

Q & A with Olivier Dauga

Ex-rugby player turned Bordeaux wine consultant Olivier Dauga on the green agenda

What is the Green Winemaking Charter?

The Green Charter was born following Bordeaux's 2008 Carbon Initiative – a six-month study that found the industry produces 200,000 tonnes of carbon per year.

Alain Vironneau, president of the Bordeaux Wine Bureau (CIVB), intends to bring the figure down by 30,000 tonnes within five years, and to have an overall reduction of 75% by 2050.

I have taken a leading role in ensuring it reaches its commitment by convincing wine producers to adopt a more environmentally friendly approach to their winemaking, to respect people, the environment, and ensure economic viability.

I believe organic winemaking doesn't go far enough, and it is difficult financially. Instead, this charter is based upon a common sense, and practical ways to lower your carbon footprint while making natural, healthy wines. But it's a set of practical ideas, not a set of rules.

Why are there no rules?

We want to do it as a recommendation. We'd like to plead with owners and negotiators to stop what they're doing now as we have to prepare for the future. There are so many movements, organic, biodynamic, sustainability, CO₂ prevention. But they all amount to the same problem and all look towards one common goal – the protection of the environment. People are just doing their own thing. There is no uniformity and so many different environmental logos on bottles.



Olivier Dauga would like to see the Bordeaux region go more environmentally friendly

How difficult is it to impose something like the Green Charter to impose in Bordeaux?

It's not easy. Bordeaux doesn't like movement or change, it is always the last to undertake anything. Out of 61 Grand Cru Classés there's just one that's organic. The Grand Crus don't move, they don't see why they have to, people have always bought their wines. But now the wines are not selling, the Bordeaux dream is turning into an nightmare and they're going to have to change on many levels. Burgundy is more involved in green winemaking practices and Champagne is developing its green credentials very fast. In Bordeaux, producers are surprised by the Green Winemaking Charter and ask: "Why do we have to change?"

What are the charter's aims?

It looks at key stages across the winemaking cycle and suggests ways to optimise

energy consumption to reduce dependence on non-renewable sources of energy. It aims to phase out the use of herbicides, prevention rather than cure measures against disease, to respect treatment thresholds, encourage biodiversity and reduce sulphur use in cellars.

What obstacles do you face?

The biggest one is if producers don't believe in the charter, they will not want to change. The first thing we have to do is get people to realise why they have to change, which is for the future and the next generation. It's all about education.

How far can you go?

As far as the producer wants to go, ultimately, so there is no wastage whatsoever. It's not an easy thing to accomplish at that level, so it is whatever the producer feels comfortable with. I work with one producer which has a forest next to the vineyard. It is used wood for heating, has

sheep rather than lawnmowers, has horses ploughing the land and keeps bees. There is no wastage, everything that particular producer does is sustainable and contributes to the environment. We can all make sacrifices, even if it's as trivial a thing as swapping our cars for a bicycle to run around the vineyard on.

Are you eventually looking towards a winemaking Utopia?

The ultimate dream is admittedly a bit Utopian. The Green Winemaking Charter costs initially, but it's like running a company, eventually it becomes very economical. The vision is pragmatic, it has to be what works for the producer. We have to consider the costing, otherwise it will not sell. It's all about investing on this side and making savings within three years on the other.