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LESS IS MORE

Jonathan Hesford, a sustainable and environmentally conscious winemaker from Roussillon



What made you change your mind from I.T specialist to a winemaker?

My families and I used to live in the suburb which just one block away from the World Trade Center in 2001, however, after seeing both planes crash into the buildings from a few hundred metres, we left our apartment with what we could carry. In the aftermath of that disaster, we lost our home, my job and our right to live in the States. The experience made us think about what really mattered in our life. We wanted a different environment for our children. Also we wanted to have more control over our direction and to spend our time working at something that truly motivates us.

Owning a vineyard is an idea that many wine lovers dream about but we wanted to do it right. I took a short course at Plumpton College in the UK and then volunteered at Halfpenny Green Vineyards in Staffordshire for 6 months to get my hands dirty and make sure I was really suited to the work. I loved it!

Who is Jonathan Hesford?

British winemaker in the south of France, used to be postgrad student of viticulture and oenology program in Lincoln University in NZ, after that, working as a winemaker in NZ for few years before moved to south of France. Johnathan own an estate with 10 hectares of vines which locate at very south of France, wine from Domaine Treloar are all used the fruits with high standard from vineyards without other involvement since 2006. There is no permanent employee, only hire part-time workers for vine pruning and fruit harvesting. Jonathan became a student in Lincoln at the age of 35 because he wanted to become a winemaker rather an I.T specialist.

Wow, it was such a shocking accident, right? But, were there any fears when you changed your career or any discussion with your wife?

Anybody change their career can be a big fear, because there has to be something must be given up, it's really tough to give up regular salary and follow with unknown risk, once start the new beginning for establishing new vineyard and winery, meanwhile, the final fear is always there, as a father, I should always ensure the family can still stay comfortably and bring up children without suffering from the fact.

Interesting! So let us ask some wine making from now on. We heard you are doing new world winemaking. Why did you choose the new world? Also, what is the difference between old world and new world?

New-world winemaking is aimed at producing wine the appeal to consumers, which are not from traditional winemaking.

For flavour, New-world winemaking tends to be fruity, softer, with a little bit of sweetness, more easily to be accepted by consumers. Meanwhile, the old-world wine are more complex flavour profile, drier with more tannins and earthy characters.

For technology, new-world winemaking are more technical rather than the old-world winemaking, almost all the winemakers are quantified while, the winemaker from old-world would like to have lot more control over the process by their old experience rather than academic knowledge.

Sustainable management with moderated, controlled chemicals addition contributes balance in vineyard, finally result in healthy fruits with high quality, finally great wine are there!



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I see. And also, we heard the vineyard place affect the taste of wine a lot, but how did you choose current place? What was the important point when you selected the place of the vineyard? (e.g. weed, pest, and fungus management in the vineyards/ soil, water and fertilizer management. etc)

- 1) The amount of fertilizer applies, the amount of herbicide, soil management (e.g. manual work, ploughing the soil). Yield management of the fruits, which highly rely on ripeness time, design the amount of fertilizer supplement, once there are varied ripeness in grapes, which could lead to undesirable result in final product.
- 2) Also adding sulfites, fining agents for flocculation and clarification, as well as flavour agent could contribute reliant of these chemical agents, and wineries will be forced to use these for the later days.
- 3) sustainable management in vineyard to limit manufactured product usage.



How do you maintain the water quality?

Town water is used in his winery which means he has to pay for it, with the cost of water limits the usage in winery. Otherwise, management of wastewater also become a cost, from the view of economy, the cost should be limited, also, the wastewater directly run from winery floor into waterbed, therefore, winery takes responsibility to protect water body in village from pollution, there are no chemical agent and microbial input in wastewater for sedimentation, wastewater in winery is also reused for tree irrigation.

How to minimize the environmental impact of the material that the vineyard use, e.g. chemical residues, diffuse discharges, single-use plastics, waste to landfill, supply chain efficiency

Herbicide, pesticide and other chemicals are avoided use in winery, the only chemicals in used is sodium hydroxide for hygiene, only 500 grams of citric acid usage in one year winemaking to avoid chemical waste, winery pesticide waste should be deal with separately

How to reduce, mitigate the impact of existing or potential pest & disease?

Pruning at the right time to avoid infection of botrytis and powdery mildew, the wild weed will not be allowed to grow in wrong timing, also after trimming the old shoots should not be left in the field which could reduce the risk for disease. More than 2 types of spray mix should be avoided to reduce toxin, also, insecticide spray should be reduced. For sustainable consideration, only thing in vineyard should be protectant and nothing more, dose of spray should be controlled whether the spray is organic or not. In time canopy management is also required to control the risk of disease, e.g. in middle summer, the large canopy should be removed to prevent the micro-climate formation and Moderate chemicals and nutrients input, keep the balance in vineyard possible as I can.



Accumulating carbon into the soil is good for vine growth and carbon sequestration. Are there any efforts to conduct this?

Sustainable management have the philosophy the idea should be maintaining a living soil, so that the soil itself regenerates the nutrients that the vine need, actually vine doesn't require such much nutrient, nitrogen from air could be provided sufficient for leave growing, once there are not too much leaves there, vine will intake nitrogen from soil, there are sufficient nitrogen and carbon provided by cuttings and leaves from vineyards, there only small amount of fertilizer is required for mineral deficiency, limited nutrient input could avoid high vigorous issue as well. Keep nutrient balance between soil and vine is always a consideration of mine.

How to minimize the carbon emission during the industry production in vineyards? For example, using renewable energy or so.

Reduced diesel usage of tractors, winery even isn't refrigerated however, the improved winery construction with old stone wall could protect wine from overheating in summer and cold stroke in winter, heat management could be achieved by windows and shutters.

During the day that the modern winemaking contribute great profit with high efficiency by selling cheap nice wine, Jonathan still keep his mind in sustainable winemaking with less human input and rely on the natural balance, he slows down his step from busy London and comes to Roussillon for his winemaking career. The countryside in south of France provide him a dream to establish his wonderland to deal with vine and wine, nothing is important than the balance between estate and the chef winemaker himself, and the natural feedback to him is much more than profit. keep simple, keep lively then, enjoy the beautiful wine, cheers!

WHAT WE
WANNA
SAY