

Alois Lageder (pronounced "ah-loh-IS lah-GAY-der") is the fourth generation of his family to manage this eponymous winery in the northeastern Italian province of Alto Adige. The region belonged to Austria until after World War I, which explains why many of the wines don't taste stereotypically Italian and why wine labels are written in German as well as Italian.

Lageder has explained the dichotomy this way, saying Alto Adige's wines combine "the richness and body of the south with the elegance and finesse of the north." Now, he's moving to add a third factor to his wines: biodynamic agriculture.

Think of biodynamic as beyond organic. Based on the beliefs of [Rudolf Steiner](#), the Austrian philosopher and scientist, biodynamic farming is a method that calls for the creation of a complete, self-contained ecosystem by introducing a variety of animals and plants to the landscape. Biodynamic agriculture encourages good grapes without the winemaker having to resort to chemical fertilizers or pesticides.

While some remain skeptical of the method, a growing number of winemakers are looking into it. Enter Lageder's Beta Delta, a blend of chardonnay and pinot grigio made from certified organic grapes farmed biodynamically. The 2008 vintage, Lageder's second, is on store shelves for about \$20. It's an elegant wine, smooth and fragrant.

In a telephone interview from Italy, Lageder explained why biodynamic agriculture is so important to him and his winery.

Q: Why a biodynamic wine? And why now?

A: Biodynamics is my world. It's something I've been interested in for many, many years. The philosophy of Rudolf Steiner always excited me. My mother worked in that direction, not in vineyards, but in a vegetable garden.

Q: Why should biodynamic wine be important to a winemaker? To the public?

A: The winemaker has a big responsibility. He has to be respectful to the consumer. His objective is to have very good grapes, healthy grapes. Today, too many winemakers are forcing the wines to have very high (critics') scores. That's the wrong approach. We have to produce wines that are enjoyable. With biodynamically farmed grapes, you have a more entire, more intact product. It's important to the consumer that there be no chemical residues. Biodynamic wines are more harmonious, more elegant, more expressive of the terroir and more authentic. The vines are healthier and more able to withstand heat stress, so they ripen earlier and have lower sugar levels.

Q: Where do you want the [Alois Lageder Winery](#) to be in 2020?

A: I think we have big work still to do. Biodynamics speaks from the closed circle of a farm, it never speaks from just one part like the wine estate. You should grow other products. You should have animals. Our objective is to produce other products and have more animals. If you can optimize the biodynamic product, you will make better wines. That's our objective for the next 10 years.

These Lageder wines are generally available in the United States.

Classic Wines

A series of wines in two quality classifications: denominazione di origine controllata or DOC, and indicazione geografica tipica or IGT. DOC wines include Muller-Thurgau, gewurztraminer, lagrein, lagrein rosato, pinot nero

(pinot noir). IGT wines include pinot bianco (pinot blanc), chardonnay, pinot grigio.

Single vineyard

DOC wines

- n Haberle pinot bianco
- n Benefizium Porer pinot grigio
- n Lehen sauvignon blanc
- n Coreth chardonnay
- petit verdot
- n Rain riesling
- n Vogelmeier moscato giallo
- n Romigberg Kalterersee classico

Estate wines

- n Lowengang chardonnay
- n Krafuss pinot nero
 - n Lindenburg lagrein
- n COR Romigberg cabernet sauvignon and
- n Beta Delta pinot grigio/chardonnay



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Photo: MCT, Bill Hogan / Chicago Tribune.

