

# Forbes

MAY 31, 2018

FRENCH PRESIDENT  
**EMMANUEL  
MACRON**

"I WANT THIS COUNTRY  
OPEN TO DISRUPTION."

## LEADER OF THE **FREE MARKETS**

AS TRUMP TOUTS TARIFFS AND BRITAIN BLUNDERS TOWARD  
BREXIT, FRANCE (FINALLY) EMBRACES ENTREPRENEURSHIP.

**PLUS: THE MOST POWERFUL PEOPLE ON EARTH**

# Not All Wines Are Created Vegan- -And Why You Should Care

Is the wine in your glass vegan? How can fermented grape juice not be vegan, you ask. It turns out that the winemaking process, especially with modern technology, may involve certain animal products that you weren't aware of. I recently had the chance to meet Carissa Kranz, the Chief Compliance Counselor and Attorney at BevVeg! International, a company that's in the business of certifying vegan beverages that are truly vegan compliant. I asked her and her colleagues to share some insights on the current state of vegan wine, and how this might impact your wine choices. It's a fascinating subject, and I hope this knowledge and perspective will benefit both you vegans and non-vegans!

## **I. Introduction of vegan wines**

### **1. What makes a wine vegan (or not vegan) and why is this important?**

Vegan is not regulated by the USDA or FDA, and many interpret "vegan" differently. Most people think that, because wine is made from fermented grape juice, all wine is vegan. However, the winemaking process, specifically the fining process, often adds small amounts of substances that may be troubling to vegetarian and vegan consumers. Many of these ingredients are derived from animal bones, intestines, or other byproducts, making the wine unsuitable for vegans and vegetarians. For more details, see this piece.

Attorney Kranz says, "Vegan wine is wine certified to stand by the BevVeg! vegan guarantee." The BevVeg vegan guarantee stands by the following: *No animal ingredients or animal by-products in the processing, clarification, or filtration before bottling or packaging, and no animal testing. BevVeg ensures the product manufacturing, bottling, and packaging is not outsourced or sub-licensed to a facility that may compromise the vegan integrity or cause cross-contamination. If sugar is required, BevVeg requires proof that the manufacturer uses zero bone char.* If it's certified BevVeg!, then the consumer can be confident it's verified vegan and in alignment with our vegan guarantee.

### **2. Why might this be important for even the non-vegans (people who eat animal products) to consider?**

Consumers want transparency. We're a company managed by attorneys to keep the labeling process honest. People want to know what they are putting into their bodies. Wine is no exception. Consumers are label-conscious. There are no labeling requirements or regulations for alcohol. It is not regulated by the USDA or FDA.

BevVeg! Attorney Counselor Alyse Bentz says, "Even health-conscious meat eaters are constantly looking for sustainable humane farming alternatives. This is something everyone should care about, and the market shows buying habits are driven by labels."

According to a recent report by Mintel (a consumer trends research company), a growing number of consumers report “a general mistrust of food safety throughout manufacturing and supply chains, with only one in five Canadian adults saying that they trusted manufacturer labels on product packaging.” To address consumers’ growing concerns, more and more food and beverage manufacturers and distributors are looking to independent, third-party certification companies to help instill confidence in their products and practices.

### **3. What’s the percentage of wineries in the world are vegan, to your knowledge? Any estimates?**

At this time, it’s hard to provide specific estimates. Because the term “vegan” is not regulated, many wineries can claim that their product is vegan, and the consumer has no way of knowing whether or not this is true. Furthermore, the information posted on these sites is often outdated. The BevVeg! vegan certification label is the label the consumer can know and trust to be verified vegan.

BevVeg! is aware of sites that compile information supplied by the wineries themselves regarding whether or not their wines are suitable for vegans, but no site actually verifies this information. Unfortunately, relying on information from the wineries themselves can be problematic. A number of wineries who truly believed their products were vegan have submitted paperwork to us to become BevVeg! certified vegan, only to learn that their ingredients were derived from animals. In one case, BevVeg! determined that the yeast used by the winery contained dairy, and was therefore not eligible for vegan certification. Fortunately, these wineries have expressed a desire to alter their winemaking process to substitute the problematic ingredient for vegan alternatives in hopes of reapplying for future certification.

