

Valerie Kathawala

Hello everyone and welcome to Trink Talks. My name is Valerie Kathawala. I am the co-founder of TRINK Magazine together with Paula Redes Sidore. We are thrilled to have a special panel of guests join us today to discuss from several angles Camilla Gjerde's book, *Natural Trailblazers*.

I would love to introduce our guests first so you know who will be joining us today. With us is Camilla Gjerde. She's a passionate natural wine lover. Ever since her first sip of Arianna Occhipinti Il Frappato in 2008, she has been exploring the world of natural wines. But what matters most to her is the passion and the person behind the wine. She's the author of the first book on women in natural wine, *We Don't Want Any Crap in Our Wine* — also an excellent read. Her second book is *Natural Trailblazers*, which was published in October 2024.

Our second guest is Miki Smith. She is based in Virginia and is the founder of Good Wine, working to move the wine industry toward net zero one bottle at a time. To do this, she is educating consumers and creating demand for climate-friendly wine through wine education and partnering with local shops to offer climate-positive wines.

Completing our panel today is Christine Pieroth, who joins us from the Nahe region in Germany. She converted her family vineyards from conventional to organic, regenerative farming and bottles artisanal natural wines under her label, Piri Naturel. She's fond of the steep slopes as a cultural asset where she wants to preserve the traditional Riesling and Pinot Blanc vines, but plants new vineyards with PIWI varieties and works with agroforestry, trying to create more stable ecosystems that are fit for the future. I think in our discussion, as Paula will elaborate, you'll see how all of these characters and personalities fit together in Camilla's book and in the wider world of natural wine.

Paula Redes Sidore

Thank you, Valerie. My name is Paula Redes Sidore, I'm based in Bonn, Germany. I am very excited to be here today to talk with everybody about this important book, *Natural Trailblazers*. The book poses a simple but quite profound question: What if the wine in our glass could be part of the solution to the climate crisis, not part of the problem? To explore that question today, we're going to follow the book's own trailblazing path.

We'll start at the source, exploring the personal conviction and incredible journey that put Camilla on a train across Europe to find these stories. Then we'll step into the vineyards where a quiet revolution is happening, a radical shift away from the perfectly manicured row and toward a wilder, messier — and as Christine said — perhaps a more resilient way of farming that challenges what many of us thought we knew about viticulture.

From there, we'll follow the chain to the winery and beyond to look at the less-discussed aspects of the surprising climate impact of a simple wine bottle, the taboos of transport, and the final journey to our glass.

This is a conversation about hope, about stubbornness, and 13 visionaries who are working to change the world, one vine, one bottle, and sometimes even one bike ride at a time. So let's dive in. To kick things off, we're going to start off our discussion with the book and how it came to be.

Camilla, please talk a little bit about how you ended up here. Your book really reads not just like a piece of journalism, but very much like a personal mission. You frame it with your decision to stop flying, to undertake this incredible journey by train and by bike. We really want to understand a bit about some of the experience you faced in your research: Were there specific moments or conversations during your travels that reinforced your own sense of optimism and convinced you that these trailblazing actions matter in a larger context?

Camilla Gjerde

Ooh, big question, but let me just say thank you for inviting me and I'm just so happy to be here with Christine and with Miki as well. I think that for me, this book was really important because I wanted to do what I could to talk about climate change and what we can do to mitigate climate change.

But also to honour my decision to drink wine and to love wine and to try and combine the two. It started with the frustration that we know that, well, or at least most of us know, that we're in a climate crisis and still we don't do nearly enough to do what we can to stop the heating of the planet and all the effects of it. So yes, I've stopped flying and I just love traveling by train and with my foldable Brompton bike. That's why we're in Europe in my book and mainly in France actually as well. It's difficult to travel long distance, or very, very long distance, like to the US or to other continents.

Valerie Kathawala

How did you identify the 13 producers you wanted to profile here?

