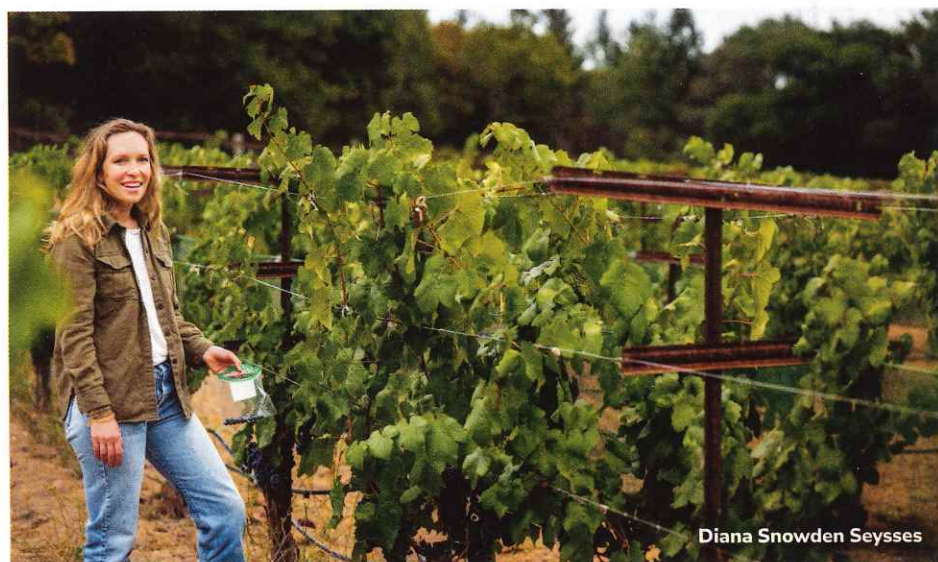


The ethical drinker

'Community is the answer'

We talk sustainability in wine with a guiding light in the industry

Natalie Earl, Decanter Sustainability Editor



Diana Snowden Seysses

Diana Snowden Seysses is one of wine's most articulate and driven environmental advocates. I met her on a rooftop in London. It was sunny and bright and we were drinking Provence rosé from Domaine de Triennes – where she's the consultant winemaker – yet the tone of our conversation was sombre.

Snowden Seysses is an active voice in making wine more sustainable: she's on the global steering committee of The Porto Protocol, the wine industry's climate action network, and is widely sought out for her advice on carbon capture, limiting greenhouse gas emissions, bottle reuse and environmental sustainability initiatives. She farms biodynamically at Burgundy's Domaine Dujac, where she is a family member and oenologist; and organically at California's Snowden Vineyards where she is also a family member and winemaker.

And yet, the emotional reality of the climate crisis is a heavy burden that even Snowden Seysses struggles with. Global political instability and inaction ('Trump's re-election plus many countries missing the UN deadline to set new climate targets') have left her feeling 'defeated and helpless'.

It's something many of us feel. So how do we manage to keep going, despite it all?

'Community is the answer,' she says, when I caught up with her a few months after our first meeting. Drawing on the Buddhist notion of no hope, no fear – a philosophy of accepting the way things are – she says 'we're going to have to do this together. As The Beatles famously pronounced: we get by with a little help from our friends'.

Economic backdrop

But sustainability is not only a matter of willpower. The barriers are systemic and economic. 'Our biggest challenge for sustainability is that wine sales are terrible at the moment, and few companies have the extra resources to throw at sustainability,' she observes.

For a business to survive long enough to change, it must be economically sustainable first. Focusing on things that wineries have direct control over – such as farming, packaging and shipping – and that also make economic sense, is key.

These initiatives might include reducing bottle weight, working towards no-till viticulture to improve soil health and its ability to store carbon, or planting trees and hedges to provide biodiversity and cooler microclimates. The important thing is, not to give up entirely.



**Snowden Vineyards,
Cousins Merlot, Santa Cruz
Mountains, California,
USA 2021 90**

£41.95 Shelved Wine

(UK importer: Flint Wines)

A vibrant Merlot made from biodynamically farmed grapes sourced from the Zayante vineyard in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Notes of plum and black cherry are buoyed by succulent acidity and wild herb.

Conceived by the Snowden cousins Diana, Christian, Susanne and Carey – the third generation of this family estate – it has been specifically set up for bottle reuse, with a wash-off label and no foil capsule. It's only a small part of the Snowden range, but this wine is much greater than the sum of its parts. What it represents, and the

message it puts across, is what counts. Although logistical obstacles to widescale bottle reuse remain, this project demonstrates that meaningful change is within reach.

Snowden Seysses wants to 'make the wine world reuse-ready', and this wine makes the case for us changing our expectations on what and how we drink. **Drink** 2025-2027 **Alc** 14.5%

