

Home › Lifestyle › Food & Drink › **Wine**

WINE

Why more and more winegrowers rely on concrete eggs and amphorae

Opposites attract, and the babies from such connections become much more beautiful? Yes, it's about wine. It is wine that hatches from concrete eggs and amphorae

Nina Wessely June 8, 2019, 11:00 am 152 posts

The Domaine Dujac in Burgundy is usually quite contemplative. The vintner family was one of the first to focus on the biodynamic production of wine. Strengthen the vine, let the grapes become wine as they shape the region, the climate in which they grow and the people around them. With calm, patience and knowledge of the cycles of nature. That is one of the goals in the vinophile bio-dynasty.

Only today, on this November day in 2007, is it around the Dujac court. The concrete egg is coming. It's like a rocket lands in the winery. Rarely do people run around in the winery so upset. How to bring the eggs to the cellar without breaking and as quickly as possible? An egg made of concrete, of course, two meters high and weighing several hundred kilograms. Markus Altenburger was one of the people who happened to be on that day in 2007 because of a wine trip. He is a winemaker in Jois, Burgenland.

I want that, too

After this experience and the subsequent concrete egg tasting research in various wineries, the Joiser winemaker was certain: "I want something like that too." And that's how he still does it today, twelve years later. With Markus Altenburger, the white Neuburger grape comes into the egg. It stays there for seven months. This is followed by the egg separation: part becomes Markus Altenburger's sparkling wine, in the still wine version the wine bears the name "Neuburger emphasizes".

And even though the current hype has reached France, from South America to Austria, the concrete hype, concrete in wine in the Republic is old hat. After all, it was easier for the winemaker to wall concrete cisterns for vinification than to build barrels. And steel tanks were not yet on the schedule at the time of the concrete tanks that we had created ourselves.



Markus Altenburger "emphasizes" his Neuburger in the egg.

Photo: Markus Altenburger

This tradition is still held in Bordeaux and parts of Italy. Few people know that some of the best-known Bordeaux wineries, Cheval Blanc or Château Petrus, still ferment in concrete. Among many others. Today, of course, no longer in the self-bricked version, but in concrete as a high-tech version.

Because, contrary to the first reaction of most, wine and concrete are opposites, but those that add up to a round whole. At least that's what they say in Bordeaux and Co. These statements are supported by wines that can be had for several hundred euros and have famous names like Cheval Blanc or Château Petrus. More and more Austrian winegrowers can only agree with their own experience-filled bottles.

Current concrete history

Today, winegrowers rely on concrete because they do something good for the wine and want to give it more space to show their origin. This is exactly what amphorae are aiming for, the next trend in the scene that couldn't be older. After all, wine was developed in amphorae in its country of origin, Georgia, thousands of years ago.

In terms of price, this type of expansion, both with concrete and with the amphora, is in the upper segment. Already from the amounts that such a steel tank holds in contrast to the amphora. Not to mention the greater effort that concrete egg and amphora mean in daily work.

The winegrowers are interested in enriching the wine world and, above all, their wines with another facet. They should become even more expressive. The key factor is the air a wine needs to breathe and mature. Because while steel tanks are hermetically sealed systems, amphorae and concrete eggs definitely let air through. Whether more or less than wood, depends on the respective wood, the amphora or the concrete container.

Traces in the wine

What is certain is that there are differences. After all, the raw material wood also leaves its mark on the wine, depending on how old or badly burned the barrel is. But this story is on a different page. Concrete and ceramics also leave their mark on the wine, only on a very subtle and still less well-known level.

In addition, the shape alone, in particular that of the concrete ice, should lead to more rounded results. If you put the test to the test with Markus Altenburger's sparkling wine from the egg and the "Neuburger emphasizes", one thing is certain: Yes, that's a well-rounded affair.

