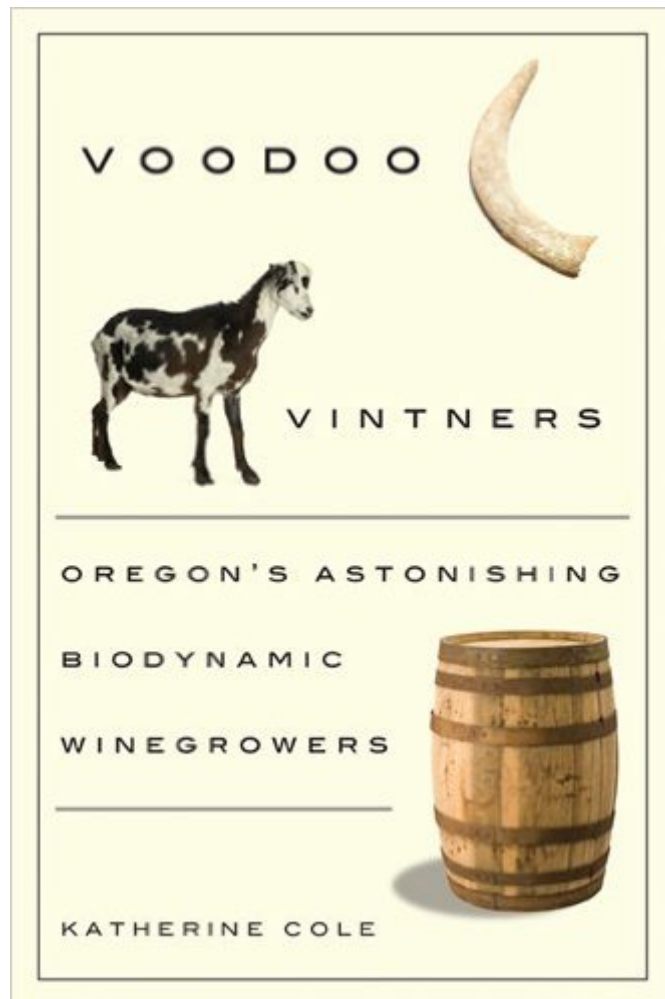


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Voodoo Vintners: Oregon's Astonishing Biodynamic Winegrowers



Synopsis

Could cow horns, vortexes, and the words of a prophet named Rudolf Steiner hold the key to producing the most alluring wines in the world--and to saving the planet? In *Voodoo Vintners* wine writer Katherine Cole reveals the mysteries of biodynamic winegrowing, tracing its practice from Paleolithic times to the finest domaines in Burgundy today. At the epicenter of the American biodynamic revolution are the Oregon winemakers who believe that this spiritual style of farming results in the truest translations of terroir and the purest pinot noirs possible. Cole introduces these "voodoo vintners," examining their motivations and rationalizations and explaining why the need to farm biodynamically courses through their blood. Her engaging narrative answers the call of oenophiles everywhere for more information about this "beyond organic" style of farming.

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Customer Reviews

If you've wondered exactly what biodynamic wine is, why winegrowers make it, and who they are, then this is the book for you. It presents the perfect mixture of explaining the concepts and practices of biodynamics, telling great stories about the individual wineries and winemakers, while maintaining a skeptical viewpoint that shows the odd parts of biodynamics without extolling it or condemning it. I'm a frequent visitor to Oregon wineries and have wondered exactly what "biodynamic" means. The book answers that in substantial detail -- not as a winegrowing manual, but from a readable, journalist's point of view: what is the difference from organic? what are the "preparations"? the role of the moon? the underlying beliefs? The author does a great job of presenting answers all around,

without being tedious or overwhelming. It's the perfect introduction to those topics for interested wine aficionados. The author is not trying to convince anyone that biodynamic is better -- in fact, she is clearly skeptical of some aspects of it, which I appreciate -- and is instead just trying to explain it and tell its story. One thing to note is that the book is *not* a guide to the wines themselves. It remains studiously neutral about the quality of the wines it discusses. In my opinion, some of the very best Oregon properties are biodynamic and make exquisite wine; yet there are also duds where I can only say things like "well, I like the idea." The author leaves aside such judgment. Instead, she tells the history of the biodynamic movement and its foundation in Rudolf Steiner's philosophy, skillfully woven with stories of individual wineries and the history of organic and biodynamic winegrowing. In short, if you want a wine guide, this is not it (try John Haeger's Pacific Pinot Noir).

I recently published *Creating World Class Red Wine* on . It could be described as kind of a top-down study of how the finest wines in the world are actually made--Hands on winemaking. Here author Katherine Cole approaches the dodgy subject of biodynamism from a reporter's perspective, by interviewing Oregon viticulturists and winemakers engaged in the practice, and offering her opinions. Her style is fun, young and whimsical. The book is written in a slightly more informal style than her professional wine reviews. The incomplete sentences threw me off at first, but then I just got used to them. Katherine is not a winegrower or winemaker, but she lives, breaths and works in the midst of it all in Oregon. The influences of both Burgundy and California are outlined as well. The differences between organic viticulture, vinification and biodynamic winegrowing and winemaking are covered quite well. She illustrates how there is no absolute established dogma for any of the disciplines, except perhaps biodynamic Demeter certification. Demeter is quirky, particularly the winemaking rules. "Though shalt not" • almost everything. For example: A Demeter certified winemaker is not allowed to use a commercial yeast "well--unless you end up with a stuck fermentation" then it's okay. That's funny. Then why have the rule in the first place? Personally, I feel aligned with the biodynamic viticultural ideas, but there is no way I could tolerate some organization of British non-winemakers breathing down my neck telling me what I shall do (and tithing them to do it). Yes, it is almost like a religious organization. Winemaking and winegrowing techniques are evolving constantly, and should be encouraged to do so. We are learning more every day. I prefer to say "no" • to limitations.

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