



Written by
Erik Sauter

Erik Sauter is one of the most experienced wine tasters in the Benelux. This edition he visits

Domain Aldenborgh.

photography
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Domein Aldenborgh

Organic *wine* from EYS

Anyone keen to find out how an undisturbed natural environment can influence viticulture should definitely pay a visit to the Aldenborgh vineyard in Eys-Wittem. This modest wine estate (spanning six hectares, of which three are under development and were recently planted) is writing history and passionate about sharing its wealth of information. A touch melodramatic perhaps, but it is no easy task to encapsulate their vision, ambition, idealism, and rare respectful approach to soil, nature, and the environment in a single sentence. The path Aldenborgh has chosen



is certainly not the easiest one; here, they do not have the comfort of falling back on fertilizers, synthetic pesticides, and insecticides. Father and son Pelzer have opted for an organic approach that goes a step further than that required for certified organic wines. “We don’t use synthetic pesticides or artificial fertilizers, which means that nature has a real opportunity to develop in our vineyards. This translates into a rich soil culture. In and among the vines grow numerous plants and trees. Rare songbirds build their nests in the vineyard and feed on the abundance of insects. And there’s even a badger sett. By choosing an approach that respects nature, our vineyard has a level of biodiversity usually seen in forests.”

Peter Pelzer Sr. may be from Heerlen, but his family hails from Eys. His interest in viticulture first took root in Eys; he had a view of ideal, south-facing plots of land with a particularly favourable soil composition: a thick layer of Kunrader stone (flint with fossilized shellfish) on top of a layer of Gulpen chalk – topped with a 50-centimetre-thick layer of Limburg clay. He planted the

first vines in 1999, and has pursued an organic approach and been certified (Skal) since day one. Embarking upon and sustaining such an ambitious organic strategy requires a great deal of courage and stamina. With today’s erratic climate and weather conditions, there is a very real chance that the fruits of an entire year’s hard work cannot be harvested at all, or only partially. Fortunately, however, there are also good years that yield grapes that are perfectly ripe, as a reward for their tremendous effort. This natural philosophy continues in the cellar, and the result is reflected in the expression of the wine. For more fascinating insights and interesting blogs, wine enthusiasts can visit the well-maintained and informative website www.aldenborgh.nl.

As always, we sampled a few wines from the estate to present one of them in more detail in our tasting notes. In this case, we have chosen the estate’s flagship wine – the naturally sparkling Eyra Riesling, made using the “methode traditionnelle” with the second fermentation in the bottle, as pioneered in the Champagne region.

But there is so much more to taste here: the wines are expressive, remarkably pure, and utterly original. Take the 2018 Gewürztraminer (alc. 14%), for example. Tasting notes: Beautiful, vibrant colour and distinctive, subtle taste expression of the grape: mildly aromatic – acacia honey, yellow butter, orange blossom. The subtlety of the taste structure also impresses; the wine offers a formidable balance, just the right level of freshness, and a wonderful length. Rarely have I tasted such a palatable Gewürztraminer – a unique wine! €29 per bottle.

The red wine we tasted was the 2018 Satin Noir, a cross between cabernet sauvignon and a selection of American grape varieties (currently kept under wraps) developed in Switzerland by Valentin Blattner. The wine has a formidable colour concentration. Despite the vinification in stainless-steel vessels, it has beautiful, delicate woody notes and a rich bouquet of black fruits: blackberry and cherry. Thanks to the vitality of its powerful structure, this wine can also be matured for a few more years. We just have to be patient; this wine is not yet available on the market.



Tasting notes: Eyra Riesling, sparkling (blend of 2011 and 2013 vintages).

Radiant straw-yellow colour with a white-gold sheen. The delicate, lingering bubbles of carbon dioxide create a soft, flavoursome mousse. It has a delightful aroma: a fascinating interplay between remarkably vivid fruits, the unmistakable minerality of Riesling, and the effects of the extra intense vinosity resulting from the second fermentation. This bouquet evolves over time, so it is really worth leaving to rest for a moment to experience its full complexity.

On the palate, the elements that distinguish excellent sparkling wines from the rest come together: the elegantly enduring flavour, a model balance, the invigorating freshness, and fantastic length. We taste many premium wines based on chardonnay, pinot noir and pinot meunier, both professionally and for pleasure, but the Riesling works remarkably well here. The wine content appears to be and remains very high. This is a worthy alternative to other superior and more expensive sparkling wines, including Champagne’s finest. An excellent glass of wine as an aperitif and pairs beautifully with Creuse and flat oysters. Price per bottle: €32.95.