

WINE-TASTING ROOM

# 7 good causes, 15 top wines

by ray isle

**NEW GREEN WINERIES** Vineyards around the country have found a multitude of ways to go green—not just by switching to sustainable or organic grape-growing, but by taking advantage of every other green initiative around as well. This includes everything from familiar ideas, like solar power and recycling, to oddball (but effective) ones, like using recycled blue jeans as winery insulation.

**A PRACTICAL CHOICE** Aside from the philosophical reasons for going green, wineries can also save money—always a strong incentive. For instance, when Sonoma’s Rodney Strong installed more than 80,000 square feet of solar panels in 2003, the winery—which produces about 800,000 cases of wine per year—cut its electricity bill by more than 40 percent. To lower the cost of cooling and heating its winery buildings while it helps the environment, Napa’s Frog’s Leap reduces its reliance on fossil fuels with geothermal energy from “wells” dug 250 feet beneath the winery’s parking lot. Water circulates in a closed loop up and down through the wells, absorbing heat from the earth during the cold winter months and reversing the process during the hot days of summer.

**GREEN WINE FOR SALE** More and more wines that follow eco-friendly production practices—many of which are organically or biodynamically farmed, too—are appearing on wine-shop, and even supermarket, shelves. Expect to pay high prices for some of these bottles, though. This isn’t because these practices are necessarily more expensive, especially since in the long run they often save money. Rather, with a few notable exceptions (Fetzer, for instance), boutique, small-production wineries have been at the forefront of this trend. Here are 15 terrific “green” wines, along with descriptions of each winery’s strategy for helping the environment.



Oregon’s WillaKenzie preserves forestlands around its vineyards.

*the cause*

**GREEN BUILDINGS**

**Gargiulo Vineyards**

**Green Initiative:** Gargiulo Vineyards’ new tasting room in Napa Valley is made almost exclusively from recycled materials, such as roof beams from a decommissioned bridge, flooring from a high school gym, a reworked barrel as a chandelier and walls made from vineyard stones.

**Wine to Buy: 2004 Money Road Ranch Merlot (\$40)**

A richly textured red, Gargiulo’s ’04 Merlot has lush cocoa and black cherry notes.

**Stoller**

**Green Initiative:** This Oregon producer built the first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) gold-certified winery in the U.S.; it uses solar power, waste-water reclamation and energy-efficient heating and cooling.

**Wine to Buy: 2007 JV Estate Chardonnay (\$20)**

This unoaked Chardonnay from Stoller is clean, crisp and fresh.

*the cause*

**INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT**

**WillaKenzie Estate**

**Green Initiative:** This Oregon winery keeps pastures and forestlands around its vineyards untouched to provide homes for natural predators like hawks and owls, helping eliminate the need for chemical pest control.

**Wine to Buy: 2006**

**Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$25)**

WillaKenzie’s most affordable Pinot bottling reveals soft, ripe raspberry fruit and hints of anise and rosemary.

**Lolonis**

**Green Initiative:** Lolonis releases millions of ladybugs every June, July and August to control insect pests in their organically farmed vineyards—a practice they started more than 50 years ago.

**Wine to Buy: NV Lolonis Ladybug White Cuvée III (\$12)**

A blend of Colombard, Sémillon, Chenin Blanc and Chardonnay, this white has juicy pear-melon flavors.

## Paul Dolan

**Green Initiative:** Owl boxes in Dolan's vineyards help control voles and other rodent pests; manure from mobile chicken coops provides an alternative to chemical fertilizers.

**Wine to Buy: 2005 Deep Red (\$45)** A robust blend of Petite Sirah, Zinfandel, Syrah and Grenache, this coffee-scented red lives up to its name with flavors of black cherry and blueberry jam.

## the cause LAND PRESERVATION

### Frei Brothers

**Green Initiative:** People may not associate Gallo (which owns Frei Brothers) with eco-awareness, but since the late

1970s, the company has set aside an acre of untouched land for every acre of coastal California vineyard it has developed—making for an impressive total of more than 6,000 acres so far.

**Wine to Buy: 2005 Alexander Valley Cabernet (\$25)** Mostly sourced from Gallo's Barrelli Creek Vineyard, this juicy Cabernet shows cassis and peppercorn notes.

## the cause RECYCLING

### Fetzer Vineyards

**Green Initiative:** Fetzer has reduced the material it hauls to landfills by 95 percent since 1990, roughly the same amount of garbage that would've been produced by 17,000 homes. (The

company is the largest grower of organic grapes in California.)

**Wine to Buy: 2005 Shiraz (\$9)** Spicy and full of dark berry fruit, Fetzer's Shiraz isn't wildly complex, but it is tasty.

## the cause SALMON-SAFE

### Benton Lane

**Green Initiative:** Oregon's Benton Lane started working to control runoff and erosion from its hillside vineyards back in 1996. This helps keep nearby rivers clean so that salmon eggs can hatch.

**Wine to Buy: 2007 Pinot Gris (\$13)** Classic green apple and pear notes define this juicy, drinkable Pinot Gris.

### Novelty Hill

**Green Initiative:** Winemaker Mike Januik's 225-acre Stillwater Creek Vineyard was the first in Washington's Columbia Valley to achieve salmon-safe certification.

**Wine to Buy: 2005 Stillwater Creek Vineyard Merlot (\$28)** Plush tannins and ripe boysenberry fruit make this red a model of Washington state Merlot.

## the cause SOLAR POWER

### Honig

**Green Initiative:** Honig has 819 solar panels; its website offers an interactive display that shows exactly how much power the panels are producing at any given moment.

**Wine to Buy: 2007 Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc (\$16)** Honig's '07 bottling is melony and firm, with a bright, zesty finish that lasts.

## Rodney Strong

**Green Initiative:** In 2003, this Sonoma County producer installed roughly 80,000 square feet of solar panels on the roof of its barrel house, producing about the same amount of power that would be used by a town of 800 homes.

**Wine to Buy: 2005 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (\$40)**

Graceful black cherry fruit, velvety tannins and a long, rich finish make this red taste far more expensive than it is.

## the cause WILDLIFE PROTECTION

### Alma Rosa

**Green Initiative:** This Santa Rita Hills winery lets the Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group keep a hack box in its vineyards. After being rescued from bridges and skyscrapers, peregrine falcons are released from it into the wild.

**Wine to Buy: 2005 El Jabali Vineyard Chardonnay (\$30)**

This honeysuckle-scented Chardonnay is one of several good wines from Alma Rosa.

### Medlock Ames

**Green Initiative:** Rather than building fences, Sonoma's Medlock Ames created wildlife corridors to allow wild pigs, deer, bobcats and mountain lions to pass through its vineyards without damaging the vines or themselves.

**Wine to Buy: 2006 Chardonnay (\$30)**

Though full-bodied, this creamy Chardonnay is elegant and focused, with lemony flavors that end on a mineral note. ●

## star selections



**2007 Frog's Leap Sauvignon Blanc (\$18)**  
This longtime organic producer uses clean, renewable geothermal energy for heating and cooling its winery buildings. The 2007 Sauvignon Blanc is as crisp and juicy as ever.



**2006 Sokol Blosser Estate Pinot Gris (\$24)**  
Biodiesel-fueled tractors, LEED certification, solar power—Oregon's Sokol Blosser is at the forefront of eco-friendly U.S. wines. Plus, it makes this delicious, nectarine-scented Pinot Gris.