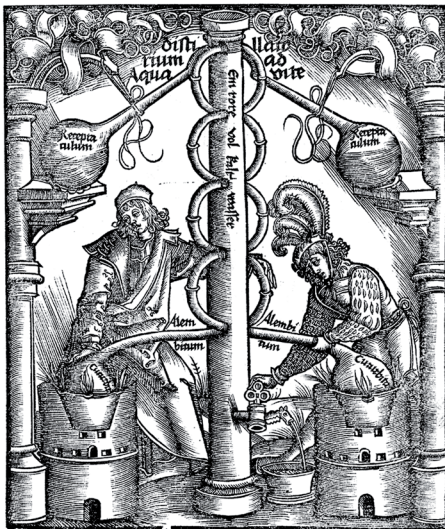


The NATURAL BOOZE Manifesto



- english version -

In light of a rising craft fashion and with the EU-organic label becoming more and more delusional, we, “natural distillers”, feel the need to explain what we do and what distinguishes us from those who work industrially or and many other “artisans”.

There’s a difference between craft and craft: working with your hands doesn’t mean you refrain from using industrially produced bases, resorting to the chemistry lab or buying your botanicals on the world market. And craft doesn’t imply organic.

People are confused, knowledge about distillation and distillates is rare and has been lost with the decline of rurality. Many new techniques have risen with the scientification and industrialisation of the production of distilled alcohol.

Time for us to do as our comrades in Natural Wine and nail down a Natural Booze definition.

OUR HERITAGE

Distilling is an old craft belonging to alchemy and to the farmers world: distilling meant transforming matter and creating medicine, and later on it also meant creating tasty drugs from your local fruit.

Thereby you could use your excess, have something to get warm on in cold and long winter nights and have a means of payment and exchange in the rural context. In any case, wherever there was farming, there was fermentation and once invented, the alembic was never far.

With alembics in every farmhouse or village, local traditions had evolved and recipes, working styles and methods had been born. This is the context of our craft. It has been willfully destroyed by legislation with great efficiency in many countries.

We believe that looking back and acknowledging our heritage while taking it to the 21st century, combining it with research findings and the piled up knowledge of all the people who distilled before us, we discover the wealth of a craft almost extinct.

THE FOUNDATIONS

Industrialisation has seen technical evolutions of distilling, but the basic concept: growing, fermenting, vapourising, has remained the same. It is with this awareness that we write. Therefore to us distilling implies taking responsibility for the land that grows the fruit. Industry and intensive agriculture have been destroying biodiversity, soils and water reserves. As distillers we cannot ignore the way our base has been grown and processed. We adhere to minimal pollution. This has implications.

Natural distilling means searching for the pure expression of

- the fruit, cereal, vegetable or plant,
- the land (terroir) and
- the personality of the distiller and his method.

Together they will always lead to a unique product, for no distiller, no alembic, no land, no year's seasons and no fruit/plant are the same. We reject the standardisation of flavour as proposed by industry. But we do insist on making high quality distillates. Alcohol can be harmful for your health, or it can be a cure. *Dosis venenum fecit*: it's the dose that makes the poison, Paracelsus said. Its consumption is hence a question of balance.

For a happy high that stimulates interesting conversations and leaves us with beautiful memories, we need good alcohol.

Natural Booze is by consequence defined by

- craft work
- untreated distillates
- respect for nature

WE THEREFORE ADHERE TO

12 AVOWALS:

- 1 - We distill in manually operated copper stills.
- 2 - We obtain our base from organic quality farming (with or without official label).
- 3 - We obtain our base locally and we know the social practices and working methods applied by the producer.
- 4 - We do not intervene in the mash: no sulfuric acidification, no peroxide, no lye, no external yeasts, no artificial enzymes, no taste enhancement. Only fermentation on indigenous or self-raised yeasts can ensure that it's the fruit that expresses itself and it's the yeasts and enzymes present in this part of the world that have assisted. Wine used as base is respectively Natural Wine. If you use different bases, add yours. (Cereal bases need to be discussed yet).

5 - We do not use additives to facilitate distillation such as anti-foaming agent.