Camilla Gjerde

Some of the profiles or people were all-time favorites of mine. For example, Christine who is very, very much a favorite that I knew I wanted to include in the book because I think their work is just fabulous on so many levels. We will get back to that. But I also contacted importers in various countries because I knew that I didn't know enough about all kinds of producers and how they work and who to choose. Interestingly, only a few responded, which I also take as a response. Many of them didn't know or didn't understand the question. What do you mean, people who make wine in a climate-friendly way? Even though I had pinpointed that it was the vineyard work, I'd given examples, the winery work, and also the transportation bit on the move. But there were very few who actually knew how to, or perhaps knew their producers as well so they could give me examples. But there were a few who gave me fantastic examples.

So the ones I had by myself that I had met at different wine fairs or that I had visited — like Christine — and then the examples from importers, and then some of the producers themselves added people they thought I should include. So it was a mix.

What was quite interesting for me was that so many of the really trailblazing or extreme profiles were in France. I still haven't got my head around it, why that is. Is it the, you know, the revolutionary 1789 just sitting there in the backbone of all the French people, or what is it? Is it just because, you know, since I'm focusing on natural wine, natural wine is of course huge in France? But yeah. So there's a bias, a quite obvious bias.

Valerie Kathawala

Was there a logistical bias as well?

Camilla Gjerde

Yes, definitely. I travelled with my favourite photographer, Cecilia Magnusson. She's got a small child and she didn't want to be away for more than a week. That was the starting point, and then I managed to get her to stay away for like 10 days, I think, on the second trip. So we did two trips.

So it was very much a clear schedule and a very tight one at that. If I had been traveling alone, it would have been more relaxed. I could stay in more places and I would probably have gone to more people, although not necessarily include them in the book. But there are always constraints.

Then of course, I live in Sweden. It takes a day just to go down to Christine in the Nahe. So yeah, it takes quite some time when you travel by train, although it's rewarding as well..

Paula Redes Sidore

Were there any stories you were not able to fit into the book that you think listeners would be curious to hear more about?

Camilla Gjerde

Yeah, there is one that I had, well, I actually have written it and it was all finished, ready to print when I got the message that this particular person, a woman called Saskia van der Horst in Roussillon in south of France of Domaine Les Arabesques, she decided to quit just a few months before publication. She's in a very, very dry area and they hadn't had rains for three years at the time. This year they've had rain so maybe she regrets the decision, I don't know. I met her because she works organically, she works manually, she's really feeling climate change. Temperatures are really rising in the south of France as well. I mean, Europe is the continent that feels climate change the most, temperature wise. So it's rising the fastest of the whole world. That was one of the reasons she decided to stop. It's a sad story.

Of course I could have included it, but I wanted the stories to be inspiring and someone quitting, is not that inspiring. So I decided to let her go. But yeah, her wines, if you can get them, her last vintage is 2023. So if you can get her wines, are really beautiful, beautiful examples of the south of France, but without the high alcohol.

Valerie Kathawala

I think that's a really important element to talk about. When you highlighted that some of these growers are among the most extreme in their progressive viticulture or other practices, it's because they are meeting such an extreme in the climate and social structure. So it feels like we need to meet this moment with these increasingly pointed measures.

One question that leaped out to Paula and me, because of course we look at everything through this lens of German-speaking wines, you have, obviously for excellent reasons, included Christine here, and you have Mythopia in Switzerland, even if not necessarily the German speaking part. How did those two producers make the cut? Was there an abundance of others you could have tapped or was it harder in those regions?

Camilla Gjerde

Well, Christine made it to the finals because she's just an incredible person. When I met Christine, I felt that she is exactly the kind of person that I wanted to write about because she works incredibly hard in the vineyard, going from conventional to organic. But not only that, but working to include different kinds of trees and hedges, and permaculture in the vineyards and not opening the soil to avoid releasing carbon. And she has planted PWIs, the hybrids that don't need as much spraying as the *Vitis vinifera* that we know. Of course makes it possible to avoid some tractor sprayings as well. There are many reasons why Christine got to the finals. Also, of course, biodiversity. That's one of the reasons why Christine does what she does. I mean, she wants to increase biodiversity in her vineyards and really like having real nature in her vineyards and not just vines.

