



## BATTENFELD SPANIER



### DEVOTED TO DOING

It's been 30 years since Hans Oliver Spanier founded his estate, Weingut BattenfeldSpanier. From the start, the VDP member estate from the Wonnegau has worked organically – in fact, biodynamically for the past 15 years. His terroir-driven Rieslings and Spätburgunders from BattenfeldSpanier are favorites of sommeliers and wine aficionados from 35 countries around the world.

In the early days, his assets included an antiquated Bergmeister tractor and a few scattered vineyards. That was 1991. Hans Oliver Spanier was still in the process of recovering from a tragic accident that changed his life plans. He had acquired his farm vehicle using the injury settlement cash. And that's how it all began. *"My family has been in the Wonnegau for three hundred years, with roots in the Zellertal. There's a reason for our surname. My ancestors were mercenaries, paid to fight in southern Europe during the Thirty Years War. 'Spanier' simply means: Spaniard. Because that's where the lads came from — but they ended up settling down in Rheinhessen."*



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H.O.s family always had vineyards. But by the time he decided to make wine, the site was in disastrous shape. A bit of a kamikaze mission. Rheinhessen viticulture was in terrible shape, run down, with neither vision nor a plan, shaped by wine scandal and falling prices — “Rethinking Rheinhessen required a radical cure.” H.O. and his dedication to excellence found a warm embrace in the small community of organic winegrowers. The viticultural philosophy for his estate was forged through his experiences in this clique, which at its core represented wine estates working based on Ecovin.

*“You can only talk about ‘terroir’ if you respect and preserve the soil and its microbial life. Otherwise there is no terroir,” the young Hans Oliver Spanier was fond of saying, scandalizing industry old-timers. What surprised people was his knack for swapping his existing vineyards for better and stonier ones that more closely fit his vision; for promoting wild fermentation and granting his wines extended barrel maturation; and his tenacity in transitioning from organic to bio-dynamic viticulture. People are perpetually a bit surprised at just how much I love and appreciate my lifestyle and the finer things. What they don’t see is just how much work goes into that.”* What initially started as a necessity due to lack of funds would become a virtue for Spanier, one that he continues to pursue today: he leaves sales and presentations to the professionals. *“It’s not worth it for me to fly all over the place. I’m needed in the vineyards and the cellar. As a winegrower, you have to keep on top of everything if you intend to wave the flag for uncompromising quality.”*



Biologisch-dynamisch  
ausgebaut von  
**H.O. SPANIER**

**[ NO BULLSHIT  
JUST SULPHITES ]**



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He took an early shine to the nearby Zellertal — a striking and fertile river valley between the Rhine and Nahe with an ancient cultural history — at a time when no one in the industry had expressed a serious interest. “The Zellertal had devolved from the valley of the ‘fat winegrowers’ around 1900 into a Rheinhessen/Pfalz poorhouse,” H.O. explains, “but nothing about those fabulous limestone cliffs had changed at all.” Spanier is driven by an interest in the vines themselves and the substrate in which the vines are rooted. And so he came to buy his first vineyard on the Frauenberg, long before anyone in the surrounding villages had grasped its real value. It was followed by the Zellerweg on the Schwarzer Herrgott and the Zeller Kreuzberg, today all classified as VDP.GROSSE LAGE sites that have earned absolute top marks from wine critics the world over.



The prices for the vineyards in the Zellertal are rising. And Hans Oliver Spanier loves it: *“We’re on the right track. These sites are one-of-a-kind, the cultural history is unique. You can taste it in the wines. The expression and the aura of grand wines was there from the start.”*





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A shared vinous path with wife Carolin began in 2006. She brought to the equation her family's winegrowing estate, Kühling-Gillot — and suddenly H.O. was working with terroir not just from the Wonnegau and Zellertal, but also on the fabled Roter Hang. Famous terroir in its own right, and far from the reclamation projects Spanier usually encountered. Even so, he was instrumental in re-molding its image. The Roter Hang is now almost herbicide-free — thanks to the trailblazing role of Spanier and colleagues who were willing to join him.

For Carolin and H.O., the principle of *"interconnected"* is more than just the motto for the two estates; it's their lived reality. They built a joint cellar in Hohen-Sülzen for processing the grapes and maturing the casks and bottles for wines from both estates. *"My husband has revolutionized wine style,"* says Carolin Spanier-Gillot. *"He was always radical, fervent, extreme and doggedly fastidious — with an uncompromising focus on quality."* Few winemakers in the world can appreciate, let alone match, those convictions. Those who do recently nominated him for the *"Académie Internationale du Vin,"* one of only a handful of German-language winegrowers to earn that honor.

2020 saw Carolin and Hans Oliver finalize an important milestone in their journey. *"The third dimension of the wine, time, is what has always fascinated me most,"* Spanier says. *"Maturity makes the difference between a good and an outstanding wine."* They created a subterranean cellar, naturally cooled across its 1,800 square meters. A massive investment to bring wines onto the world market at the perfect point in time.





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The perspectives for the next 30 years are mixed: *"For us, the future lies in establishing a perfectly curated environment in which to release our wines: brought to market at the ideal age for consumption, staged to help restaurants and fine retailers the world over in the right framework. And yet, our focus is and remains on promoting the vitality of our vines in top sites."*

While others are relying on increased irrigation, H.O. Spanier is focused on 'dry farming.' The challenges posed by the Roter Hang in this regard are enormous. Spanier knows that he's already found several good answers, but much remains to consider: *"Nature guides our way. Only when we listen properly can we find the right solutions"* — repeating once again a principle that has served him so well for 30 years.

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