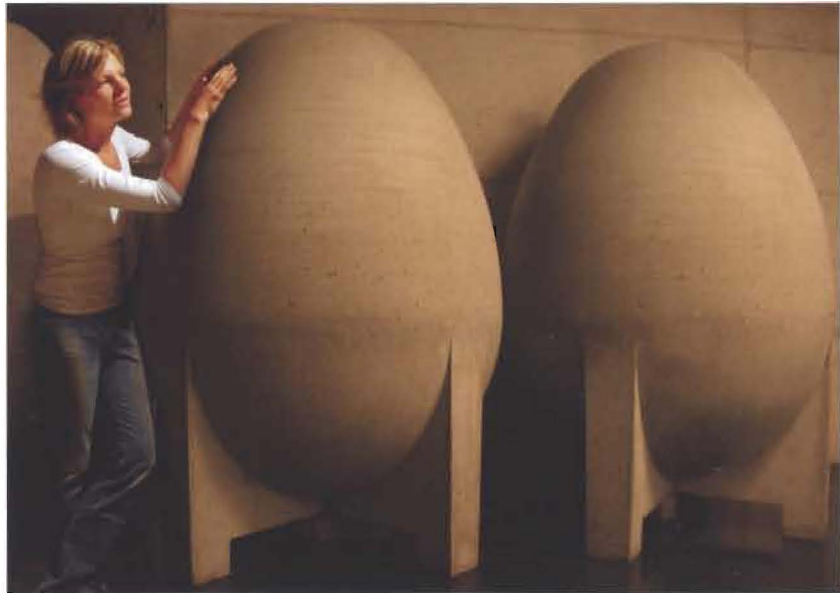


Winemaker's success with concrete

Innovative maturing and storage method for bio-dynamic winemaking

The incredibly large number of applications and innovative uses of concrete never ceases to surprise one. Hence, concrete is now also demonstrating its outstanding suitability in the world of wine – not only as the winemaker's preferred building material for vineyards and cellars, but also for the maturing of the wine, in oversized concrete eggs.

This technique originally comes from France, where winemakers have been achieving remarkable success for many years. Angela and Werner Michlits, from the Meinklang Demeter vineyard in Burgenland, Austria, first became captivated by the new method of maturing wine in concrete eggs some three years ago. Since then they have been successful in making bio-dynamic winemaking using this method of maturing and storage acceptable. Concrete and wine as enhanced natural products that enter into a wonderful symbiosis. The advantages of concrete over wooden or stainless steel casks for the maturing of wine are obvious to Werner Michlits. Oxygen reaches the wine specifically in miniature doses through the large numbers of extremely fine air pores in the concrete; a natural micro-oxidation takes place so that the wine can breathe sufficiently in order to mature. Wood also has pores, but it imparts toasting aromas and tannins into the wine, which are not appreciated by all wine lovers. In contrast, concrete does not influence the taste of the wine. The oval shape of the egg, which is



Wine maturing in over-sized concrete eggs at the Meinklang Demeter vineyard in Burgenland.

constructed in the golden ratio, enables the young wine to circulate unhindered and to clear naturally, hence supporting the wine in its naturalness. "And that conforms to the Demeter concept," says Werner Michlits.

The Rauter concrete precast works in Styria were commissioned with the task of further developing the French model and initially developing three man-sized concrete eggs with a capacity of 900 litres. With regard to the quality of the wine, Rauter's Executive Manager Johann Ramsbacher was convinced right from the start that this way of using concrete would work. "In the beginning

we had to learn everything about the chemistry of the wine with respect to its reaction with the concrete and then we created a suitable type of concrete for maturing the wine," says Ramsbacher. Wine has an acidic pH value. A special recipe was therefore created. The formwork and, hence, the concrete surface of the concrete eggs was also improved. The experiences of the French winemakers have already shown that tartrate crystals and acids form a protective layer inside the concrete egg and that, as a result, the acid attack becomes weaker and weaker with time. One concrete egg in the Meinklang wine cellar has a wall thickness of 12 cm, weighs over 1.7 metric tons, holds 900 litres and is equally suitable for maturing red and white wines. The Meinklang vineyard has chosen the name 'concrete' for this special method of maturing wines in concrete, which stands for pure vinification and completely uninfluenced sort character. A total of 50 egg-shaped concrete vessels are planned, with the award of sponsorships. Angela and Werner Michlits emphasise that, for them, it is also about taking this new philosophy out into the world.



The concrete eggs have in the meantime been exported to vineyards and food manufacturers in Germany, France and Australia.

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www.betonmarketing.at
www.meinklang.at
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