

BIODYNAMIC CHAMPAGNE, A CATEGORY OF ITS OWN?

Weinakademiker - WSET Diploma in Wines & Spirits

Unit 7 - Thesis

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Abstract

Motivation for choosing this topic

Drinking wine is exquisite. Meditating and discussing wine amounts to quality time. Studying wine enhances these experiences.

What starts with a little sip as a teenager becomes a passion, a part of your life. And as values and points of view evolve over the course of life, the same happens with the wine experience. It became inseparably entwined with my life and touches my deepest beliefs. I selected this topic from my view of life. I am sometimes asked what type of wine I would choose if I could drink only one sort for the rest of my days. Indisputably, I would choose champagne. It is the most lively, most energetic wine containing the most subtle aromas and refinement. A wine with history, present at historical moments that concern the world but also present at the highlights of people's personal lives.

But this beautiful world and therefore everyone's personal life is threatened. Power, money, selfishness and the pursuit of profit, destroy compassion, the sense of community and warm attention driven by love. It is my conviction that humans as a species have come to a point where they need to decide to live differently if we want to continue to exist. The change will be major if we want to regain above-mentioned values, without which we lose our humanity and reason for being. A large part of this choice will be a reversion back to respecting life, to instinctive agriculture and to connectedness. The power to change lies with biodynamics. The scientific basis is minimal, but the energetic sense of accuracy is great.

Playtime is over. We need to shift our focus at all levels. Also in the creation of the most beautiful drink in the world, by placing biodynamic Champagne in a category of its own.

Problems

Biodynamic Champagne does not exist as a separate category and is therefore not documented. Literature on Champagne mentions at best that the winegrower in question works biodynamically. The subject is narrowed down to believers and non-believers, with the first preaching to the choir and the last shrugging their shoulders. So the information must be obtained from the winemakers themselves. Hard-working people who live much closer to their vines than conventional-working winegrowers and thus do not have a lot of time to receive curious students. The choice was limited but I am grateful that I was able to interview seven fantastic people.

Another problem was the delimitation of the subject. Biodynamics is about personal instinctive feel without the possibility to fall back on described definitions. The answers to what is important, what is the right path are still in the future. Because this method of winemaking characterized by trial and error is evolving, the subjects covered are but a snapshot.

Objective

Defending my heart.

Methodology

According to Rudolf Steiner (lecture 3, 11 June 1924), the peasant who lives close to nature instinctively start to meditate and acquires a kind of spiritual knowledge. Although I studied hard and methodologically to obtain the diploma, I felt that I had to approach this subject with the same attitude as presented here by Steiner.

I distanced myself from the little that has been written on biodynamic Champagne and visited the vintners with hardly any preparation. The energy between the two of us would determine how the conversation would go and how long it would last. I mainly noticed what shook me or caused shivers. Then I went to the vineyards to feel the earth, the life in the earth and the plants. During tasting I focused mainly on the feeling that these Champagnes evoked. I wrote the thesis at full moon and let the content be determined by what spontaneously occurred to me, of course, justified by what the vintners had told me or what could be found in literature or on the internet.

Content

First, I put forward a definition of biodynamics and explain why my description may be criticized.

Because biodynamics is rooted in anthroposophy where a higher reality and a broad connectedness are central, I establish a link with agriculture, where food is produced without which human life is impossible.

Buddhist monks and science agree that everything is energy. But different energies collide, so I look at the relationship between biodynamic and conventional wine growers.

Next I describe the problems that biodynamic wine growers may encounter in the vineyard and the cellar and how to solve them. It is only a selection because there are as many approaches as there are winemakers.

I made it personal by adding my tasting experiences.

For the business part I listened to the producers' ideas about how their Champagne should be marketed and present my own idea.

Conclusion

There are pros and cons of biodynamic Champagne becoming a category of its own. What is important is that the discussion has been opened and is extended to all aspects of a future vision of humanity.