The sparkling wine from Altenburger, which carries out the second fermentation (like champagne does in the bottle), convinces with a lively mousseux, the velvety on the palate - which is probably due to the storage on the yeast and the advantageous shape of the ice cream ? - makes the wine special. Subtle and yet sustainable. "Neuburger emphasizes", it also holds. If you take the time to taste exactly, you will recognize the finesse of the wine.

"In your face" is nothing. Neuburger, a fairly neutral grape variety, shows no makeup. The concrete leaves her the space to develop and show the fine, herbal nuances with a hint of citrus. This is a clarity in the wine that leaves an impression. In a very calm way, but in a way that stays in mind.

Orange resonates

And even if the term "Orange Wine" had never been used correctly in this context; If you put the keywords "concrete", "amphora" and maybe even "natural wine" in your mouth, you will inevitably get an "orange wine" thrown back relatively soon. The latter is usually a "natural wine", which is expanded in a special way.

Orange Wine is white wine that is fermented on the mash (i.e. the mix of grapes, stalks and co). He often comes to the amphora, but not always. And an amphora wine is not always an orange wine. Just like the wine "Weißburgunder Erde Luft Gras und Reben" from the Edelgraben site by Claus Preisinger from Gols. An amphora wine without any orange.

Preisinger: "For me, the wines are made even more honest by the amphorae. I want to show their origin." The amphora helps him. The higher the temperature at which they were fired, the smaller the pores in the ceramic and the less air will let it through. And yet it is still more than a steel tank. He also finds amphorae more suitable for his business than steel tanks. From the feel to the shape to the end result: the wine.



Claus Preisinger finds amphorae good for his wines in every respect.

Photo: Claus Preisinger

Der "Weißburgunder Erde Luft Gras und Reben" sowie der "Blaufränkisch Erde Luft Gras und Reben" stellen das in der Verkostung unter Beweis. Pure Eleganz. Klare Ansagen. Blaufränkisch wie Weißburgunder sind feingliedrige Zeugen ihrer Herkunft, die in Weiß mit Rauchigkeit und Kräuterwürze bestechen. Der Blaufränkisch punktet mit dunkler Frucht, Lakritze und belebenden Kräuteraromen.

Genauso wie man es nicht ganz greifen kann, was einen Wein mit Seele von einem durchaus perfekt gemachten unterscheidet, der aber keine Persönlichkeit hat, verhält es sich mit Amphoren und Beton. Man kann nicht genau feststellen, was sie beitragen, und dennoch sind sie eine Facette im Wein, auf die immer mehr nicht mehr verzichten wollen.

So sind auch die Winzer Gernot und Heike Heinrich auf den Geschmack der Amphore gekommen. Und zwar von im Jahr 2017 zwei Stück auf heute 140. "Mein Mann kann nicht klein", lächelt Heike Heinrich. Das hat Gernot Heinrich schon oft unter Beweis gestellt. Immer in Hinblick auf Qualität und Authentizität.

Denn es ist schon eine Hausnummer, einen Betrieb von 100 Hektar auf biodynamische Bewirtschaftung umzustellen und somit auch die Art, Wein zu sehen und entstehen zu lassen, komplett umzukrempeln. "Ich bin sehr zufrieden mit unserer Arbeit. Die Amphoren komplettieren unsere Art, Wein zu machen", sagt Gernot Heinrich. Das heißt nun ja auch nicht, dass in genannten Weingütern kein einziges Holzfass mehr zu finden ist.

The amphora adds just one more facet, a bit more complexity to the colorful world of wine. In the tasting, the comparison of the two barrel samples is particularly exciting (*note: wines that are still in the maturing stadium and thus in barrels or amphora*). They come from the same location as Claus Preisinger's wines, namely the "Edelgraben" location.



Heike and Gernot Heinrich have expanded two amphorae from 2017 to 140 today.

Photo: Gernot and Heike Heinrich

Both were pressed in the same year, namely 2018. Only one part went into the barrel and the other into the amphora. Both are great wines that impress with their complexity. Of course, they are still too young to be drunk now. You are not finished yet. And yet the first noble trench from the barrel scores just like the full-bodied wines with a little more body and well-known, warmer aromas of leather and dark berries than the wine from the amphora.

