

# XTRAVAGANCE

# GRAPES

**A South African**  
biodynamic  
winemaker  
introduces his  
star white and  
blend of reds to  
Thai gourmets

MANOTE TRIPATHI  
THE NATION

**T**he star of a recent biodynamic wine dinner organised by boutique wine importer FIN was South Africa's leading biodynamic "wine hugger", Johan Reyneke of Reyneke Wines from Stellenbosch.

Reyneke is honest about wine-making and respectful of the soil and nature. And, as you drink his wine, you develop a respect for that biodynamic viticulture and wine-making.

Biodynamic farmers are more serious than organic growers though they share the organic approach to a certain degree. In the biodynamic vineyard weeds have a purpose and a sense of place and are not completely removed.

Life in soil is key to the biodynamic approach, says Reyneke.

"Without chemicals, life in the soil comes back in a big way. It changes the pH value in the soil and affects the wine. The wine will have natural acidity. Chemicals and fertilisers acidify the soil."

The moon has a definite effect on the vines just as it affects the tides. It makes sense that when the pull of the moon is strong (i.e. during the full moon), more moisture than average will be concentrated in the leaves.

Different positions of the moon as well as the constellations favour different farming activities. Planting at certain times produces larger plants, for example during the full moon, and at other times, stronger plants (moon - Saturn opposition).

"The moon casts different constellations in favour of different parts of the plant," Reyneke explains, adding that in biodynamic wines, there are only two ingredients: grapes and time.

"That is it," he says, "The wild yeast that grows on the grapes is all free because we don't use chemicals. So you get a unique flavour. Our sauvignon blanc is different from other sauvignon blancs even from South Africa, a completely different expression of the cultivar."

Two of Reyneke's biodynamic wines were represented at the wine dinner hosted by Elements of the

# THAT BAY AT THE

# MOON



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FIN

2008 Clos de la Coulée de Serrant, Nicolas Joly, Loire, France



Illustration of 'Perle De La Dombes' duck



Chef Cyril Cocconi



Fumet of Artichokes

Okura Prestige Bangkok.

The pre-dinner aperitif was Cremant de Limoux AC, Bernard Delmas, Languedoc-Roussillon, France, which tuned our palates and had us ready for the food.

The first course, Salad of Maine Lobster "leger" Mango crisp, pistachio oil, fine greens and tamarind, was paired with 2010 Westhofener Riesling Trocken, Wittmann, Rheinhessen, Germany. The wine was described as having crunchy green apple and Asian pear flavours and fruitiness complemented the

salad quite well.

The typical petrol-like aromas were more pronounced in the second Riesling wine, a 2010 Terrassen Riesling DAC, Fred Loimer, Kamptal, Austria. It worked with the Gravlox, slightly smoked tuna served like a salad, with orange and sweet-sour black radish. The wine was refreshing and complemented the fusion of tropical flavours of the dish quite well.

The third course was flan of marinated girolles shaved joselito, the perfect egg and parsley, which was married with Reyneke's 2009 Sauvignon Blanc, Stellenbosch. The egg was amazing as it was slow-cooked. It was a lovely pairing, Reyneke commented. A typical sauvignon blanc from South Africa is expressive, acidic and aromatic in a reductive style. But Reyneke's sauvignon blanc is different. It has notes of lemon with floral character and lots of minerality on the palate. "It's a very linear wine with a nice structure more like the old-school sauvignon blanc. Plenty of fruitiness and freshness," said Reyneke.

The fourth course was Fumet of artichokes aromatic prawns, cepes foam, which was matched with 2008 Clos de la Coulée de Serrant, Nicolas Joly, Loire, France. The wine had to be decanted one day before being served. The dish was slightly spicy in the Thai *tom yum* style. Nicholas Joly is regarded the father of the biodynamic white wine movement and this wine is iconic of Joly's heritage and often touted as a work of art.

A Coulée de Serrant is different from all the other white wines in the world. The grapes come from the steepest and best site with the oldest vines. They are a gleaming gold, with exotic aromas of a particular clarity, and added to this is a complex mineral, spicy and nutty bouquet with honey and butter nuances. The aromatic soup was delicious and with a sip of this wine, the flavour lingered a little longer on the palate.

The fifth course was Illustration of 'Perle De La Dombes' duck (slow cooked breast with morello and toasted almond), which was paired with 2007 Pinot Noir Galets Oligocène Elevage, Domaine Bott Geyl, Alsace, France. The duck was juicy and tender under the thick skin. It was a smart paring. The sauce went especially well with the wine.

The next dish was Kurobuta pork with a touch of soy polenta with fontina and carrots in different forms. It was paired with 2006 M2 de Matallana, Ribeira del Duero DO, Telmo Rodriguez, Spain. The wine had notes of spicy, layered black fruits.

Next was wagyu beef two ways combined as a short rib, compressed celeriac and apple cheek hachee in potato box topped truffle foam, which was married with 2008 Cornerstone, Reyneke, Stellenbosch, South Africa. This cuvee of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Shiraz is designed to celebrate Reyneke's farm labourers who are the cornerstone of his business. This had more powerful tannins than the last one, but was not as refined. "It has the vibrancy of Africa", Reyneke confirmed.

The dessert was Praline taste "imaginary landscapes" hazelnut, pacotised ice cream. It came with 2008 MR Mountain Wine, Telmo Rodriguez, Malaga, Spain. The wine tasted like apricot and honey, making it perfect for those, like myself, with a sweet tooth.

The dinner was quite heavy, but the biodynamic wines helped to make it a healthy culinary journey.



FIN's Benjawan Wisootsat



Jan Ganser of FIN, a big fan of Nicolas Joly's wines.



Johan Reyneke describes himself as a 'wine hugger'.