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Wine by Richard Nalley

Witchy Wines

Magic or science? With biodynamics, some of the world's greatest wineries are going deep medieval.

Was it mere nostalgia, for instance, that led Jean Charles Boisset to chuck out the tractors at Clos de la Vougeraie and plow his vineyards with horses? A French entrepreneur who owns the biodynamically farmed Clos de la Vougeraie in Burgundy and DeLoach Vineyards in Sonoma, Boisset discovered that "The effect of a two- or three-ton tractor constantly compacting the soil was that the soil couldn't breathe or evolve. Our earth was down to 10 to 20 types of organisms; now that we have incorporated horse plowing, it hosts 60."

Maybe planting, pruning, etc., according to the phases of the moon is another one of those old-time-knowledge things. If the moon can shape its tides in the ocean, the reasoning goes, it can surely exert a mighty tug on things as watery/sappy/resin-y as plants. This is not a revolutionary brainstorm; you can find a "Best Days" moon phase calendar in *Farmers' Almanac*. And it is universal.

Says Boisset "Back in my little village of Vougeot, the traditional gardeners and vine-growers have always followed those (lunar) principles because it is common sense and common practice. They think it's crazy *not* to take solar and lunar rhythms into account."

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