



EXACTLY HOW MUCH SULFUR DIOXIDE IS IN A GLASS OF ORGANIC WINE??

Let's put things in perspective. The USDA measures Sulfur Dioxide (also known as the natural compound SO₂, derived from elemental sulfur, and generically called sulfites) in parts per million (ppm). Organic wine is allowed to have up to 100 ppm. How much is that really?

Sulfur dioxide occurs naturally, not just in the human body and many other daily chemical reactions all around us, but also in the fermentation of grapes. The chemical reaction to crushed grapes either inoculated with a foreign yeast, or the presence of local yeasts in the environment, cause the process of fermentation which creates many chemical reactions producing alcohol, histamines (the most common of allergens in wine), tannins (this may cause headaches), and sulfur dioxide.

The quantity of naturally occurring sulfur dioxide in wine tends to be higher in reds than whites, and when measured in ppm (parts per million), can be up to 20 ppm.

The USDA and TTB allow for up to 350 ppm of total sulfites in wine, some of which is naturally occurring, and most of which is added at different stages of the winemaking process. SO₂ is an antibacterial and preservative. Wines made with organic grapes, such as all the wines represented by Organic Vintners, are allowed to have a maximum of 100 ppm.

Let's take the Can Vendrell Cava as an example, which contains 80 ppm of sulfur dioxide.

1. 80 ppm of sulfur dioxide =
2. 80 milligrams per Liter =
3. 60 milligrams per 750 ml bottle =
4. 0.0021 ounces per bottle =
5. 0.00053 ounces per average wine glass (4 generous glasses per bottle)

To put things in further perspective; sundried tomatoes and apricots are sprayed with SO₂ as a preservative, and have been found to contain¹ 800 ppm of SO₂, which is eight times more than wine made with organic grapes, but safe for human consumption according to USDA regulations established in 1987.

¹ US FDA surveillance of imported foods, conventional sun dried tomatoes and dried apples were found with 7-8 times more sulfites than wines made with organic grapes, 800 ppm and 750 ppm, respectively. (see <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/fssulfite.html>).