



POSIT
IVELY
Charged

VOL 5: REAP WHAT YOU SOW
OCTOBER 2020

avallen in partnership with wonderNETwork / share, learn & connect



WHAT CAN WE DO, RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW?

Doing our part to lessen our impact on the planet

During times of crisis, it can be even more challenging to keep an eye on the big picture - to think about our actions, to lead by example, and, above all, to be(e) positive. Sometimes it's all we can do to keep putting one foot in front of the other, and that's ok too.

In Avallen's Zoom boardroom, we came up with an idea - a way to generate the kind of inspiration that charges our batteries (sustainably) and stretches our brains (considerably).

We wanted to create a free resource for our community, taking a long look into a brighter future whilst we are housebound in the present and, perhaps, feeling a bit lost.

To that end, we convened another enthusiastic expert panel, handpicked for this month's theme:
REAP WHAT YOU SOW!

We are, as always, excited to activate their expertise for the benefit our wider community.





REAP WHAT YOU SOW!

BECAUSE WE CAN DRIVE CHANGE FROM THE GROUND UP

“Like the soil, mind is fertilized while it lies fallow, until a new burst of bloom ensues.”- John Dewey

For a lot of us, the word ‘terroir’ conjures images of dazzling vineyards and expensive dinners - a word that connotes artisanal craft and quality production. We definitely don’t think about climate change catastrophes and crop insecurity. That has to change.

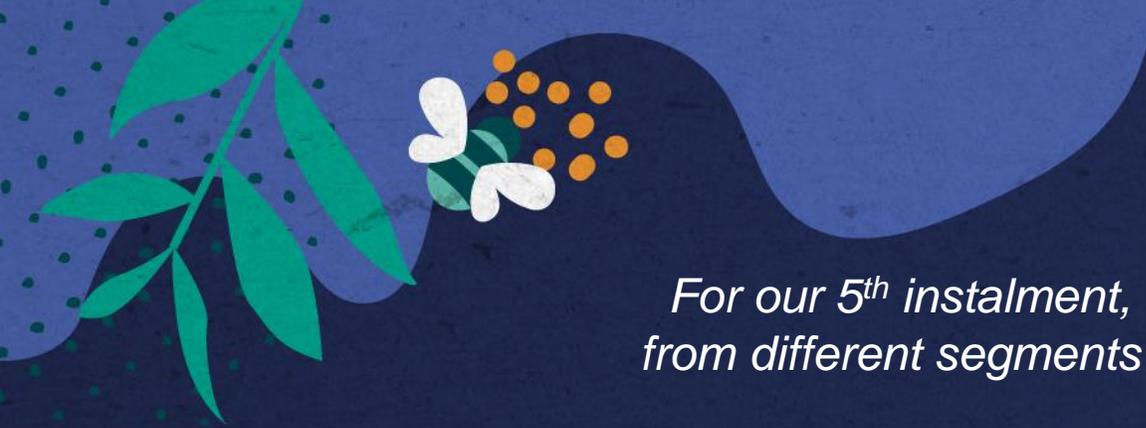
With the ever-increasing global appetite for inexpensive wines and spirits, many makers are forced to push the land to its limits, overworking the soil and manipulating the ecosystem that nourishes it. Whilst we may ask questions about processes, ingredient provenance, and waste, how often do we ask about the growing conditions, and how well would we understand the answers?

REAP WHAT YOU SOW! centres on terroir and the importance of nurturing the natural growing conditions that make all life on earth possible, not to mention all those delicious flavours and aromas we know and love. Our extraordinary panel of experts from all corners of the industry share their sage advice on what we can do to promote healthy soil and protect future harvests.



This is the phenomenal 5th instalment of Positively Charged, a series offering bite size chunks of curated and co-created wisdom with a single aim - to light up the sustainability conversation in the drinks industry using a balanced blend of expertise, creativity, and positivity.