Mythopia had been on my list for very long but then I was uncertain. I was a bit in awe of them. I don't know why. You know, sometimes I'm just afraid of people. I don't know. And then the Soulea brothers who are included in the book, Charles Soulea said, you need to go to Peter in Switzerland and talk about how they work.

So of course I knew of them and all of the work and then I decided, okay, yeah, let's go. They work completely without machines in their very steep vineyards. They also have PIWIs, but what they do, which is what I try to focus on in the book, is that they use biochar. Not only do they not open their soil, but they burn all their cuttings from the vineyard work in winter and spring and burn them in a climate where you not release the carbon, but you store it within the char. So when you dig it into the earth, the carbon can be stored for thousands of years. So it's really a way of getting to carbon neutrality or even to carbon minus.

So it's one of the examples of what you can do to really make a difference. And then to the question of, yes, of course, there are just so many people I would have loved to include in the book. There were many on my long list. Many of them were in Austria and Alto Adige and some in Germany as well. For instance, Thomas Niedermeyer in Alto Adige with his PIWI work. He's really a pioneer of the PIWIs and biodiversity. We have Marion and Martin Goyer of Pranzegg that I really love.

Paula Redes Sidore

Mm-hmm.

Camilla Gjerde

Their vineyard work, their focus on biodiversity and planting trees and all kinds of stuff, including animals in the vineyards. Alwin and Stefani Jurtschisch in Kamptal, Austria, for being organic, getting other people to work organically and planting trees in the vineyards, working with horses and just being amazing people. Also Weingut Heinrich in Gols in Burgenland for their work with cans and also for being a huge producer with almost or around 100 hectares. Then Jas Swarn of Katla in Germany for her work with kegs. She was also on my list. So yeah, there were a lot of people. Inspiring people. The idea of the book is to say, these are the ones who do great work and look at them. They're fantastic. Yes, you can do that, but it's not like they are the only ones, they are just, or not just, but they are simply examples of what people do. Although some are, well, all of them are trailblazers, but it's not to say that there aren't other people out there doing fantastic work. So it's just some of the inspiring examples that I found.

Valerie Kathawala

Excellent. I'll just jump in here before we shift the focus to Christine and her work, just to let listeners know that we have a profile, an excerpt from Camilla's book about Mythopia. So you can read it and get more detail about the biochar that's being made there and get a better sense of that estate. We also have a feature on Christine, from 2021, before Camilla wrote her book, by another author. So there are opportunities to dig in to both.

So Christine, tell us, I mean, you're the one out there doing the trailblazing. Tell us what it's like. Tell us a little bit about your region and the kind of circumstances in which you're working and what inspired you and what you feel you can do to change the climate impact of your wines.

Christine Pieroth

Yeah, big question. Let's start at the beginning. I'm based in the Nahe region in southwest of Germany. Unfortunately, there's still only very few producers in the valley farming organically. We already talked about that before very briefly, Valerie. It's, I guess, for several reasons, which would probably be too much to dive into right now, but that's a fact. I grew up on a conventional farm back in the days with my parents' farm. I've always been interested in everything that has to do with nature and generally the outdoors and gardening, foraging wild herbs and everything.

