

Bodegas Bhilar / Etérea Kripan

Who we are

The winery, Bodegas Bhilar, is located in the village of “Elvillar/Bilar”, Rioja Alavesa, in the Basque region of Spain. (Bilar is Elvillar in Euskera)

Melanie’s wines are produced in the same winery under the brand of Etérea Kripan, increasingly focused on the neighboring village of Kripan.

However, in farming practices, they share the same ethos.

WHY WE ARE UNIQUE: MORE THAN Sustainability

Power - The entire estate (winery, warehouse, home) is powered by solar panels and a windmill. We are not connected to the electric grid. We collect rain water for our application or use in our own garden.

All of our vineyards are **certified organic and certified in Biodynamic**. The wines are produced from certified organic and Demeter certified Biodynamic farmed Estate fruit.

We are the **first winery in Rioja Alavesa** with this certification.

Village wines and Single vineyards wines. Together we manage 17 Ha of vines located in 33 different parcels. Majority in Elvillar (90%).

Therefore, it is not possible to explain a homogenous method of vine training and green prune as each vineyard is different.

I will define the constants that apply across all parcels and then further define other viticultural practices we follow.

Constants:

All vineyards are dry-farmed. No irrigation is needed in the vineyards as our average rainfall ranges from 500 to 700 Liters per year most of which falls during late fall, winter and spring.

The land is worked by plow-horse (we don’t own a tractor.)

A strip of native cover crop is left in the center of the rows, which is mowed when it reaches about thigh high. Depending on the spacing of the rows, this strip will be larger or smaller.

Working than land with horses provides us with deep knowledge of our soils is very important. This continual connection offers us guidance on how to properly manage the structure and characteristic of each vineyard.

Biodynamic applications

We have been farming Biodynamically since 2006 and decided to certify our farming under Demeter as of 2021. Some of our newer plantations or newly acquired sites are still in-conversion. Our vineyards receive 2 applications per year of preparation BD 500, BD 501 and Maria Thun. We select and rotate vineyards in which we apply biodynamic compost, as we don't feel every single vineyard requires biodynamic compost application each year.

Treatments

We try to avoid the application of heavy metals (ie. Copper) in our vineyards. In very wet years, we may apply one application, maximum 2 applications (like 2017 or 2020)

We dilute the quantity of treatments sulfur (and copper when applied) in the vineyards by combining them with Yarrow (BD 502), Chamomile (BD 503) and Horsetail (BD 508). Our vineyards receive an average of 4 treatments per year vs. the average rate of 8 or more.

Very important for us is the “**fitotherapy**” (Herbal medicine; work with plants to prepare infusions or remedies to protect, build strength system plant or cure if it is necessary)

Training of vines:

90% of our vineyards are bush vines which are head trained, with a “Candelabro” (chandelier) prune consisting of three main branches. Many will have a guide wire trellis. The vines are not trained, rather the wires support the upward growth of the vine. This system prevents us from having to cut the shoots during the spring (to look like a bush) which in turn shocks the vine causing an imbalance due to a secondary flowering and fruit set. Preventing this step balances the energy of the plant to focus on the primary fruit set.

Harvest and aging:

Only concrete and French oak used for fermentations and aging (no stainless steel).

Typically, from late September through early November.

Hand Harvest in 20kg cases

Selection in vineyard followed by further selection in winery.

Native yeast for fermentation.

No forced malolactic, natural process and usually just after the alcoholic fermentation.

Low sulfur: generally around maximum 30 mg/L in total. Added prior to bottling or very small amounts when racked, when needed.