

Not long ago the idea of “better living through science” would have been thought axiomatic. Today, however, most of us are not so sure.

Ewald Tscheppe, oenologist and agronomist at his family farm “Werlitsch” in southern Styria, has spun his own enlightened axiom that is inspired by little more than humility and truth: “I cannot do anything better than nature does itself.”



Some natural wine makers eschew “dogmatic,” natural approaches to wine growing in favor of a looser, more “as needed” approach. “Lutte raisonnée” tactics are favored in culturing the wine and the strict path to earning and maintaining certification is not followed.

Ewald Tscheppe, however, embraces the challenge and has morphed biodynamism into a way of life summed up by his dictum: “So zu produzieren und leben, dass es den Menschen dienlich und zuträglich ist, dass es der Natur dienlich und zuträglich ist und dass es mir selbst dienlich und zuträglich ist. Nach diesen Gesichtspunkten ist es sehr einfach, nachhaltig zu arbeiten.”

“To produce and to live in a way that serves and benefits mankind, that serves and benefits nature, and serves and benefits myself--from this perspective, it is very easy to work sustainably.”

An uncompromising naturalist and certified biodynamic farmer and wine maker, Ewald follows with an almost gnostic confidence the agricultural principals of the European Demeter Biodynamic Association. His goal is to promote an integrated bio-system in the vineyard and cellar where the health of the soil, plants, and fruit are maximized and blights and ailments in the vineyard do not develop.

Quite apart from the “pharmaceutical” approach to farming where disease has been unknowingly encouraged by an environmental imbalance--mono cropping is the best example-- and then treated the ailment not the cause is treated with chemicals. Ewald allows the ecological fullness of the farm to act like a balance beam, and nature, without much intervention, gets on just fine. Vineyard and cellar afflictions are reduced by creating and sustaining a healthy eco-totality from within the farming system. A few practices and proscriptions are listed below.

Abatement and elimination of: genetically modified microorganisms (GMOs), ascorbic acid, sorbic acid, something called PVPP, diammonium phosphate, blood and gelatine, and isinglass
Hand harvested

No alteration (increase or decrease) in the concentration of the juice or must

Indigenous yeasts

Malolactic fermentation carried out with only indigenous bacteria
Minimal use of sulfur

Organic fining agents only, if applicable

Gravity feed propulsion, no centrifuges

Use of natural materials only during élevage: steel, wood and clay amphora. No silicone linings.

No pasteurization

Indigenous yeasts

Use of bodydynamic preparations in the vineyard such as compost, stinging-nettle, horsetail teas, soil-fermented chamomile, oak bark, dandelion, yarrow flower heads, and the spraying of ground quartz and rain water are used to control fungi.

TECHNICAL INFORMANTION

Name of producer: Tscheppe Ewald

Address of producer: Glanz 75, 8463 Leutschach / Austria

Name of wines: Morillon, Ex Vero Legoth, Ex vero I, Ex Vero II, Ex Vero III, Amphorenwein

Appellation: Styria

How long is the plot owned by the producer: Several Generations

Bottles produced: 4000

Grape varieties and name of clones if applicable: Estate grown Chardonnay, Sauvignon blanc, Muskateller, Pinot blanc, Müller-thurgau, Sämling, and Welschriesling.

Age of vines: 12 to 45 years.

Slope, exposure and altitude of plot: Steep slopes / South east to west on 360 to 420 meters altitude.

Number of vines per hectare/ yield per hectare: 3000 kg/hectare

Soil types: Sandy soil

Description of pruning, how often and when: Winter cut once in February. In summer, one time.

Average number of bunches per vine: Depends on the varieties and the age of the vines. Aprox. 7 – 10 bunches.

Green harvest: No

Remove of foliage to better ripen the grapes when needed: No

Organic, biodynamic: Certified biodynamic

Use of chemical treatment or fertilizer: No

Copper, sulfur or any other type: Copper and Sulfur yes. Sodium

SATYR PICKS



Kind of press: Pneumatic tank press

Submerge the cap and or pumping over how often: No

Fermentation how long/what temperature: As long as needed, with natural occurring temperature.

Yeast type, indigenous or selected: Natural ambient vineyard yeast

Size of barrel for fermentation, wood or steel: Wood barrels from 300lt - 3000lt

Malolactic fermentation total/partial, how long: Yes all the wines 100%

After fermentation in what size barrels: 300 – 3000lt barrels

Percentage old or new wood: Three year old barrel. No new wood

Time in barrel: 2 years

Name of agronomist and oenologist: Ewald Tscheppe



Morillon

Werlitsch's 100% Morillon, Styrian for Chardonnay, has the acidity of a brilliant Chablis but the floral bouquet of a top Condrieu, and, thankfully, without the oak encasement or lugubrious texture. In a way it's a chardonnay in its own class and of its own stripe.

The acidity is mouth watering and the wine invokes cold clear fresh water streams and shiny pebbles. The currant is fast and unrelenting. Words and their images like pristine, fresh, chiseled are apt. But there is more to the morning dew and fresh air. The fruit component delivers flavors of quince, green apple, honey suckle and mint. A unique expression of Chardonnay.

The wine from Werlitsch farm draws attention to the grapes ability to deliver acidity, fruit and texture far above and beyond its commercial deformations. This is even more impressive knowing it is from a land and climate far away from its most noble habitats. The Morillon's aesthetic is akin to a hunting dog's bark in the cold morning air.



EX VERO LEOTH

The silver surfer. The Ex Vero Legoth is a blend of Muskateller 20%, Pinot blanc 20%, Chardonnay 20%, Müllerthurgau 15%, Sämbling 15%, Welschriesling 10%.

Peach flesh and salt, or some unknown alloy or a soft steel. Kafir lime and kumquat zest, pot pouri, elder flower, green chatruse, fresh rain? A lighter, brighter, faster wine. Adults only

EX VERO II

If you called up the acid from the sauvignon and the gras of chardonnay you end up here. Great depth in the mid pallet. The hard edges found in the Legoth and Morillon have been rounded out. Not as linear but more dense with greater mass.