I've always been interested in our vineyards and felt part of it. And yet, kind of looking back, I guess that's something I realized only later. I felt like the way we did our farming back in the days, it was not very much part of nature. It felt very disconnected, actually. And this is only something I realized later and was not I guess aware at that point because I was not obviously as involved as I am today, when I'm responsible for everything. After school, I moved to BC, Canada for a while, where I worked on several small organic farms and where I realized, okay, wow, this is so inspiring to live and work and also learn from the land that you're on, that you work with. That felt so inspiring and so connected to the surroundings. Then I moved back to Germany and did my studies in Geisenheim and lots of internships and everything. Eventually I came back full-time to the winery. I knew for certain this is something that I want to work on. So

first step was to convert our vineyards to organic. Luckily my parents were up for it. It was not that they were opposed to it before. They, of course, knew how much more time- and labor-intensive the work is, especially in the steep slopes. We farm some vineyards that we can't use any tractors on. So especially in those vineyards, but also in other vineyards and the flat vineyards, it's just generally much more work to farm organically.

Things that don't happen overnight. As everything, you know, like in farming, working with soil, working with nature, it takes time. But yeah, it felt good. And so I was like, okay, let's just go for it. We'll just get started. I quickly realized organic is not enough. Thinking about how fast climate is changing. We really feel how extreme the years are. We are directly affected, not only in the actual farming part, but everything that goes beyond it. Sustainability has all these different aspects, so everything is affected, obviously.

So yes, I just realized I want to look at our vineyards more from this permaculture perspective of like where we are, as part of nature, as part of the landscape, as part of our culture here. So bringing all these aspects together. From the last new plantings that we did for the last years, I always try to include more trees and try to include wild hedges that we plant along the side of the vineyards, look at where the slope goes, where the wind comes from, where the sun comes from. Try to bring all this into our consideration of how we plant the vineyard and to eventually create a more stable system of vineyard. I feel like it's like, we really need to look at things like farming and bringing nature together, like they're not opposed to each other. Like we should look at it, bringing it together. The landscape has changed. So much if you look back to like the '50s or '60s you can hardly, compare it anymore.

Paula Redes Sidore

That actually brings me sort of perfectly to the next thing that I was wondering, which is, I know at Geisenheim, much of what you're talking about was not historically taught. So how have you found that the conversation around PIWIs, around agroforestry, has evolved both since the book was researched, but in general from when you finished with Geisenheim, when you said this is the way that I want to start? Are other growers more accepting of these ideas? Are customers more accepting of these ideas? And afterwards, Miki, I'd love to hear you chime in as well and your thoughts as to what you hear sort of on the other side.

Christine Pieroth

Talking about the new varieties, the hybrids, the PIWIs, I feel the perspective of the growers is maybe getting a bit more like positive towards the PIWIs. It's happening very slowly, unfortunately. I think it's actually currently more due to the market being under pressure. Things are happening, but changing very, very slowly. From the consumer perspective, I feel like it's still quite hard because people generally like to drink what they know or kind of they think they know what to expect.

But from my personal perspective, I just see all the positive aspects, not only regarding the vineyard and the soil and less spraying, less soil compaction, less fuel that we're burning and so on, but also one aspect that is often not talked about enough: I see the positive impact on us as well, the humans behind the wine.

Because I feel like, in some years, we really struggled to get through the season to manage to have healthy grapes at the end. And it's only because I, I don't know, in the peak season, I work like seven days a week to make it happen. So having the more PIWI vineyards now each year, I think it's a really big relief.

And so this is another aspect that's often not really talked about much — that it's a physical and also mental relief for sure.

Valerie Kathawala

That's so important. Not to make you the PIWI spokesperson — but just a question I have because PIWIs are designed to be fungus-resistant varieties. That's their main attribute. How does that factor into the increasing patterns of drought and heat stress that we see in Germany? Because my understanding is they're not necessarily equipped to deal with that particularly well, - or is that also a feature?

Christine Pieroth

So on the one hand, they're more fungal-resistant and one reason, not the only reason, but one reason is because also the skin is often much thicker. So for some varieties, they are definitely less impacted by sunburn throughout the season. They tend to be healthier on the vines because the skin is much thicker, they get less botrytis or less, not only fungi as in mildew, downy or powdery mildew, also rot. So, yeah, there's different aspects and they cope with climate change well, very well.

Paula Redes Sidore

So they adapt.

