



Whose *Wine* is it Anyway? Meet Sybille Kuntz

Every other month, '*Whose Wine is it Anyway?*' profiles a German winemaker to give you a behind-the-vines look at the world of German wine. This month, we're highlighting Sybille Kuntz of SYBILLE KUNTZ! Located in the [Mosel](#), Sybille exclusively produces organic and biodynamic Riesling in her own style.

Background



SYBILLE KUNTZ is a relatively young estate, but owner and chief winemaker Sybille has deep roots in the wine industry. Born and raised in Lieser, a village on the Mosel River near Bernkastel, Sybille Kuntz's family has been in the area since the 16th century and has a long tradition in various areas of the wine business. From making barrels and acting as wine merchants to growing vines

and producing wine for other growers, much of Sybille Kuntz's appreciation for the art of winemaking can be attributed to the work of those who came before her and has predated the founding of her estate.

Sybille learned to tend vines from her father at an early age on their family vineyards. However, she didn't envision a future in winemaking and chose to leave vines behind to study business administration in Wuppertal, near Düsseldorf. To help finance her studies, she opened a wine shop in 1981, first selling wines from her parents'

vineyards but soon expanding its inventory to other estates to meet demand. Purchasing for her shop introduced her to wines from different regions and styles, which eventually inspired Sybille to found her own estate, as she determined that Riesling had greater potential beyond the light and sweet wines of the time.

Sybille started out with one small half-hectare parcel of vines in 1984. Since its beginning, the estate exclusively produces Riesling, highlighting the hallmark grape of Sybille's home region. Dry wines were the focus along with organic practices. As Die Chefin, or boss, Sybille is involved in all day-to-day tasks at the winery. Along with her husband Markus Kuntz-Riedlin, an enologist from Baden, she has developed a distinct style unique to SYBILLE KUNTZ Riesling.

My standards for what qualified as a good wine had either become too high or the quality of the wine I was buying had much diminished. I had a real problem. So I said to myself: I can do better than this!

Vineyards

The SYBILLE KUNTZ estate contains 20 hectares of Riesling vines with an average vine age range from 45 to 100 years old across three sites: Lieser Schlossberg, Bernkastel-Kues Weisentein, and most notably, Lieser Niederberg-Helden.

Niederberg-Helden has been classified as Grand Cru (Grosse Lage) since 1804, when Napoleon sent terroir experts to evaluate vineyards of the then French part of the Mosel. Even earlier, the Romans recognized the site's potential and planted vines two thousand years ago – remains of ancient Roman wine presses remain at the base of the slope today.

Niederberg-Helden faces south at an incline of up to 70%, and the vines have root systems as deep as 45 feet in Devonian slate soil. Sybille's first parcels were inherited from her family, where the estate's oldest vines were planted in the 1920s with the Selection Massale method – the practice of utilizing older vines to propagate the new vineyards at the same site – and are still own-rooted.



Sybille eventually acquired a total of 8 hectares on Niederberg-Helden over time, sometimes purchasing old vines that were abandoned by former owners due to lower yields and difficult labor required by the steep slopes. However, Sybille saw the vines as historically significant and an opportunity for developing the unique character of her wines. Sybille Kuntz and a few other local producers are credited with resurrecting this esteemed piece of the Middle Mosel. Over 10 years ago, the estate joined a research project of Hochschule Geisenheim University with a goal to protect and secure own-rooted vines planted before 1950.

Since her time owning a wine shop, Sybille has believed that wines grown organically are superior and because of this, all SYBILLE KUNTZ Rieslings have been produced using organic farming methods since the 1990s, without herbicides or other chemicals in the vineyards. She believes that the hard manual labor that goes into producing organic wines is a small price to pay in exchange for clean and healthy Riesling. The estate achieved “Bio-Weingut” organic certification in 2013 and has been Demeter-certified biodynamic since 2016.

The increased care we apply to our vineyard work has strengthened the ties that bind us to our vineyards.

Wines

In the cellar, Sybille utilizes individual skin contact methods depending on the ripeness of the grapes to achieve a higher flavor output. Soft pressing methods are employed to retain the wines’ ideal profiles. All the wines are a testament to Sybille’s personal preference and how she believes Riesling that is authentic to the terroir of the Mosel should feel and taste.

SYBILLE KUNTZ wines are “color-coded” by the labels, using the “colors of nature” to indicate the ripeness level and taste profile. While the Kabinett Trocken wine sports a blue label in honor of the blue Devonian slate, the rest of the wines in the classic biodynamic Riesling line are labeled according to the grapes’ skins at the time of harvest. The Qualitätswein Trocken is indicated by green for the early-harvested green fruit; Spätlese Trocken’s yellow label mirrors the golden color of the fully ripened grapes; Auslese Feinherb has a violet label symbolizing the impact of early botrytis on the berries’ skin; and so on.

For those new to her Rieslings, Sybille recommends the green-labeled Qualitätswein Trocken, which she sees as an excellent introduction to her work. For appreciators of natural wines, seek out the Orange Riesling – aptly labeled in orange – fermented spontaneously on the skins and bottled unfiltered.

Passion Project

Sybille's love of wine has extended beyond her three Mosel vineyards and over to Baden, where her husband Markus Kuntz-Riedlin hails from. Together they founded Weingut Riedlin in 2010 on land that his family had tended since 1656, on the foothills of the Black Forest. Weingut Riedlin exclusively cultivates Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) with the same biodynamic principles applied to SYBILLE KUNTZ Riesling, achieving Demeter certification in 2018. Beyond the Riedlin's red and rosé wines, Sybille and Markus utilize the small distillery on the Riedlin estate to distill spirits from wine yeasts, labeled Sybille Kuntz Mosel-Riesling Weinbrand (brandy) and Riedlin Brillant.

