

The Franz Strohmeier Philosophy

The Strohmeier family cultivates Blauer Wildbacher in any variety provided by nature – Schilcher wine, red wine, sweet wine, sparkling wine, ... – based entirely upon what the weather brings each year.

Over three decades, during which the Strohmeiers have gained experience with the Blauer Wildbacher grape, they have always endeavoured to tend their vineyards as close to nature and environmentally consciously as possible. No herbicides and insecticides have ever been used. However, due to the highly moist and warm climate of West Styria, the use of synthetic fungicides had been regarded as unavoidable – the missing link to organic growing.

In Franz Strohmeier's words:

Let me give you an example as to why we have decided to follow the organic path: Fungi are very useful organisms in nature. By degrading organic substances, they recycle dead plant material into new nutrients for the growth of plants. Especially in the soil, fungi are extremely important for a sound food chain cycle.

I admit to having long overlooked that the cycle of nature links all plant parts – above or below ground – with themselves and with the environment. Consequently, an antifungal agent that is sprayed on a leaf, via the plant's root, will also combat the fungi encountered in the soil, where they have to fulfil vital functions. Such plant protection measurements will, therefore, decrease the vitality of the soil. The plant's susceptibility to diseases and pests will, on the other hand, increase because of the lacking availability of nutrients and vital elements.

All this will entail an increase in fungal infestation, and additional plant protection will be applied to alleviate the signs of such an infestation. An integrated approach will get to the bottom of the causes rather than treat symptoms.

To avoid any dependence on chemical treatments from the very beginning, tests were made in our new plantings from 2003 by spraying tea and flower extracts rather than synthetic fungicides. These tests turned out to be highly promising, thus paving the way for organic farming even in the existing plantings.

After having studied Rudolf Steiner's "Spiritual-Scientific Foundations for Success in Farming", I started working in tune with cosmic rhythms. Subsequent comparisons of the growing seasons 2003 to 2007 with all the experiences gained from earlier operations opened up completely new perspectives on how to successfully grow our cultural asset "wine".

Today, preparations made according to Steiner's indications have become an essential part of our integrated vineyard management. They stimulate life in soil and influence growth and ripening conditions. It is a homeopathic treatment of our vines to enhance their physiological ripeness year after year.

A new consciousness for so-called "pests" has emerged. These are, in fact, frequent indicators of imbalances in the vineyards, as already briefly outlined above by way of fungi. Thus, they are a help rather than a "pest". Many causes will become aware by persistent observations and exchanges of experience with like-minded vintners or

farmers. Wein & Sektmanufaktur Strohmeier's operations have been under the control of "Austria Bio Garantie" since 2006.

In the cellar, we practice "attended vinification":

The grapes are picked by hand. The juice or must starts fermenting automatically. A number of microorganisms will develop lively wines full of character. "To give them time" is an important factor. During vinification, the style of a wine is only determined by the coordination of maceration times, cask aging periods, and constant tastings to find out the optimum times for racking and bottling.

It is our long-term goal to keep agriculture sustainable and productive on its own.