

Studies Shows Organic Wines Taste Better



A 2021 study led by UCLA shows that organic wines taste better. The study found that certified organic French wines rated higher by experts. This data adds to past studies that showed similar results. From the [UCLA press release](#) "[A new study](#) by Magali Delmas, an environmental economist at UCLA Anderson School of Management, and Olivier Gergaud, an economist at the Kedge Business School in Bordeaux, France, found that **organic wines are judged to be higher quality by experts** — but that the difference is not just a matter of whether the wines came from organic or conventionally grown grapes. That is, **the difference in quality is apparent for wines that certified organic by a third-party accreditation service, but not for those that are self-labeled by a French wine industry-backed group for using conscientious practices.**"

According to the authors in the abstract:

"Using the case of wine, we test the impact eco-labels have on experts' ratings of product quality. We use information about the quality of French wines from three major experts' guides, with information on third-party organic and biodynamic certified eco-labels, as well as self-declared eco-labels without third-party certification. **Our findings, based on 128,182 wines, suggest that the third-party certified organic and biodynamic labels lead to improved ratings (+6.2 and + 5.6 percentage points respectively) as compared to conventional wines.** These findings indicate that experts have a different appreciation of the quality of eco-certified wines than some consumers. **However, self-declared eco-labels that include non-certified sustainable practices, received similar ratings to conventional wines in the best-case scenario.** This indicates that non-certified sustainable practices can be associated with greenwashing and endanger the perceived value of eco-labels more generally.

UCLA goes on to say: "Three esteemed wine guides — Gault Millau, Gilbert Gaillard and Bettane Desseauve — scored the third-party-certified wines an average of 6.2% higher than those that were certified organic by an industry-backed group. The findings are based on ratings data for 128,182 French wines that were produced from 1995 to 2015.

Wines that were certified as biodynamic by the third-party association performed even better, scoring 11.8% higher. Biodynamic wines take organic farming a step further, using methods that time planting, trimming and harvests to coincide with seasonal and lunar cycles, and integrating animals for a more complete ecosystem.

"Organic and biodynamic wines showed much higher quality," Delmas said. "It's another example of sustainable goods providing additional benefits to consumers."

This new study is a follow up to a 2016 [published study published by UCLA](#) from the same authors which showed that *California* organic wines also scored higher overall when looking at wine reviews. In his article [Here's the Best Reason of All to Drink Organic Wine: It Tastes Better](#), *Washington Post* columnist Dave McIntyre says: "

"Organic wine is still stuck with the "hippie wine" image of grapes trodden with unsanitary feet and juice that goes funky in the bottle.

Maybe it's time to rethink that image. A new study out of UCLA [published in the Journal of Wine Economics](#) concludes that organic wines do taste better, as measured in the scores of leading wine critics. The authors — Magali Delmas, Olivier Gergaud and Jinghui Lim — analyzed the reviews and scores of more than **74,000 California wines** from the 1998 to 2009 vintages in three magazines: *Wine Advocate*, *Wine Spectator* and *Wine Enthusiast*. They found that "eco-certified" wines scored significantly higher than other wines and that reviews used more positive words about them."

Other Studies Show Organic Wines Taste Better

A 2017 study published in *Food & Nutrition Journal*, "[The Taste of Pesticides in Wine](#)," indicates that when compared with a conventional wine with detectable pesticides present, [organic wines](#) taste better. **Blind taste tests showed for the first time that humans can actually taste pesticides present in conventional wine, and that subjects preferred the organic versions sans chemicals.**

This French wine study conducted 195 blind tests carried out with 71 different people on different days. Organic wines were preferred an amazing **77% of the time.** "Although a description was not requested, they indicated a longer and deeper taste in the mouth, with less artificial aromas."



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Researchers Professor Gilles-Eric Seralini and chef Jérôme Douzelet gathered 16 pairs of organic and non-organic wines produced in seven French regions and one Italian region. The same varieties of grapes in each pair were grown on the same soils (in neighboring vineyards), in the same climate and in the same year.

The wines were assessed for over 250 pesticides. Out of the 16 organic wines, only one bottle was found to contain traces of pesticides (under 10ppb). **Up to 6 pesticides-mostly fungicides and one glyphosate-based herbicide were found in 86% the conventional wine samples.**

Seventy-one volunteer professionals accustomed to drinking wines were recruited for the experiment. They included renowned chefs, wine makers, advisors, and retailers. 195 blind tests were conducted with these professionals at different periods.

Pesticides alone or in mixtures were diluted in water at the same levels present in the wines and participants were asked to taste the different glasses of water. "At least one pesticide mixture was identified as such because it was judged to taste different from water in blind tests: this held true in 85% of cases in which answers were offered by the professionals."

Pesticide	Taste described
Boscalid	chlorine or burning
Cyprodinil	drying, astringency, bitterness
Dimethomorph	cardboard, rag, drying, biting
Fenhexamid	chemical sweet, artificial strawberry
Folpet	alcohol, medical drug, drying, bitterness
Glyphosate	strong dryness, acid, acrid, limestone
Iprodione	irritant, bleach, old burned plastic
Iprovalicarb	astringency, mouldy nut
POEA	drying and papilla blockade, acerbity
Pyrimethanil	soil, dust, detergent
Roundup	putrefied wood, drying, bitterness
All - synthesis	drying, papilla blockade

Table 2 from "The Taste of Pesticides in Wine"

Participants Who Detected Pesticides Determined Organic Wines Taste Better

Among the experts who detected pesticides, 57% identified the wine containing pesticides out of the pair of conventional and organic bottles. The professionals were asked to describe the taste of the pesticides that they were able to identify as being present. The taste of glyphosate, an endocrine-disrupting herbicide often used in vineyards, was described as "strong dryness, acid, acrid, limestone." The glyphosate-based formulation Roundup was described as tasting of "putrefied wood, drying, bitterness."

"Most of the 11 pesticides detected have been proposed or classified as endocrine or nervous disruptors, or even as carcinogens. The highly debated case of glyphosate has shed a new light on this molecule worldwide. Glyphosate-based herbicides are in fact the most-used pesticides of the world and are extensively used in vineyards. They were detected in the wines in this study and were found by the professionals to impart an unpleasant taste in liquids."

"Moreover, the pesticides detected were among the most frequently used ones at this period, but were still several thousand times above the admissible level in tap water (0.1 ppb)."

—Professor Gilles-Eric Seralini and chef Jérôme Douzelet

Researchers concluded that larger studies could and should be completed to assess the amount and types of pesticides and herbicides present in wine as well as other foods, and to determine additional sensory perception of the chemicals.

"A larger study could also be envisaged, not only to confirm the presence and distribution of pesticides in foods and beverages, but also to progress from this primary test of feeling to sensory tests on a wider range of pesticides and a larger number of volunteers. To our knowledge, this experiment is the first where humans can identify pesticides by taste. It is also the largest measurement of pesticides in non-organic and organic wines from the same locations, years, and varieties."

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