This, in turn, is tighter in structure and a little more fruity with a salty finish at the back. Both are images of their origins that taste really good.

Wine can also be an island

"Motor Callet" from the "4Kilos" winery shows what an amphora wine from Mallorca tastes like. The special feature here: the wine is fermented in open amphorae. The mash itself forms the lid and thus the protection against too much oxygen. As a wine, a cheerful greeting from delicate fruit, chiseling acidity and lightness.

"Motor Callet" also brings a lot of facets into play, which shimmer in a different form with each sip. "One of the strongest wines in the flight," says the winemaker in the tasting round, which came together to test the concrete and amphora in the wine. He has about 90 Spanish Tinajas at home. Tinaja is the Spanish version of the amphora.

At home, that's Mezzolombardo in Trentino, Italy. The winemaker Emilio Foradori is the son of the winemaker Elisabetta Foradori and makes wine. For some years now, mostly in Tinajas, even if a drop or two is still put in the barrel after a while in the amphora. "The end result of wine is crucial", all winemakers agree.

It would be a shame to reduce the wine to its type of expansion in the amphora or in concrete. The expansion is an important component, yes. With the emphasis on "one". The wine Emilio

Foradoris, the "Teroldego Morei", convinces with lively fruit, firm structure and radiance, which cannot match the words that make great wines the same.

Other times, other customs

Franz Weninger is a winemaker who brought the concrete back to his winery after a generation break. "When I was a child there was a huge concrete cistern here," says Franz Weninger, pointing to the area where the large wooden barrels are today. "My father removed my grandfather's cistern." A few months ago, three concrete fermentation stands from Italy arrived at the Weninger winery in Horitschon in Burgenland. They are still in front of the courtyard. The structural engineer is not yet asleep thinking about moving these giant concrete tanks to the upper level of the building.



Franz Weninger relies on egg, ceramics and concrete.

Photo: Katharina Gossow

Sooner or later the three cubic concrete giants will join concrete and amphorae in the Weninger wine house. The Zweigelt is currently stored in the concrete egg. The "Blaufränkisch Balf" from the Hungarian part of the winery is tasted. It is fermented in concrete and has had its finish in wood.

A bright guy who is multi-faceted but approachable and convinces the group. The "Green Veltliner Kafka 2014" is fermented in the amphora. This is a bundle of energy filled into the bottle that invigorates. The wine shows itself in a thousand facets: from salty to flint and grassy herbal wort that prances over the tongue. The label says: "Live until you kiss hard and are tired of drinking."

A saying that the wine makers of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing borrowed. And a state that is far from being reached. Especially not when the winegrowers keep conjuring up new contradictory babies from their potion containers. (Nina Wessely, RONDO, June 9, 2019)

Read more:

[Wanted worldwide: wine barrels from Lower Austria](http://www.derstandard.at/story/2000103127956/weltweit-heiss-begehrt-weinfaesser-aus-niederoesterreich)

[<http://www.derstandard.at/story/2000103127956/weltweit-heiss-begehrt-weinfaesser-aus-niederoesterreich>]

[You can read about where to eat well or which places are better avoided in Corti's restaurant review](http://www.derstandard.at/lifestyle/essentrinken/cortis-restaurantkritik) [<http://www.derstandard.at/lifestyle/essentrinken/cortis-restaurantkritik>]

© STANDARD Verlagsgesellschaft m.b.H. 2020

All rights reserved. Use exclusively for private personal use.
Further use and reproduction beyond personal use is not permitted.

rid: 0HLU1Q5KN2SHS: 00000001 | rts: 1584264030334 | mc: ea7925493d8a | ed: At | ap: | br: na | hs: na | gd: na | np: at / lifestyle / essentrinken / wein | ci: 086d5013-02c1- 557c-95b6-05aee66fc8ca