



A Question of Respect: WINES & COMPANY

According to Melanie Nathou, founder of the Spain-based producer Wines & Company, the brand name Ecotreebu “puts together three different words. ‘Eco’ is *‘ecológico,’* which means ‘organic’ in Spanish; ‘tree’ is a symbol of life, respectful of nature; and ‘tribu’ is ‘tribe’ in Spanish. So it [alludes to] the tribe of the organic wine lovers.” With a moniker like that, to paraphrase the old Smucker’s ads, the wine has to be sustainable.

And so it is. It’s not just that Ecotreebu’s three EU-certified organic and vegan expressions—a Verdejo, a Tempranillo rosé, and a Syrah/Cabernet Sauvignon blend, all IGT Tierra de Castilla—appellated—are farmed without the use of manmade chemicals, including pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers, and free of GMOs. They’re also bottled in lightweight glass adorned with partly recycled—and fully recyclable—screw caps and labels as well as shipped in recycled cardboard cases that, Nathou

says, “are printed so they look really pretty. [As a result,] we can avoid one-use displays without reducing the [visual] impact on the consumer,” all while ensuring that every aspect of the product reflects Ecotreebu’s strategy of increasing its focus on sustainability.

But Ecotreebu isn’t the only brand in Wines & Company’s portfolio. So what about Toro Bravo, Spicy Wings, and UMUE? Though they’re not organic, Nathou assures, “all the brands share the same DNA . . . regarding the values that we have,” which means that the company’s sustainability efforts apply across the board. Besides the fact that they’re also vegan and packaged by the same methods as Ecotreebu, all are sourced from cooperatives that eschew pesticides, strictly control irrigation, and rely on solar energy; some work in gravity-fed facilities. Additionally, “there is this careful promoting of social welfare for all the families that are in the cooperatives,” she says,

noting that leadership helps negotiate contracts for everything from purchases of heavy machinery to bank interest loans so that members can benefit from improved rates, access, and other advantages. And then there’s the matter of transport: Wines &

Company insists on shipping [in] full trucks or containers, whether it’s ordering “large volumes of dry goods for its production” or sending bottles to market, “to reduce the impact of the carbon footprint.”

This latter practice is a perfect example of how sustainable initiatives can also be beneficial economically as they help cut costs. As she points out, “for a company to be sustainable, it . . . has to be alive. And to be alive, it has to be profitable. We are trying to make sure that we remain profitable—that we bring to the consumers a product that can please them now but also in the future. From the beginning, it’s [been] very important for us to focus on two values: One is respect and the other one is sustainability. They go together because . . . when you respect people and the land, you also respect the future, the next generation, [while] offer[ing] a brighter opportunity for your company to continue to exist.” In short, may the tribe thrive.

The vineyards of one of Wines & Company’s grower-partners, a cooperative in Spain’s Valencia province.

