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Blinded by the Vine—Eugene Meyer at Appellations

Appellation wine and spirits — an unconventional wine shop. By unconventional we mean that we focus on producers who depart from convention and make organic, biodynamic, or natural wines.

People like to throw around the term “rock star” when talking about their favorite winegrowers. It’s something that comes up especially in the natural wine community where many growers are iconoclastic trailblazers, the kind of people easier to imagine tattooed and in fashionable jeans than in a well-cut suit or a farmer’s boots. But that’s far from the reality of those growing natural, organic, or biodynamic wines. What you find more often are humble people like Eugène Meyer in Alsace, whose conversion to biodynamics far predated the current boom and was born out of an intensely personal experience rather than ideological grounds.

The Meyer estate has been growing grapes in Alsace since 1620. The conversion of their vineyards to biodynamic farming happened in 1969 after Eugène was afflicted with a sudden paralysis of his optic nerve. He sought treatment after treatment, with nothing working until he had entirely cut chemicals and industrial products from his home and vines. Soon he began to recover. With the belief that his consistent use of chemicals in his vineyards could lead to a life of blindness, Eugène decided to take his land a significant step further: removing all unnatural influences and allowing life to correct itself and return to its own path. The resulting wines speak for themselves, if subtly, quietly.

Still, Eugène has never become one of the rock stars. Despite being one of the old guard he has never been much of a self-promoter. No cult of personality has formed around him like Nicolas Joly or Marcel Lapiere. But his estate will continue to appear on every list of the great natural producers worldwide and his wines will continue to be beloved by all who try them. His 2011 Pinot Blanc is wonderfully representative of the wine he makes with his family: light-bodied and lower alcohol, with bright green apple aromas. The flavors are bright, with a backbone of crisp acidity, but the wine as a whole has a softness to it that makes having a glass very comforting. It’s a great summer wine, and while you’re sure to enjoy it over lunch out in the hot, bright sun I find it even more enchanting late in the evening, when you can give its subtleties your full attention.

’11 Domaine Eugène Meyer Alsace Pinot Blanc \$17.99