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Wineries Give Back to Mother Nature on Earth Day

The wine industry pitches in to keep planet earth green

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Tomorrow is Earth Day, an international celebration of the environment which started in the United States on April 22, 1970. The celebration promotes green environmental practices, and this year's theme is "A Billion Acts of Green," intended to inspire 1 billion acts of environmental service. Many wineries are doing their part, and if you'd like to create your own Earth Day event or attend one near you, check out the official Earth Day Network website at www.earthday.org. Below are just a sampling of wineries giving back to Mother Nature this year. If you know of others, please post them in the comments section.

- The Sequoia Grove winery's Save a Tree Campaign is back in effect this year. Last night they provided the wine for a concert at New York's Webster Hall performed by the wine-loving pop group **Train**. The event was organized by the Origins Rocks Earth Month program and emcee'd by local DJ **Jeff Miles**. A cardboard version of a Sequoia tree was on hand, and guests were encouraged to sign their Sequoia Grove corks and attach them to the tree, and Sequoia Grove will plant a tree in the name of every signature in conjunction with the Global ReLeaf organization, which helps improve local environments by planting and caring for trees. Since 2009, the Origins reforestation program has planted more than 90,000 trees, and Sequoia Grove has even more planned for Arbor Day next week ...
- First a more lightweight bottle for bubbly. Then an effort to recycle 91 percent of winery wastewater. What's next for Champagne in its appellation-wide push to reduce its carbon emissions? Vine prunings. That's right—when you're properly managing a vineyard's vigor, all those cuttings pile up, totaling about 150,000 metric tons per year in Champagne. An audit showed that, while the energy-intensive production and shipping of bottles contributed 17 percent to the wine region's carbon footprint, the viticultural side of the puzzle accounted for about 15 percent. For generations, after winter pruning, European winegrowers commonly burned the shoots and canes in the fields, emitting smoke, without benefit. So the Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne (CIVC) trade organization initiated the BIOVIVE program to organize producers and growers to collect their wood waste and give it to the local utilities to use in their generators, which then helps power the Champagne bottling plant in place of oil and coal. The goal is to cut CO2 emissions by 10,000 metric tons, or the equivalent of taking 5,000 cars off the road.



Courtesy of Origins

The wine-loving members of pop sensation Train performed at an event where guests could sign their corks and have a tree planted in their name.

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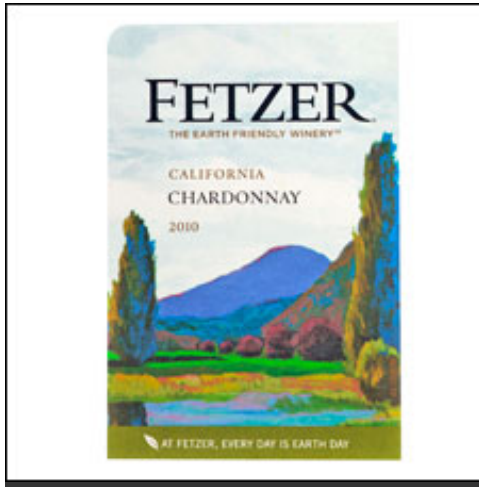
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- Of course, you'd expect Fetzer Vineyards, which bills itself as the "Earth Friendly Winery," to be commemorating Earth Day 2011. This year, the Mendocino County-based winery has released a special label for its 2010 California Chardonnay (\$9)—depicting a pastel mountain valley landscape by local artist Anne Kessler—on its now-standard 17 percent lighter, 35 percent recycled glass bottles. In addition, to mark 25 years since it first initiated sustainable winegrowing and business practices, Fetzer is making a \$10,000 matching grant donation to the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics, a nonprofit organization devoted to teaching people how to enjoy outdoor activities with minimal environmental impact. Visit facebook.com/Fetzer and, until June 1, the company will give \$1 for every person who joins the cause and \$1 for every \$1 donated. And if you're planning a camping trip or picnic this spring, don't even think about leaving that empty bottle of Fetzer behind.

- Using a percentage of proceeds from wine sales, the Hess Collection has rounded up \$10,000 grants for two local environmental groups, the Land Trust of Napa and the Napa County Student & Landowner Education and Watershed Stewardship program. Hess is an annual participant in 1% For The Planet, a coalition of companies that donate money from their sales to environmental programs. This year, Hess earmarked the money from sales of their Small Block Series wines, as well as Hess Select wines and Hess Collection Napa Valley Chardonnay.

- Since July 1, 2008, California producer Trinity Oaks has been planting a tree for every bottle of wine sold. As Earth Day approaches, the winery celebrates more than 4.75 million trees planted since the program's inception and doesn't seem to plan on stopping any time soon. "The program runs all year with absolutely no limit to the number of tree plantings we fund," said marketing director Tim Peters. The wines are available nationwide and for as little as 6 to 8 bucks you could manage a buzz and plant a tree! Groovy.

- Total Wine & More has teamed up with TerraCycle, the world's leader in the collection and reuse of nonrecyclable post-consumer waste. Partnering additionally with Nomacorc, the global leader in alternative wine closures, Total Wine & More will place collection bins in select stores where customers can drop off wine closures to be "upcycled" into eco-friendly cork boards, all produced via low-energy-consumption means by the TerraCycle Cork Brigade program. Beginning in California, Total Wine & More hopes to expand the program throughout many of its 73 wine superstores across 11 states.