

Querciabella

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Biodynamics Without the Cow Horn

*Sebastiano Cossia Castiglioni speaks publicly
about turning Querciabella vegan*

Sebastiano Cossia Castiglioni is nothing short of relentless. That he led Querciabella's conversion to organic farming in 1988, long before the term green was over-spun, and subsequently turned the Tuscan estate to biodynamics in 2000, is emblematic of his environmentalist convictions. Now, the spirited in-subordination of Querciabella's owner is stirring up debate over the very definition of biodynamics.

Guided by the principle that biodynamic practitioners must adapt to the needs of their land and surrounding environment, Querciabella has become a fertile arena for some of the most pioneering experimentation in biodynamic agriculture since the early 20th century. The Tuscan estate's uniquely cruelty-free approach underscores Sebastiano's vehement stance against factory farming. "It is unethical to kill and torture animals and raising them, on any scale, is simply not sustainable for our planet," he says. While ongoing trials are underway, a collaboration with Italy's leading authority on biodynamic farming, Leonello Anello, has broadened the range of alternative vegan practices at Querciabella, including the use of inert vessels in lieu of cow horns and the production of plant-based preparations composed of estate-grown grasses, medicinal herbs, cruciferous vegetables and legumes.

The unorthodox decision to forego animal byproducts leaves some biodynamicists confused; others challenge the idea that a completely plant-based model of biodynamics can exist at all. Outspoken, passionate and armed with conclusive evidence, Sebastiano has taken to the road to speak out about the role of activism in his life and the benefits derived from a farming model – which bans the use of all animal-derived products – that he created for ethical, environmental and qualitative reasons.

"Those who do things differently will inevitably receive criticism," says Sebastiano. "When people doubt the scientific basis to biodynamics, I point to the healthy, balanced ecosystem we have at Querciabella and to our wines' pure expression of terroir, but more importantly I point to the countless scientific studies that prove how conventional farming, with all its poisonous chemicals, is dangerous – for the planet, for people and for animals."

Sebastiano has recently discussed his cruelty-free view of viticulture in detail on radio programs such as Monocle 24's *The Menu*, REAL Radio's *It's All About Food* and Heritage Radio Network's Taste Matters with Mitchell Davis, Executive Vice President of the James Beard Foundation. He was also profiled in the feature-length article *Querciabella Tuscan Biodynamite* by renowned wine writer Stephen Brook in *The World of Fine Wine*. Sebastiano frequently contributes to forums on topics relating to animal rights, organic agriculture and fine wine. Such interrelated issues will be the focus of Querciabella's upcoming Lecture Tasting Series with Sebastiano, set to launch in early 2013 with an inaugural gathering of international guests at Villa Le Balze, Georgetown University's Florentine center for learning and scholarship.

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ABOUT QUERCIABELLA

Founded in 1974, Querciabella enjoys the acclaim of the world's most discriminating critics and consumers for wines such as Camartina, Batàr, Palafreno and Querciabella Chianti Classico. In its uncompromising pursuit of quality, sustainability and authenticity, Querciabella has continually honed its approach to biodynamic viticulture for over a decade. With vineyards located throughout Tuscany's Chianti Classico and Maremma areas, Querciabella exemplifies the mindful preservation of tradition through forward-thinking, albeit completely natural, winemaking. For the latest winery news and updates, join Querciabella on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).