



## We Only Sell Vegan Wines – No Animal Byproducts Used in Production

Natural Merchants imports [vegan wines](#) from throughout Europe and South America which are designated as [certified organic](#), or [made with organically grown grapes](#). We've created a new [Vegan Wines video](#) that captures the key points about what makes a vegan wine, but read on for all of the details!

## 100% of our Winery Partners Produce Vegan Wines

All of our winery partners are committed to using no animal byproducts in production, utilizing only Bentonite clay, a naturally occurring mineral, or vegetable protein as fining and clarifying agents. Some of our wineries utilize sterile filters (ceramic filters) or cross-flow filters as their only form of filtration and fining.

Wines that are aged for long periods of time naturally let suspended solids sink to the bottom of the tank or barrel. These wines are often bottled as unfiltered and unfining, but may still appear cloudy to the eye. Most wines have a shorter processing time that does not allow the natural fining process to take place. For those wines, fining agents are utilized to speed up the wine's natural clarification process.

**Fining agents are used to improve the clarity of a wine by removing the protein, yeast particles, cloudiness, off flavors and reduce the organic particles or sediment.** It's also used as a way to stabilize wine that have a shorter aging process. The fining agents added to wine attract unwanted particles, then become heavy and settle at the bottom as sediment. For many winemakers, it is the final step in giving the wine a beautiful, polished finish.



## Animal Byproducts Used in Non Vegan Wines

Isinglass being added to wine. Photo courtesy of [WikiMedia Commons](#)

**Fining agents are extracted from many sources and elements you may never think of as being added to wine.** There is no requirement for nutritional labels on the back of wine, or any alcohol product, making it impossible to know how the wine was processed and what ingredients may have been used in production.

*The Guardian* writer **Jon Henley** explains in his article *Natural Wines: No Lab-bred Yeast, Pig Pancreas or Cryo-Extraction*, that conventional wines can include a wide range of animal-based additives as well as other chemicals: "These range from eggs and milk through lab-bred yeasts, powdered tannins, phosphates and peroxides to animal derivatives such as casein."

Popular animal-derived fining and clarification agents used in the production of conventional wine include:

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- Casein (milk protein)-used in wine making to give white wines clarity and remove oxidative taint.
- Chitosan (also known as Chitan-fiber from crustacean shells)-has a positive ionic charge and is used to remove excess color and phenols from white wines.
- Egg whites (albumen)-still widely used in Bordeaux to remove harsh tannins.
- Gelatin (a protein derived from animal hides and bones) is used on both red and white wines to enhance color or effect mouth feel.
- Isinglass (derived from fish swim bladder membranes)-gives white wines brilliant clarity by removing solids and excess color.
- From the Winerist in their article about [Discovering Vegan Wine](#): "The problem is that these animal-based products are not used only to filter the wine and then thrown away, but small quantities might get absorbed into the wine as well, making wine unsuitable for vegans." In general, most who have chosen a vegan lifestyle prefer products, from food and drink to skin care, that are made without the use of animal products.

## Bentonite Clay as a Natural Fining Agent in Vegan Wines

**All Natural Merchants wineries use only bentonite, a natural earth clay or vegetable pea protein for fining and clarification.** Bentonite is a clay formed by the weathering of volcanic ash. Wine makers receive the clay in a powdered form, then re-hydrate it with water to form a slurry. The minerals within the clay become negatively charged ions that attract the positively charged natural partials present during wine production. When added to the wine in very small amounts, it binds to the natural proteins, acting like a magnet to capture the floating particles that cause cloudiness and sediment in wine. The wine is left to settle for several days until the particles sink to the bottom of the tank. The clear wine is then "racked-off," siphoned off the top.

## Selecting Vegan Wines for Diet and Health

Those who have chosen vegan lifestyles can feel comfortable in consuming our entire portfolio of wines. **A listing of our wines and other vegan-friendly wines can be found at [www.barnivore.com](http://www.barnivore.com).** Barnivore's founder Jason Doucette points out that it's not just those choosing a vegan lifestyle that want to know what's in their wine and other alcohol products. "We've also seen a lot more interest from people with allergies, who, while not necessarily vegan, seek out wines that are made without the use of egg, dairy, or fish." There are even gluten-containing fining agents including [hydrolyzed wheat gluten isolate](#), which our wineries also avoid, making **all of our wines also 100% gluten free.**

100% of our winery partners are committed to vegan production. Look for Vegan on the back label or a vegan certification seal.



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