:48 pm](#)

Thanks Lauren. You might especially like Jane's book. It's not exclusively natural wines, but really top wines in the low intervention style around the world with more in depth interviews, too.

Reply

Lynn says:

[January 18, 2021 at 4:41 am](#)

The benefits of being cheap! I didn't know the history of the Amoreau family, thanks for the tidbits and a great article Jeff. Definitely double both!

We went to Raw Wine London in 2019, fantastic. If you get a chance, definitely go.