BevVeg! Attorney Kranz states, “We certify products, not wineries. In other words, because the winemaking process can vary from one year to the next, and even one product to the next, BevVeg! requires that wineries certify their products each year, independently, for review to avoid any potential contamination. Therefore, while a product may qualify as BevVeg! certified vegan one year, if the winemaking process changes, the wine may not qualify as BevVeg! certified vegan in subsequent years.”

## **II. Tasting vegan wines**

### **1. Does vegan wine taste differently? What kind of taste on the palate might indicate if a wine is vegan or not? Can a customer tell if it’s a vegan wine by simply tasting? If not, at least know what to look for in the taste?**

The taste of wine is a reflection of where its grapes were grown and the soil used. Depending on the winery, the winemaker may refrain from fining the wine in order to maintain the natural character of the wine region. To date, BevVeg! has not found any difference in the taste of vegan wines versus non-vegan wines. Many of our certified vegan wines have received accolades for their superior taste.

By way of example, BevVeg! certified wines from United Nations of Wine in South Africa, The Vice Wine from Napa, and Bellissima Prosecco by Christie Brinkley have received accolades for their superior taste. In particular, Bellissima Prosecco is one of the most searched for wines, and the Bellissima Prosecco D.O.C. Brut is among the top 3% of wines in the world according to Vivino.

Attorney Kranz says, “While there is no documented taste difference, I think there is a placebo effect. It just tastes better when you know the ingredients are pure, healthy, and vegan. I mean, who wants to drink trace amounts of fish bladder, animal intestines or bone char?”

## **2. Are there equal amount of reds, whites and roses that are vegan wines?**

As noted above, whether or not a wine is vegan is dependent upon the winemaking process. There is nothing specific to red wines, white wines, or rose wines that would preclude them from being vegan.

The same can be said for sweet versus dry wines. (Often times, winemakers will use sugar to create sweeter wines. Because some sugars are made using bone char, wines with added sugar must demonstrate that the sugar used is not made using bone char in order to be considered vegan.)

BevVeg Attorney Bentz says, “Usually vegans stand for justice and equality. That being said, all wines have the potential to be equally vegan. It’s a choice to be vegan and winemakers’ choice to add ingredients that may compromise vegan integrity. It does not matter if the wine is red, white, or rose--what matters is the ingredients used as an additive or processor of the wine, if any.”

## **III. The economics of vegan wines**

### **1. How long has vegan wine been in existence? What’s the history of this winemaking process?**

The fact that wine is not vegan, is an education process. News articles from the past decade have slowly revealed wine is made from more than just grapes and sulfites. However, vegan wine is likely as old as wine itself. (The earliest archaeological evidence of wine was estimated to date to 7,000 BCE). Absent written records, it’s hard to definitively state when vegan wine came into existence. However, most hypothesize that early wine was most likely vegan as it was created from fermented grape juice and was less processed.

Fining agents and other filtration methods represent a relatively recent innovation in the winemaking. As the craft grew, people began to develop means of clarifying the look and taste of wine through the use of fining agents, some of which are derived from animals or contain animal byproducts. The process of fining wine adds to the nuanced taste of the different wines.

BeVeg! Attorney Kranz states, “Fining is an age-old art, but the process of fining does not need to use animals to still be considered ‘fine’ wine. The process of winemaking has evolved over the years. For example, two ‘traditional’ fining agents that have largely fallen out of use are dried oxblood and blood albumen.<sup>[1]</sup> Today, more modern fining practices have evolved, and fining can be accomplished using vegan-friendly agents such as bentonite (an inert clay).”

## **2. What’s the mentality of the winemakers towards vegan winemaking? How many are willing or planning to adopt this method in the near future? And which regions are they from?**

Winemakers understand that demand for vegan and vegetarian products is growing and are constantly inquiring about BeVeg! certification requirements. BeVeg Attorney Kranz states, “During the application process, BeVeg! often hears feedback from winemakers that the number one consumer demand is whether or not their product is vegan.”

“In our experience, we’ve found that many wineries are willing to substitute problematic ingredients for vegan alternatives in order to qualify as BeVeg! Certified in future wine batches,” notes BeVeg! Attorney Kranz.<sup>[2]</sup>

As noted above, vegan fining agents are just as effective as their non-vegan counterparts, and they are comparably priced. What’s more, many winemakers are becoming cognizant of the growing demand for vegan and plant-based products.