Christine Pieroth

Well, it takes a long time for a new variety to be finally available for us growers. Like when a new variety is — like when someone starts working on a new variety — it takes, I don't know, 20 years until it's finally for us available to plant in the vineyard. Of course, 20 years ago, it was again — the climate is changing so quickly, right? So I'm not sure if you can say they adapt continuously. There's still so much we also need to learn and explore what's going to happen. But they are definitely made in all this thought that climate is changing so fast and we need varieties for the future.

Paula Redes Sidore

Fantastic. Thank you. Miki, what's your take on it? How are people responding to it? What do you hear?

Miki Smith

Yeah, such an interesting question. Here in Virginia, just outside [Washington] DC, and there's such a great kind of burgeoning wine scene. You know, kind of as part of one of my efforts and trying to move things forward was to have a wine club for about two years.

We offered wines to consumers in a local shop and I was really trying to test the idea - hybrids being one of them - that putting climate at the center of the conversation had resonance for consumers. Interestingly, and I wonder if this is sort of rooted in the United States, I felt that there was more openness to something like a hybrid, for example. So I think, people who are newer to wine or people that are, even if they're not as new to wine, I didn't notice a resistance really. So that was kind of exciting. One of the ways that I tried to kind of reframe the conversation around some of these changes that maybe were not classic or traditional was to frame it as experimentation and get people excited about kind of participating in new ways of doing things.

So in Virginia, where hybrids are actually becoming a key part of the conversation, particularly with growers, I had a wonderful test case. There's a couple of people in particular in Charlottesville and in Northern Virginia as well. And there's one individual in particular, his name is Tim Jordan. He's down in Charlottesville, Virginia. I think his goal is ultimately to transition only to hybrids. He is a scientist, so I think, he may have an easier time than some folks in terms of kind of thinking through this systematically. But I don't want to throw shade on others. I think there's a lot of great potential there. October is, you know, Virginia Wine Month. So the couple of years that I ran the club, we focused specifically on Virginia and on those efforts and kind of tried to get people excited about and that was actually one of our more popular months. So I think it's kind of about the framing of it, kind of trying to say, you know, you haven't heard that much about Traminer or Vidal Blanc, but have you — you know, if you like Petit Manseng, maybe you'd like this other variety. It's, you know, not *Vitis Vinifera* but it's wonderful. Some of it too is for consumers, gauging how much education they actually want to participate in. Because they might not want to know all the backstory. They want to know: Is it delicious?

Christine Pieroth

I totally agree, that's such a good point that you're mentioning, Miki, because the word PIWI in German translates to more fungal resistance and that doesn't sound very appealing. It's always like, where to put the spotlight?

Camilla Gjerde

Although I think, Christine, your first PIWI wine with the name Aurora is a perfect example of how you can frame it not to be like PIWI is the name of the wine. It's like, no, it's something that sounds delicious and is delicious.

Valerie Kathawala

Definitely. Miki, something you said in a separate conversation that really interests me is your focus on discussing climate as a social good. I think that gets to the heart of what Camilla and Christine are doing. But I also think it's something that is lost in the natural wine conversation far too often because there's such a focus on the cultural rebelliousness and that this is a breakaway movement that will reframe wine for a new demographic and new generation. But that climate-as-a-social-good component is, for me, why natural wine is interesting. I feel like that is still a stumbling block in communicating what exactly happens in a vineyard and a winery and in the last mile of getting those wines to people. Can you elaborate a bit on that?

Miki Smith

Yeah, absolutely. Thanks, Valerie. We've had lots of wonderful fruitful conversations in this area. I initially started Good Wine, my wine project, because as you said, the natural wine movement is this wonderfully animated, well-intentioned movement that I just really respond to. But I had noticed that there was sort of this sharpening of the conversation that we could do around the climate change piece and if when making purchasing decisions or decisions as a grower, the climate part is the main focus, then it could have more impact because you're really making those choices for the reason of reducing your impact on the planet and making more climate-positive choices.

