Norah Jones and “This Life” wine: a celebrity wine that (finally) doesn’t smell like marketing

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Norah Jones, ten-time Grammy winner, collaborated with French winery Maison Wessman to create This Life – a rosé and a crémant de Limoux. Unlike most celebrity wines, the project stands out for one reason: Jones never pretended to be an expert. Her honesty about wine, and her genuine involvement in the process, make this collaboration worth talking about.

When a collaboration between a celebrity and a winery is announced, the script is almost always the same: glossy photos in the vineyard and declarations of a “lifelong passion” for wine.

Generally, celebrities who dive into the world of wine have, in most cases, a background comparable to that of a personal trainer who qualified with a weekend course.

And, just as personal trainers charge steep fees – because, as everyone knows, qualified expertise comes at a price – celebrity wines also carry a price inflated by the name, for a wine that, at best, is mediocre.

However, listening to the Wine Enthusiast podcast episode with Norah Jones – a singer-songwriter who has won ten Grammy Awards, daughter of Ravi Shankar, one of the most recognizable voices of the last twenty years – we found that something doesn't add up. And thankfully so.

Jones collaborated with Maison Wessman, a French winery in Languedoc-Roussillon, to create a line called This Life, a rosé and a crémant de Limoux. The name was taken from a little-known song of hers, chosen not to evoke some grand winemaking heritage (which Jones openly admits she doesn't have), but simply because it "felt right."

But what truly struck us, listening to the conversation with journalist Matt Kettmann, was the almost disarming honesty with which Jones describes her relationship with wine. She doesn't understand grape varieties. She gets confused by regions. Terroir is not a concept she uses. Her only benchmark is one: whether she likes a wine or not.

"It's a map I can't quite follow," she says. "I only know what I like from a taste perspective. I don't pretend to know much about it, honestly."

In an industry where even those who know little tend to flaunt expertise, this statement is almost revolutionary. In an industry where those who know nothing go on to produce celebrity wines, this statement is also deeply significant.

There is also a passage in the podcast worth highlighting.

Kettmann asks Norah Jones whether there are bottles that have truly moved her, ones that gave her a “wow” moment. Jones mentions two.

The first: a slightly sparkling rosé drunk in Spain. She remembers it because it was good, because she sought it out every time she returned to Barcelona, because she always went back to the same restaurant to order it. She doesn’t remember the producer. She doesn’t remember the vintage. She remembers the place, the moment, the feeling.

The second: a bottle of Saint-Émilion received as a gift. Years later she tried to track down that label, without success. “Maybe it’s a broader area than I thought,” she explains.

What Jones describes is the way most people actually experience wine: through experience and sensation. Not as a catalogue of appellations and wineries, but as an archive of moments. Wine as an emotional map of places visited, people met, evenings worth remembering. Jones says it explicitly when talking about her tours: the best way to remember a place is through a meal, a local product, often wine itself.

Returning to the starting point, celebrity wines, it’s worth stressing that the issue isn’t celebrities collaborating with wineries. The issue is when the collaboration is a marketing superstructure built over an ordinary product, with a figure playing the role of enthusiast without truly being one.

What emerges from the Jones interview is something different and, in some ways, oxymoronic: a collaboration that is simultaneously deeper and, in the best sense of the word, more superficial.

Deeper, because it goes beyond a face and a name used as a marketing lever. Jones visited the vineyard, got to know Robert Wessman and his wife, took part in tastings, and made choices. She also said she didn’t want her face on the bottle.

So her name is there, but the product is not an action figure of herself in bottle form.

More superficial, in the positive sense of the term, because Jones brings no technical expertise but contributes taste, instinct, the perspective of someone who loves wine without being able to analyse it. And this, paradoxically, is more valuable than the enological vocabulary used in a sponsored post that probably nobody will understand.

Her approach to the collaboration is the same she uses with music: “I don’t care about the details. I care about how it makes me feel.”

At the end, when Kettmann asks whether she has a musical or food pairing to suggest for This Life, Jones has no ready answer. “It depends,” she says, “it’s subjective.” And this is the least commercial answer she could have given, and perhaps the most honest. Because it’s true that everything is subjective, that a wine can go with everything for one person and with nothing for another.

There is a consistency to all of this that celebrity wines built around a boardroom table rarely achieve.

We don’t know whether This Life is a great wine. The crémant de Limoux scored 91 points on Wine Enthusiast, which is a good sign. But what’s interesting isn’t the score: it’s the fact that behind it there is someone who never tried to seem like something they are not.

Key points

1. **Most celebrity wines rely on inflated names rather than genuine expertise** or product quality.
2. **Norah Jones openly admits she doesn’t understand grape**

varieties, regions, or terroir.

3. **Jones visited the winery, attended tastings, and chose not to put her face on the bottle**.
4. **Her approach reflects how most people actually experience wine**: through memory and emotion, not technical knowledge.
5. **The crémant de Limoux received 91 points from Wine Enthusiast**, supporting the product’s credibility.