Here are a few statistics we quoted on our website from various sources that demonstrate the growing demand for vegan and vegetarian products:

- Euromonitor International reports that “global market for ethically labelled packaged foods, soft drinks and hot drinks (excluding private label) accounted for US\$ 793.8 billion in 2015 and is set to reach US\$ 872.7 billion by 2020”
- According to Mintel Global New Products Database, there has been a 257% rise in vegan claims in global food and drink launches between September 2010-August 2011 and September 2015-August 2016.
- Research from Innova Market Insights found that, from 2015 to 2016, launches for new products with a “plant-based” claim increased dramatically in the United States. In 2015, 220 new products with a “plant-based” claim launched in the United States. In 2016, this number grew to 320.
- The top three fastest growing vegan markets between 2015 and 2020 are China, the United Arab Emirates, and Australia, with China leading the way at 17.2%, according to new research by Euromonitor International.
- There are nearly a half billion vegetarians worldwide—a growing trend.

Demand for vegan products is on the rise, and the demand for vegan wine is no exception. BevVeg! has certified wines globally from South Africa, to Australia, to the United States. Wine producers all over the world realize vegan demand is real and tangible. Therefore, they want to accommodate this consumer base because they want to have a successful business. Winemakers don't want to exclude a large consumer market.

**3. Does the vegan winemaking process cost more or less money than conventional process?**

We're not aware of any price differential in vegan versus non-vegan wine making practices.

**4. Does it take longer or shorter time to make the wine compared to conventional process?**

We're not aware of any time differential in vegan versus non-vegan wine making practices. Winemakers are artists. Their process is their process. The ingredient used should not affect the time spent on the process. The time spent is a reflection of the artistic process of creating that batch or bottle by that winemaker.

**5. Are any of the fine wines in Bordeaux and Burgundy vegan?**

Many claim to be and we're working on certifying some now.

**6. What's the price range for vegan wines generally?**

There is no set price range for vegan wines. There are many vegan wines that are quite reasonably priced. Below are a few listed BevVeg! certified wines, and they tend to range from \$10 to \$25 per bottle:

- United Nations of Wine – Frisky Zebras Seductive Shiraz
- United Nations of Wine – Frisky Zebras Sensuous Sauvignon Blanc
- Bellissima - Prosecco DOC Brut
- Bellissima - Zero Sugar Sparkling Wine
- Bellissima - Sparkling Rose Wine
- The Vice Wine - Pinot Noir Rose
- The Vice Wine - Sauvignon Blanc

**7. Does a vegan winemaking process affect the quality of a given vintage?**

Whether or not a wine is vegan has little impact on the quality of the wine. Many BevVeg! certified wines have won awards for their superior taste and quality.

## **8. Do the major wine publications/rating systems acknowledge vegan wine and how do vegan wines compare to the other wines, in terms of rating?**

Current publications / rating systems do not differentiate vegan wines in their ratings. A wine may be highly rated and vegan, but not identified as vegan because the rating is focused solely on taste. However, we're working to change this. We believe companies should be recognized for their conscious efforts. If a wine is vegan and deliciously fine wine, we want the vegan consumer to have this information easily accessible and ratable.

We have a searchable database on our website, as well as a free app, which consumers can use to quickly and confidently identify vegan wines. Eventually, we hope to have a consumer and industry rating system incorporated into the BevVeg! App. Kranz says to stay tuned for updates.

[1] It's worth noting that, in addition to not being vegan, these fining agents are of particular concern given the epidemic of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (aka, "mad cow disease"). Because of the way prion diseases, such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy, are transmitted, the European Economic Community banned the use of oxblood as a fining agent for wines in 1997. *See* Garr, Robin "Mad Cows and French Wines," *The 30 Second Wine Advisor* (23 August 1999).

[2] By way of example, we have encountered wineries looking to become certified who were shocked to discover that some of their ingredients contained animal byproducts. After educating the winemakers about the problematic ingredients, the winemakers pledged to begin using vegan alternatives in future batches and expressed their desire to re-apply for certification in the future.