



BIODYNAMIC® AGRICULTURE • *WINE FAQ*

How do Biodynamic wines differ from conventional wines?

Biodynamic wines are intimately connected to the estate. The primary distinction between Biodynamic and conventionally grown wines is that Biodynamic grape growing develops the vineyard's greatest potential – allowing the vineyard to be the best it can be – and then captures that distinctiveness in the bottle. You will often hear Biodynamic winemakers say that their goal is to make the best wine by making the most authentic wine.

What makes a winery or vineyard Biodynamic?

In order for a winery or a vineyard to refer to itself as Biodynamic, it must have achieved certification through Demeter by adhering to the Demeter Farm Standard for a minimum of three years if conventionally farmed, or a minimum of one year if organically farmed. The entire farm, or vineyard, must be certified, not just a portion of land within the farm. Farms are inspected annually to ensure that the Standard is being met.

The Farm Standard reflects the Biodynamic principle of the farm as a living organism: self-contained, self-sustaining, following the cycles of nature. It is a regenerative organic farming system that focuses on soil health, the integration of plants and animals, and biodiversity. It demands close observation and participation of the farmer.

In practice, Biodynamic farming meets the organic standard including the prohibition of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and fungicides, but goes much further. The integration of animals and animal feeds, perennial plants, flowers and trees, water features, and composting is emphasized. Dependence on imported materials for fertility and pest control is reduced. Water conservation is considered. Farms are required to maintain at least 10% of total acreage as a biodiversity set-aside. Riparian zones, wetlands, grasslands, and forests: all are considered an integral part of the life of the farm. Specially prepared medicinal plants, minerals, and composted animal manures help increase the vitality of the grapes grown and further anchor each individual farm in time and place.

A healthier vineyard begins with healthier soil. Healthier soil results in expansive root systems, which essentially channel terroir into the grapes. This ensures a wine with an expressive and unique individuality: a “taste of place”.

If a winery is certified Biodynamic, does that mean that the wines produced are Biodynamic?

The crop that results from a certified farm is Biodynamic, so in the case of a certified winery or vineyard the grapes that are harvested are Biodynamic grapes. However in order for certified grapes to result in certified wine, the Demeter Wine Processing Standard must also be met. The intent of the Processing Standard is to minimize manipulation of the ingredients as much as possible to allow for the identity of the Biodynamic agricultural ingredients to come through.

The Wine Processing Standard has two labeling categories: "Biodynamic® Wine", the most rigorous category allowing the least manipulation, and "Made with Biodynamic® grapes". Both categories permit the use of sulfites (up to 100 ppm for dry wines and 150 ppm for dessert wines), approved yeast nutrients, Bentonite for protein stabilization, and Biodynamic or organic egg whites for tannin fining. Both prohibit the addition of outside aromatic yeast, malo-lactic bacteria, enzymes or tannins. The “Made with Biodynamic® grapes” category also permits limited sugar and acidity adjustments and

a possible variance allowing the addition of a neutral yeast strain in cases of a documented stuck fermentation.

Is there growing interest in Biodynamic certification amongst wineries?

Yes! Demeter is experiencing a groundswell of interest in the winery and grape growing community, and our winery membership has grown from 5 members to over 60 in the past four years. We are forecasting adding more than 20 new wine growers and wineries in 2010 alone.

Why is there so much interest in Biodynamic farming in the wine community?

If you asked our winery members why they decided to pursue certification, you would hear many different reasons. Randall Grahm of Bonny Doon and famed “terroir-ist” would probably speak to his interest in creating a more authentic wine. Mike Benziger and Jim Fetzer might mention their commitment to the environment and their genuine interest in creating a truly sustainable family business. The Frey family may suggest it was a natural progression in their 30-year commitment to organic farming. For Dr. Robert Gross of Cooper Mountain there is a strong connection between his training as a doctor and viticulture, leading him to apply the same homeopathic philosophy to his vineyard as he does to his patients. But the one reason we never hear is that people pursue Biodynamic agriculture for marketing reasons.

What impact will the growth of Biodynamic wineries have in the marketplace?

Until five years ago, much of the Demeter membership was comprised of small and medium-sized family farms, producing perishable products distributed regionally. With the advent of wine, many of which are sold nationally and even internationally, and because of the positive media attention wine enjoys, “Biodynamic” has hit the US marketplace with gusto. Unlike the organic movement in food, which drove interest in organic wine, we believe it is the Biodynamic movement in wine that will largely propel consumer interest in other Biodynamic products, for example food and cosmetics.

What difference does Biodynamic agriculture make to the environment?

Because Biodynamic agriculture treats the farm like a living organism, as self-contained and self-sustaining, it is both metaphorically and literally the paragon of sustainability. Healthy farms mean healthy people and a healthy planet. Even if one were not interested in the concept of “terroir”, everyone should be interested in the commitment these Biodynamic wineries have made to be better stewards of the piece of the planet on which their vineyards are located!

May a winery refer to its vineyard practices or wines as “Biodynamic” without being certified?

A winery may not refer to itself, its vineyard practices, or its wines as “Biodynamic” without being certified. Demeter, a non-profit established in the US in 1985, owns the certification mark BIODYNAMIC® to protect the Farm Standard and to ensure a marketplace definition for the benefit of consumers and trade. The term “Biodynamic” refers to an entire farming system. We have noted that some wineries will suggest they use “some Biodynamic practices” but, to use an old adage, that is a bit like being “a little pregnant”! In respect to those who go through the rigors of certification, and in order to guarantee a base market definition to the marketplace, Demeter continues to require the appropriate use of our trademarks by everyone.

Please refer to the Demeter Wine Member list for an up-to-date list of certified vineyards, wineries and wines. For more information, contact Demeter’s Marketing Director Elizabeth Candelario by calling 707.529.4412 or by email at: Elizabeth@demeter-usa.org