I'm kind of sustainability and climate change advocate. I'm very passionate about the issue. And I felt that if we can get people excited about this topic while they're doing something, as you said, Camilla, your favorite thing, drinking wine, it's a wonderful entry point for trying to move people along the spectrum in their purchasing decisions. If you love it and there's something really special about it, this wine is fresher than you have ever had before, especially if you bring in sort of a consumer who is very used to more classic or conventional wine flavor profiles or aroma profiles, especially flavor profiles, just telling them the reason why, like there's a connection here between this really fresh juice and some of the practices in the vineyard or in the cellar. And I just felt like there are all of these other really interesting places where people have already really bought into the climate impact conversation, whether it be in fashion with certain brands that now even these really wonderful fashion brands include on specific items on their website what is the climate impact, or what choices did they make around cotton, and how would they rate themselves? Are they doing better or worse? Would they like to improve upon this practice?

That really speaks to me as a consumer. I'd rather spend my dollars there than elsewhere. And so I thought there's no reason why wine shouldn't be moving in that direction and we shouldn't be bringing consumers along in this thought process as well.

And that's why when Camilla's book came out, I jumped up and down. I mean, that sounds a little extreme. But I was just so excited because you don't see those issues highlighted in that way and such a wonderful work.

Valerie Kathawala

True! And yet Camilla, your book, while certainly providing all the positive examples, you don't shy away from the challenges. For instance, I think it's Eric Texier trying to get his wines in keg and finding so much resistance to the idea. Can you talk a bit about how we have a terrific producer, phenomenal wines, willing to do the work and yet the market won't meet him even close to halfway?

Camilla Gjerde

Yeah, I was actually thinking when Miki spoke that I think that the resistance has to do with being a traditional wine country or wine-producing country or not. So like Miki says, consumers

in the U.S., for instance, they are much more positive towards experimenting and trying out new wines, new grape varieties, but also different kinds of packaging. So wines in kegs or in a bagnum, like a pouch, that's not a big deal, or a can. But for French people, Italian people, in Spain, even Germany, people tend to want their wine in a glass bottle, and it should look fresh and new and very, very nice. So that's the main problem that Eric Texier, for instance, has encountered — that people just want their wine in a glass bottle — end of discussion, sort of. So it's much easier for him, for instance, and for everyone, I think, who makes wine in alternative packaging, to sell it or to export it to the Nordic countries, to the US. I'm not sure that it's a big hit in Asian countries yet. Kegs, yeah, in some countries like Thailand where they are used to drinking beer from tap, they're absolutely open to it. I mean, generally export markets where they don't produce their own wine are much, much easier. And that goes for any kind of alternative to the traditional glass bottle. I mean, we haven't had the single-use glass bottle for that long. So it's very strange that we're so caught up with, so focused on the idea that this is how wine is served.

But I just love hearing about people who also, you know, reuse bottles. So you can still have the glass bottle, but you just use it over and over again. That's also very inspiring to me and something that we should do a lot more. Actually, we have the capacity to do it, and we used to have it. And we do it with beer bottles. In Germany, you're great with reusing glass bottles, because reusing, you know, the glass — the problem with the glass bottle is that it's just so energy-consuming to make it and the energy is fossil fuel. But if you use it, just reuse it like three times, then it's already better than producing a can. And you can reuse a glass bottle for at least 30 times, no problem. So it just seems like a colossal waste not to do it.

Valerie Kathawala

Especially when upwards of 90% of all wines purchased are consumed that same day. They don't need to be in something with a cork stopper built for age.

Camilla Gjerde

No, that's one of the reasons why alternatives to glass bottles is a good idea. Also that it's much, much lighter, like the kegs, the pouches, and the cans for export markets. So you reduce the CO2 emitted when transporting stuff long distances. But then also for the lovers of glass, if we could just reuse them.

