



Guests at Belle Mont Farm stay in small white and blue clapperboard buildings on the edge of a tropical rainforest.

TRAVEL DRINKING & DINING

Belle Mont Farm's fine wines

Belle Mont Farm on St Kitts is upping the ante for West Indies getaways and that includes excellent natural wines sourced by Isabelle Légeron



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Don't hate me but I am writing this from paradise: a small white and blue clapperboard building on the edge of a tropical rainforest where the frogs sing at night and naughty little vervet monkeys scamper around on the roof. From the bed, with the terrace doors folded back, you can look out across banana trees, across the sea, to the silhouette of the volcanic island St Eustatius. Also, I drank good wine for dinner last night.

Yes, really. Good wine. In the Caribbean, where the wine experience is more often polarised into a choice between Concha y Toro Sunrise (or something like it) or a Sandy Lane-esque Knightsbridge-on-Sea style list with grandiose sections on bordeaux and an obligatory rioja which is all a bit, how can I put this, 1990s.



Only six of Belle Mont Farm's intended 84 guest houses are open yet

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Even more surprisingly (in more ways, you might argue, than one) this good wine was also a natural wine; the very last drink I'd expect to have made its way to the West Indies.

But then that's entirely in keeping with the ethos of the very fabulous [Belle Mont Farm](#) on Kittitian Hill, a place that sets new standards for relaxing West Indian getaways. It's all about sustainability; farm to fork; restorative time; integrating elements of West Indian culture, "not fly and flop," as founder Val Kempadoo puts it.

So it's entirely in keeping with the ethos of the place that I should arrive to find the very energetic Isabelle Légeron, Master of Wine and founder of [natural wine fair RAW](#), hard at work as Belle Mont's wine

consultant, training the local staff – for most of whom this wine business is completely alien – overseeing the wine list and working on a range of botanical macerations that she hopes to turn into drinks and cocktails that resonate with the flavours of the rainforest in which guests will stay.

She feels like the right person in the right place at the right time.

I'm not an uncritical fan of natural wine but I am a big believer in the idea that wine – and food – tastes a whole lot better when the context is right. A formal bordeaux of even the highest quality is the very last thing I'd want to drink on a humid evening in the West Indies. I mean, talk about wearing. The



Fresh produce at Belle Mont Farm

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more mellow textures and overlapping flavours of a natural wine are a much happier fit in this setting – provided of course that they are good natural wines. Happily, Légeron has chosen some good ones, including an orange wine from Gravner and a beautiful rosé made in Swartland in South Africa by Craig Hawkins.

Also, she's not being a natural wine militant about it.

"I'm aiming for a list that's about 50 per cent natural wines and 50 per cent not," she says, "Because I recognise that there will be people who want something else, perhaps more classical wines, but I do want every wine on the list to be a good one."

It's a lot of work because besides selecting the wines, she also has to get them here – she's currently importing them via the UK. "They come on a boat with the cheese. It takes a month to get here and there's only one boat a month so I have to be organised."

The list is a work in progress – Kittitian Hill is so new it's still in its soft opening stage, with only six of Belle Mont Farm's intended 84 individual (or couples) guest houses open and other elements of the high-end luxury offering still under construction.

And when I met up with her this week Légeron was still experimenting with a range of potions made from cinnamon bark, allspice, lime bay, lemongrass, sea grapes and dozens of other local plants, picked from Kittitian Hill's on-site nursery. She's been fermenting cane sugar syrup, macerating leaves and barks in white rum, and using Nevis honey to make mead.

Before long, guests will be able to order a drink that's not just made here but which also incorporates local flavours. I'll just have to come back to see how she's doing. Any excuse, quite frankly.

Read the Telegraph's complete [Belle Mont Farm hotel review](#)

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www.bellemontfarm.com

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/luxury/drinking_and_dining/60647/caribbean-resort-belle-mont-farms-fine-natural-wines.html