

Rémy Grenet, from Burgundy and Alexandre Cordier, from Dijon, both grew up close to the land and immersed in the culture and production of wine. The two attended sommelier school in Dijon, are members of the UDSF (*Union of Sommeliers of France*) and work together at a top hotel in Monaco.

Several years ago, Rémy had a series of health problems that led him to switch to an entirely organic diet - something he credits for the complete resolution of his symptoms. It was during this time that he learned about Biodynamic principles and the nourishing effects they have on the earth. He also discovered that biodynamic principles have the most noticeable effect on wine production. "It's pure taste - you're never disappointed with a biodynamic wine," he said with a twinkle in his eye.

Combining his expertise in wine with his new found passion for Biodynamics (BD), he sought high-quality BD wine producers across France. Before he knew it, his house was overflowing with cases to share with friends and colleagues. That's when he realised he was on to something.

Together with his friend and colleague, Alexandre, they started *Subtil*, an exclusively Biodynamic wine distributorship. It is a niche sector in the wine industry, currently representing only 5-10% of production in France, but it is rapidly growing.

Describing conventional wine as "dead", Rémy explains that BD wine is literally alive, filled with micro-organisms and enzymes from the fermentation process. "One drop of chemical pesticide can kill the entire vat of wine," he said. This 'living' wine is also not afraid of breathing oxygen - in fact, according to Rémy, BD wine doesn't oxidise like standard (or organic) wine does. Alex backs this up by saying that Nicola Joly, "the pope of biodynamic wine," opens his bottles 24 hours ahead.

"IT'S PURE TASTE - YOU'RE NEVER DISAPPOINTED WITH A BIODYNAMIC WINE"

Subtil

Your new source for biodynamic wine

By NICOLE RUSKELL

Two entrepreneurial sommeliers in Monaco have created a new business for a very niche wine market. Their company, *Subtil*, is committed not only to the distribution of Biodynamic wine, but also the education and awareness of Biodynamic principles.



Another aspect of this 'living' wine is that it "comes out like the culture and the personality of the winemaker," says Alex. He goes on to describe the interconnected biosphere that we are all a part of and the fallacy of previous generations taking and destroying our planet. The topic gets him riled up and he shows the goosebumps on his arms: "That's my emotion showing just by talking about it!"

Sitting with the pair at a cafe in Fontvieille, it is hard to tell who is more passionate about the subtle energies of the earth and how biodynamics respects it.

For this *biodynamic* duo, *Subtil* is more than just a distributor of BD wines. They see it as a chance to support biodynamic wine producers, teach people about the principles and how to appreciate the difference in the wine. "You're 100% with the terroir," says Alex. "There are no added sugars, no sulphites and no chemicals."

Subtil currently has a sizeable selection of French wines, limited to *Demeter* or *Biodyvin* certification, the only guarantee that no chemicals were used.

Subtil delivers free of charge across the Côte d'Azur (minimum 6 bottles) and leads private wine tastings at a client's home or for private events. They describe their website as a "point of discovery" to learn and taste the wines.

"Biodynamics is more important now than 100 years ago," says Rémy. Adding, with a slight sense of excitement, that it goes completely against the system to be biodynamic. He makes a good point - in a time of intensive, corporate-owned industrial agriculture, the most anti-establishment move is to respect the earth. Perhaps Rémy is right - could the most rebellious act of our digital age be to pick up the farmer's almanac?

These two charming young men who work in one of the most glamorous hotels in Monte-Carlo speak of the energies of the earth, the phases of the moon and how it affects the terroir. That our health has jeopardised and our soil has been killed by glyphosate - and how we must nourish and replenish.

If this is who you find when you scratch the gilded surface of the principality, there is hope for the future.

With 17-year-old Greta Thunberg on the cover of *Time Magazine* and young entrepreneurs investing in products that heal the earth, perhaps our planet has a fighting chance. ▀

SUBTIL

Biodynamic wine distributor

subtil@subtilwine.com

www.subtilwine.com

WHAT IS BIODYNAMIC FARMING?

Biodynamic principles take a holistic approach to farming, considering the entire environment as a connected loop. It also takes into account the nutrition of the plants, providing ways to nourish the soil with biodiverse companion planting, special compost treatments and animal waste fertilisers. Every part of the biome is important, from insects to predators; moonlight to rainfall and farmers to consumers. Sowing, planting, harvesting and pruning are all done according to times of the day, phases of the moon, or cycle of the plant. Observing plant respiration, harvest are made at times when the energy of the plant is concentrated in the roots, in the leaves, or in the fruit.

Scientist and philosopher, Rudolph Steiner is considered the founder of biodynamics. He first began to research holistic farming practices at the turn of the 20th century. In the 1920s he gave a series of lectures entitled: 'Spiritual foundations for the renewal of Agriculture', and together with a group of farmers known as the Experimental Circle of Anthroposophical Farmers, they founded a cooperative to test and experiment different techniques. If Steiner was looking for a way to renew agriculture back in the '20s, one could only imagine what he thinks of our current industrial agriculture practices!

By 1928, the *Demeter Association* was formed, acting as an educational and certification body for biodynamic agriculture. It quickly gained popularity across Europe and is still the main certifying body for biodynamic agriculture. There are different regulations set for different types of products, such as agriculture, aquaculture, viticulture and food production.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BIODYNAMIC AND ORGANIC?

This is perhaps the most common question. While they are both similar in the idea of natural, chemical-free growing techniques, they are two very different methods. Biodynamic principles go way beyond the foundations of organic - which only limits the use of chemicals - by respecting the entire biosphere and actively nourishing the plants. Therefore, anything Biodynamic is organic, but not everything organic is Biodynamic.

Organic wines have now become so common that shelves just about everywhere are lined with 'certified bio' choices. And as people become more and more aware of the typical chemical content in wine, organic and 'Natural wines' are continuing to gain in popularity. But despite the commercial success of these so-called chemical-free wines, neither has the history, the rigour nor the commitment to soil regeneration than Biodynamics.

Said to be the truest expression of terroir, Biodynamic wine has become increasingly popular in recent years and some of Europe's top wineries are making the switch to Biodynamic.

Going beyond the limitation of pesticide use, Biodynamic wineries work with the vines and the surrounding environment to make them the happiest, healthiest and most vibrant the vines can be. And on the processing side, a certified Biodynamic wine can only use naturally occurring yeasts found in the vineyard itself for fermentation. There are strict limits on additives like sugar and sulphites, neither of which are allowed. These two factors alone have created a devout following of people who suffer from headaches or flushing after drinking conventional wine.

But the biggest reason biodynamic wine is sweeping through the wine world is the taste. A recent French study showed that while consumers chose organic wine over conventional wine, the average consumer could not taste a clear difference between the two. This is where Biodynamic wine blows the competition away. Consistently winning awards and high points, Biodynamic wines have an undeniable taste that both conventional and organic wines can't produce. A deep, rich and earthy terroir is literally in the glass and people love it.