I know there are examples of Sophie Evans in the UK who only reuses bottles for her wines. So she gets bottles from restaurants in London to her winery in Kent, quite close by. And also Beck Hartweg in Alsace that I write about in my book. They reuse about 15 to 20% of their bottles. They get their bottles in nearby Strasbourg with their electric car and then have a private way of reusing the bottles. But what I would like to see is a new standard. So yes, lots of private initiatives and they are great, fantastic and keep on doing it. But there should also be some pressure on the industry to make it easier for people.

Paula Redes Sidore

This leads me to one of the things that I was thinking about, which is you raised so many

beautiful examples of small niche creative solutions that work very much on a micro scale. But how do we get to that next step of either catching the interest of, or the attention, I guess I should say, of some of the larger operations? I mean, you mentioned Heinrich, which is fantastic with the 100 hectares. And that's one of my go-to examples when someone says, biodynamics, no, it doesn't work on a large scale. Well, actually. And so what did you find when you were researching the book, when you were writing the book? Where would you like to see the next step happen? Or any of you, what can we do?

Camilla Gjerde

I think that the next step is, well, one of the next steps is already here. Like one of the examples in the book is a Swedish importer, Ida, who is a pioneer of getting wine into kegs and to get them around Sweden into bars and restaurants. And she has seen that the big conventional importers have got their producers to make their wines available in kegs. So her thought is that, you know, even though she only works with small producers with a tiny production, she has seen that just by being an example, she can change the way the other importers and producers work. So I do think that even though the examples in the book are tiny and it's a small production, like, it's not even the tip of the iceberg, it can shift something when people realize that it's not necessarily super complicated to do things and do things that actually matter a lot. Being small doesn't mean you can't affect others.

Christine Pieroth

I think so too. I think the next step is already here basically, that we really have to talk about it, we have to be open and take away the fear of something new or unknown. So what you mentioned about the kegs, Camilla, is exactly what we experienced. Like last year was the first time I bottled kegs, also a project with my friend Jasmin. And it was exactly like that. A lot of people were first like, this is new, this is strange. We don't know how to deal with that. But now that we've been talking about it and we brought it, for example, to the Loire in February for people to be able to take a sip from the keg and taste themselves and everything tastes good, of course, made it fun and we kind of decorated the keg. So I think we have to be positive about it. And yeah, take away this fear. I think that's a big part of it.

Valerie Kathawala

I just want to ask: your wines are widely exported, Christina? The bulk of your market is outside of Germany. Is that correct?

Christine Pieroth

Yeah, almost all of it. In some countries you can tell that it's more common already, especially in Sweden for example. Last year when Camilla had the book release in October, Jasmin and I joined and just a very few days before her book release our kegs arrived in Sweden. So we were also able to have some on tap, which was super nice. And so you can tell, yeah, some importers are more open to it because they have already more experience with it. But I've also — for example, talking about France, my partners in Paris really like the idea and they are working with our kegs now. They are really into it. I guess generally they import German wine to

Paris. So they are already a little bit outside the border with Paris maybe. So for them — but yeah, they also just like it and also some other countries who were completely new to it, they said okay, you know we'll start with a smaller amount and we'll see how things go and so now it's actually quite positive.

Miki Smith

I was going to say something quite similar, which is the alternative packaging, just because if you were to take one step, the alternative packaging piece, you know, changing that portion of the overall carbon footprint would be the most impactful. And so, for me, that's the piece that I'm really hoping to either participate in the development of or, you know, see happen.

As part of our wine club, it was really challenging to source alternative packaging. There were a lot of wines that I noticed were sold that way, but we just couldn't get our hands on them because their quantities weren't large.

Miki Smith

Sometimes I would say, okay, well, do you know any producers working with lighter weight bottles? And it was hard to kind of get that information because the distributors and importers are not necessarily primed to make that a key component of the conversation. That's a whole other can of worms or whatever the expression is.

