



MONDAY, 2 MAY 2016

MOVIA WINES + RESTAURANT DE JONG + LUX =
MAGIC * NATURAL WINE



It started at 6 so we figured we'd probably be out early. And anyway, or so I thought, it was a wine *tasting* (small sips, spit spit) and it would all be natural (wine that has been farmed according to organic or biodynamic principles plus minimum intervention thereafter... including, according to some diehards, no sulphite at bottling; a practice that has the effect of stabilising the otherwise very much still alive wine by stunning microbial reproduction, fermentation and all-round interaction as well as sanitising bottling equipment: sulphite's antioxidant properties shield the wine from oxygen.) — so we'd be fine

— or at least, more fine than how we might feel after drinking, sorry *tasting*, the equivalent amount of conventional wine; wine that will almost *invariably* have had chemicals and sulphites added, noxious nasties that would have to be processed by our livers the next day as well as the alcohol. The lack of crap* in natural wine should make it, both theoretically and in many of my own experiences though certainly not all, less likely to leave you feeling bad the next day, precisely

because there's less crap to have to filter out. Obviously alcohol percentage, sugars, dehydration, levels of histamine (high in red wine), how much and how fast you drink are also influencing factors; and there are a lot of offhand soundbites being thrown around about the evils of sulphites as the major causer of hangovers, but for now, that's what they are: [unscientific soundbites](#).

And that's where we'll leave them. Hangover prevention is a bad reason to start drinking natural wine and if it's yours, please don't: it's already getting difficult this time of year to get a hold of certain bottles because there are so few made. Better reasons are (in no order): caring about the environment, supporting the farmers that care, additives in your food and if you think you'd be interested in trying something that's alive, tastes it, and is therefore unlike anything else, certainly anything we label 'wine'.

But the night itself?

Couldn't have been better. Literally couldn't. Well, I would've liked two helpings of the (outrageously good) second course. And while we're at it, I could've been on a Caribbean Island, trade winds whistling through the palm fronds as someone whispered in my ear that ocean levels would remain as they are but my pension would be quadrupling every two-seconds for the rest of my life. *That*, I suppose, would have made things better.

But people keep telling me to live in the now and the now, then, was Rotterdam and it was great. Specifically, the now of back then was the second dinner of a monthly series of collaborations between chefs Jim de Jong ([Restaurant De Jong](#)) and Milan Gataric ([Lux](#)) with special guest Aleš Kristancic-Movia and many (many) of his special natural wines.

Turns out Aleš is a riot. He's also the historically respectful but radically minded owner of [Movia Wines](#), a family estate straddling the (proverbial) fence between Italy and Slovenia that has been making wine since 1820 according to finely tuned biodynamic principles that respect the vine, root and its surrounding environment. Aleš is known (probably amongst many other things) for his daring in ageing wines. He has whites that he lets mature for more than two years in Slovenian oak casks, leaving them without stirring or filtering out any residue (which also gets bottled — we'll get to this), while certain reds can be left to rest in Movia's cellars for a period of three to seven years, with close observance to the atmospheric pressure incurred by the arrival of the new moon, before they come to market.

And this, my friends — and since you ask — is all without adding sulphite. Yes, Movia ages wine for a good many years without adding sulphite (the sediment, technical term is 'lees', helps stabilise the otherwise very much alive and kicking wine), blowing all arguments that this is necessary for wines to age cleanly out of the water.

But back to wine. We still had to *get* to the wine, past a good couple centimetres worth of sediment. This is because Movia ships its wines not disgorged, i.e., the wine is aged with the sediment, something Aleš believes gives the wine its soul; a noble thing and all well and good until you get to a bottle of something sparkling and you're next in line for a bit of un-asked for showmanship. (There seems to be a lot of showmanship required in disgorging wine — see photos below — and it must be a regular party down in the cellars where this normally takes place.)

Luckily for consumers of Movia's wine, it's easy to have your own cellar-master moment. All it requires is that you do the following (for sparkling wine): store the bottle upside down at all times. Shortly before you're ready to open it, place it (upside down) on ice to freeze sediment. Snap handy disgorging device onto the cork (skip this stage if you have no handy disgorging device which you won't — he designed it — but see photo for what you're missing) and fill a bucket of water. Submerge the neck of the bottle, pull down on handy device (if without device, twist open with hand), crack open the cork and release a shooting cloud of sediment just before you right-end the bottle. Sound like cellar-mastering is for you? First see how you fare once you're a few glasses further than you were that morning.

And thus progressed the night. Aleš disgorging wine to underwater explosions and applause or just good-old-fashion decanting it while not-so-old-fashioned back-lighting the bottle with an iPhone so as not to disturb the sediment (less applause but always an applaudable amount of sediment) until we made it through his repertoire... and then had to start drinking with dinner. Four courses of dinner (*fromage de tête* — gnocchi, crisped potato skins, potato jus and green peas — sepia-risotto with tulip petal garnish — rib eye with turnip and turnip creme — quince ice cream with butterscotch sauce and, if you hung around for enough after hours for Milan to make you a second

desert: something chocolatey that melted before you even looked at it) all paired with four more wines (plus those that went with the extra dessert but whose counting anymore anyway?)

Tonight is the third edition of the dinner series with Vleck Wijnen + the expertise of Figo van Onna. Photographs by [Sophia van den Hoek](#). Also published on [Unfolded](#).

**What do I mean by crap? Well, let's take just one additive common in all conventional wine, sulphites, and have a look: sulphite added to conventional wine need not be derived from elemental sources of sulphur but from by-products of the petrochemical industry, manufactured through the burning of fossil fuels and the smelting of mineral ores that contain sulphur to make E220, E221, E222, E223, E224 and E228. Now consider this the [tip of the iceberg](#).*







