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I scout the globe for the best experiences in food, wine and travel.

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## Why Biodynamic Wines Are Better For You: Six To Try Now

Some of the wine world's big names have been farming biodynamically for years: Domaine Romanée Conti, M. Chapoutier, and Boisset to name a few. Yet, one of my favorite biodynamic farmers is the humble Olivier Humbrecht of Alsace's Domaine Zind Humbrecht. His insights, as well as his command of the facts, make him a compelling minister of biodynamic wine farming.

[Read my first installment in this series about organic, biodynamic and sustainable wines here.](#)

At a recent tasting, Humbrecht is clad in wellingtons and a vest jacket streaked with bits of dried mud across the lapel. Indeed, his dirt-stained jacket is representative of his passionate, no nonsense agricultural genius. He talks about biodynamics with the informed, gutsy confidence of a man firmly convicted. "Conventional vines are brain dead and on life support. Biodynamic farming is so obvious to me; like cooking for your child, you do it for the health and well-being of the next generation, and in this case, for the vineyard."

As I scribble notes, his dog Scotty is underneath the table, resting his massive warm head on my knee. Scotty heaves a great canine sigh as if he's heard this sermon before. Humbrecht presses on about viticulture, the French economy and the dire straits of conventional wine making. His raw, unflinching honesty about why biodynamic farming matters for the future of winemaking everywhere, not just Alsace, is a bit alarming. He refers to anecdotal evidence of the higher cancer rates among conventional winemakers and, he adds,

“When you use chemicals they kill your terroir; they destroy all sense of place. They harden the soil and force vine roots to grow upward.”

### [Seven Luscious Biodynamic Wines To Try Now](#)

Biodynamics takes the process much deeper, involving practices that eschew man-made chemical inputs for natural ones and creating a single farm organism through elaborate efforts such as packing a cow horn (preferably a healthy, lactating cow) with cow manure and burying it in autumn. The horn is then harvested in the spring and mixed with water to make a special tea. This manure tea is sprayed on plants to encourage healthy soil composition and discourage unwanted pests.

Many winemakers skip the voodoo aspects of biodynamics (moon phases and vortex stirring) and focus on the herbal teas and other natural sprays –as well as planting vegetation that attracts the good insects. I’m simplifying the entire business, but in short, biodynamics requires constant attention and a perfect balance between animal, plant, soil and climate.

Humbrecht’s ardor for good manure, attentive pruning, and following nature’s cues, (he relies on natural wild yeasts to ferment, which can sometimes take more than a year to complete) used to make him something of a progressive in Alsace. Yet, his status as a progressive is changing. Humbrecht sees the interest from the new generation of winemakers increasing and now there are now more than 30 official biodynamic producers in Alsace.

Kevin Parker, owner of Chateau Maris in southern France’s Languedoc region, confirms the shift in thinking, noting, “ten years ago I couldn’t give away a bottle of biodynamic wine. Today our wine sales are at record highs; we get calls from buyers saying I need 10,000 cases of biodynamic wine. People are turned on to this. Wine is a purely discretionary item so why drink a bottle of chemicals?”

He is quick to note, “We don’t dance in vineyards at 2:30 in the morning under the moon and bury cow horns. But one thing there is no denying is that some of the best wines in the world are made biodynamically; it’s proving itself in many terroirs, across many grape varietals, and we have the high scores to prove it.”

Most of us just pop the cork and pour, not really considering how our wines were “raised.” But it’s a question worth asking. Below are six wines to start the conversation.

## **Biodynamic Wines to try Now:**

### **2011 Jeriko Estate Pinot Noir Reserve, Mendocino, CA.**

Cherry and peaty earth aromas on the nose with a silky feminine mouthfeel, fine tannins and a thread of violets. This was actually one of the few, if only, wines labeled with the word (and the Demeter logo), biodynamic. Look for that to change as more wineries leverage this distinction.

**Domaine Zind-Humbrecht Gewurztraminer Gueberschwihr, Alsace, FR.** Seductive aromatics of roses and spices are followed by lingering richness on the palate, precise bright acidity and elegant structure. Also try his Riesling, Pinot Gris.

**2011 Deloach Estate Vineyard Olivet Bench Russian River Valley, Pinot Noir.** Bing cherry, sweet spices of clove nutmeg in the background, dark earth. Tannins are soft and structure is good. Concentrated and pure.

**2008 Marco Abella Mas Mallola Priorat, Spain.** Grapes for this organic wine were cultivated at the highest altitude of the nine Priorat villages –yielding high acidity which lends a special vibrancy to the wine. A blend of grenache and carignan with smaller amounts of cabernet sauvignon and merlot, it has an inviting nose of raspberry and black cherry, followed by rustic dried herbs on the palate. Dusty tannins and great structure with complexity and a lingering finish.

**2011 Michel Chapoutier Sizeranne, Hermitage, FR.** Chapoutier is believed to possess the largest portfolio of organic and biodynamic wines in the world. The Sizeranne is an earthy, woody wine with warm spice and currant on the palate. Minerality, fine tannins and mouth-watering acidity give it a powerful elegance. This was one of the first wines to use braille on the label—Count Sizeranne is credited as the inventor of Braille.

**2011 Château Maris, Cru La Liviniere, Continuité de Nature, FR.** This 100% Carignan wine has sultry dark fruits (black currant), dried herbs precise tannins and a vibrant texture with a runway length finish. Starting with the 2014 vintage, all wines at Maris will be aged the winery's one-of-a-kind all-natural hemp cellar.

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