

Sustainable Farming, Organic Grapes, & Handley Wines

*“It’s impossible to sense ‘terroir’ if you’re constantly changing the soil with chemicals.
Only when you remove those things can you truly hear the earth speak.”*

– French winegrower quoted in *Wine Country Living* magazine

Since she began planting her vineyard in 1986, Milla Handley has used organic farming methods and avoided chemicals whenever possible. Handley Cellars’ goal is to encourage healthy, living soils, which in turn produce vines that yield more flavorful fruit, while maintaining sensitivity and respect for the well-being of the land, the community, and the economy. We believe that the balanced methods used in organic farming help develop a wine’s expression of regional and varietal character. For these reasons, Milla chose to pursue organic certification for the Handley Cellars Estate Vineyard, a 3-year process which was completed in August of 2005.

Much of Mendocino County is already farmed sustainably, but some vineyards choose to go further, with organic certification by an independent agency. The California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF) is one such agency. It is reviewed and accredited by the National Organic Program, a division of the USDA. These agencies verify that products claiming to be “certified organic” have actually been grown and processed without the use of synthetic chemicals.

There are organic wines and there are those, such as Handley Cellars Estate wines, which are not organic, but are made from organically-grown grapes. The farming practices are the same, with the fruit being grown without synthetic herbicides, fertilizers, or pesticides. The main difference is in the production process, where many more limitations apply to certified organic wines. Each year, Handley Cellars purchases grapes from a variety of responsible local growers, only some

of whom are certified organic. Although some of our wines are made from organically-grown fruit, to avoid confusing our customers, we’ve chosen not to mention that on our label.

At Handley Cellars, we strive to be good stewards of the land, growing grapes organically in order to minimize chemical run-off into the nearby Navarro River and onto neighboring properties. We also work to make the best wines possible. Currently, we feel that organic winemaking methods cannot consistently ensure finished products that meet with our standards. We continue to make our Handley Estate wines with organically grown fruit because we believe they are best able to allow the character of this beautiful region to shine through in the finished product. Our goal is to create wines that reflect the area in which they are grown, with minimal impact on the valley which is our home and that of future generations.

HANDLEY CELLARS

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