6 - We do not use neural ethyl alcohol of 96%Vol, as it is an industrial product.

7 - We do not clear or filter (activated carbon, milk protein, bentonite, gelatin etc.): Natural Booze is living booze. To remove thick deposit we may use a particle filter. That's all.

8 - We do not use additives such as synthetic colourants, sugar, caramel, citric acid, glycerine etc (no elements modifying structure, colour, taste or look except if naturally obtained by maceration of a plant or barrel aging for example).

9 - We stock in wood, glass, stone or stainless steel, but not in plastic to avoid phtalate extraction.

10 - We pay attention to the quality of our diluting water.

11 - We are honest and transparent about our products.

12 - We engage in waste reduction, energy efficiency, water saving and good social relations.

The idea of this manifesto is to educate. We are not creating a label nor do we want to control or start a new bureaucracy. We want people to make their choice consciously, and we want to answer their questions truthfully. We're not looking for perfection, we search to share our methods, doubts and quests of improvement.

There is no control, only trust.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

1. There is a EU-spirits regulation (No 110/2008) that obliges Vodka, Gin, "Geist", Bitter and other spirits to be made from 96% ethyl, hence industrial, alcohol – that includes organic label spirits.

2. The same regulation allows adding sugar to round off the taste, caramel to adapt colour and other adulterations.

3. Many distillers believe in heavy interventions on their mash (sulfur, yeast, lye, peroxide, sugar, enzymes).

4. Some interventions involve animal products such as clearing with milk protein, fish-glue or gelatine.

5. Researchers at one of the most renowned institutes on wine, arboriculture and spirits, Changins in Switzerland, estimate that we know barely 10% of what happens in alcohol distillation. It's still largely a chemical mystery, and that's part of what we like about it – it's alchemy!

Signing distillers (chronological order):

- **L'Atelier du Bouilleur** (distillery), Autignac, France
- **Baptiste François / Distillerie Baptiste** (distillery), Valence, France
- **David Mimoun / Alcools Vivant** (producer), Chalais, France
- **Frederic Bourgoïn/Bourgoïn Cognac** (winemaker and distiller), Tarsac, France
- **Laurent Cazottes** (distiller), La Pangée, France
- **Yann Lioux / Jean Tonique LYBR** (producer), Montpellier, France
- **Coeur De Cuivre** (distillery), Vauvert, France
- **Distillerie Moby Dick** (distillery), Plogoff, France
- **Laurent Pernet /Ambix Distillation** (distillery) Vizille, France
- **Matthieu Frécon/ Edelweiss Distillerie** (distiller), Sarreyer, Switzerland
- **Elodie Juillet** (distiller of essential oils & spirits), St.Affrique, France
- **Etienne Thomasin** (brewer & distiller in course of incorporation), Voges, France
- **Christian Binner** (winemaker & distiller), Ammerschwihir, France
- **Manuel Engel, Engel Naturbrennerei** (distillery), Schönau, Germany
- **Pierre Rousse** (winemaker & producer), Limoux, France.
- **Vincent Marie/ Dom. No Control** (winemaker & distiller), Châtel Guyon, France
- **Theo Ligthart/ Freimeisterkollektiv** (producer), Berlin, Germany
- **Hervé Mercier-Metz/Le comptoir de l'alchimiste** (distillery), Mane, France
- **Ian McCarthy / Artemis botanical wines & distillates**, (winemaker & distiller) California, USA
- **Stéphane Casaubon & Joëlle Bolduc / Les Esprits tordus**, (micro-orchard & distillery), L'Assomption, Québec, Canada
- **La Piautre** (malthouse-brewery-distillery), La Menitre (Anjou), France
- **Laurent Fell /Mas de l'Escarida** (winemaker & distiller), Cubagnac (Sanilhac, Ardèche), France

List of signees updated October 2019

*for more signees & sympathisers or if you want to sign, too,
have a look at*

www.naturalbooze.eu

Cover image: anonymous illustration from *Liber de arte distillandi de compositis*, Hieronymus Brunschwig, Strasbourg, 1512. Bibliothèque Nationale de France. **Design:** Monsieur Zed
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