We did one month have a bag-in-box from Tablas Creek out in California. It was such an interesting situation because, typically we offered three bottles a month, but in that month it was a large box. So we offered just the box. I actually did an event so that I could get our wine club members kind of familiar with the box, they could feel it, I could show them how it opened and kind of make it a fun experiment, kind of like what you were talking about, Christine, making the kegs fun. I think that went over pretty well. I think people were definitely like, okay, so where's the rest of the month's wines? And I was like, no, no, it's just this box. But the wine was incredible. It drank wonderfully. It was a white Rhone blend, Patelin Blanc I believe was the specific wine that we had. So that of course was a really important necessary component.

The other thing I just kind of wanted to point to as well is in London, there is a group called the Sustainable Wine Roundtable. I'm super excited because they're working on a packaging choice framework that I think will allow people to look and say, okay, this works for me, this doesn't, I have these logistical challenges, shipping challenges around this particular option and hopefully land on something that lowers their carbon footprint but still works for them from a business perspective. So I'm really excited to see that come out. So it was great to read about the kegs in particular. I have less experience with those but very exciting.

Camilla Gjerde

One of the beauties of kegs is that you can make it one keg, two kegs of your best cuvée available for a certain bar or premium Michelin restaurant. So there's no need to choose your easiest or run-of-the-mill wine available by the keg. You can make it as a premium thing as well. As well as the bagnums and pouches and cans. I mean, there's no need for it to be a basic wine.

I would just add that if you're a wine producer, to go organic is just the first step you should do. It will reduce the carbon footprint by 20 to 25% compared to a normal bottle of wine. And then to stop plowing and store the carbon instead of releasing it is a big move. And the third thing to experiment with alternatives to the single use bottle. If you do those three things, you've just made a huge positive impact.

Valerie Kathawala

I think if you are looking at it from the consumer perspective, if you can identify those producers who are working in that way — still a challenge, still takes research — there's no labelling shortcut to let people know about that. Maybe that will come someday. But I think supporting those producers is our top priority.

I just really want to urge people to pick up a copy of the book, Camilla. In a minute we'll give you a chance to let people know how they can do that. But I just think we only touched lightly on these 13 really powerful examples. And this book gave me so much hope and so much inspiration. I really internalized it to my own life, to questioning my own practices and choices. And I think we can all do that. But it's in a very positive transforming sort of sense. It doesn't feel heavy or like a guilt trip. You really sense the possibilities and I love that and I hope everyone will go out and find out for themselves. So Camilla, let our listeners know please where they could best find your book.

Camilla Gjerde

Sure. The best way is through my website, which is very easy: My name, camillagjerde.com. I think it will be in the show notes as well, so you don't have to take my word for it. So yeah, go to the webpage and you'll find it. And there are some people and bars and independent bookstores that have it as well. Miki has it, for instance.

Valerie Kathawala

I think something that people will have to get the book to find out more about is actually the environmental impact of the book itself, which is fascinating. Camilla has included a sort of meta story of the publisher she chose and all that went into thinking about reducing the impact of the book itself and how it will get into readers' hands. I think that's a wonderful aspect for people to discover.

I also want to let people know that Christina's wines under the Piri label are, as she said, widely exported and available and some of the most exciting, whistle-clean, stable, beautiful and expressive natural wines out there. I urge people to go and try them. Miki's Good Wine Club and concepts — we'll have all the links in the show notes — but I think it's really worth seeing the way she's talking and thinking about wine and connecting consumers with all these ideas in a very concrete way.

Paula Redes Sidore

Absolutely.

Miki Smith

Thanks. Appreciate it. Thanks everyone.

Camilla Gjerde

Yeah, thank you.

Valerie Kathawala

Thank you everyone for joining us.

Paula Redes Sidore

Really appreciate it. All right.

Miki Smith

All right, have a wonderful afternoon. Bye all, thank you so much.

Paula Redes Sidore

You too.

Christine Pieroth

Thanks a lot.