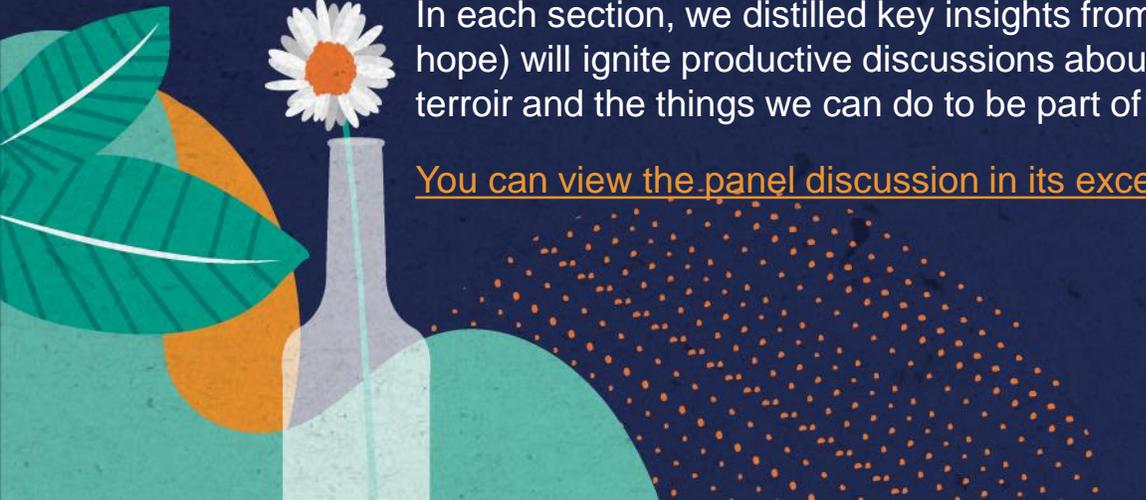
In case you missed them, you can still download [Volume 1 RISE UP!](#), [Volume 2 BEE THE CHANGE!](#), [Volume 3 THINK BEYOND THE BOX!](#) and [Volume 4 CAUSE A SUSTAINABLE STIR!](#) featuring planet-positive innovators who inspire fundamental change in businesses and individuals



For our 5th instalment, we gathered an experienced and grounded group of experts, from different segments of our industry, to talk about how brands can preserve terroir sustainably and how we can all support their efforts.

Ever-growing demand for year-round farming increases stress on the soil that nourishes us all, whilst also degrading the terroir that gives our ferments and distillates the unique aromas and flavours that delight our senses.

From choosing earth-friendly base ingredients to educating consumers, our brilliant panelists are leading the charge – influencing and empowering others to find soil-smart solutions that are as planet-positive as they are practical and profitable.



In each section, we distilled key insights from their talks that (we hope) will ignite productive discussions about the importance of terroir and the things we can do to be part of the solution.

[You can view the panel discussion in its excellent entirety here.](#)

KEY SPEAKERS

TOM HARFLEET

Head of Nature, Seedlip

WILLY BURRELL

Founder, Vestal Vodka

JULIAN KIRK

International wine expert

STEPHANIE JORDAN

Co-founder & Queen Bee, Avallen Spirits

MODERATOR

TIM ETHERINGTON-JUDGE

Co-Founder & Worker Bee, Avallen Spirits



THE HEART AND SOIL OF OUR PLANET

UNDERSTANDING THE HOW THE ORIGIN AFFECTS THE INGREDIENT

Collected insights from Tom Harfleet

Our relationship with soil has become far too distant. Tom invites us to reconnect with the earth beneath our feet and reap the rewards that a healthy microbiome offers.

Human beings used to have a close relationship with the land, by necessity. The advent of industrial farming, with its tillage, chemical fertilisers and pesticides, has all but destroyed that bond, but we can still rebuild it and invest in our own health by restoring the health of the soil.

If we look after our fast-dwindling topsoil, it will most certainly look after us, in three hugely important ways:

Crop health – Dead earth has nothing to give the plants that grow from it. Basically, if our fruit and veg don't eat a healthy balanced diet, then neither do we.

Flavour richness – All that lovely organic matter in soil that varies from place to place has a huge impact on the flavour of our raw ingredients, which helps us differentiate our products and menus.

Carbon capture – As if all that wasn't enough, soil is also a massive carbon sink, holding more CO2 than all the world's forests and oceans COMBINED.

ACTION SECTION

What we learned...

Soil is alive, but we are killing it at speed, thanks to industrial farming practices that tear up and poison these vital ecosystems.

Why it's important...

With no soil there can be no harvest - just crops that are nearly devoid of nutritional value and flavor. Oh, and we are also poisoning the climate by releasing enormous amounts of CO2

How we can be better...

- **Buy better quality food (when you can)** – it's not always possible when finances are tight, but if you can afford it, go organic, especially with [produce that retains a lot of pesticides](#)
- **Find a way to compost** – we know it's not always possible, but it is vital to return as much organic waste as possible to the soil
- **Get a little dirty** – physically touching the earth releases happy chemicals in the brain, so go outside, take your shoes off and reconnect with this life-giving resource.



YOU SAY POTATO, I SAY BE MORE SPECIFIC

FOCUSING LESS ON CATEGORY UNIFORMITY AND MORE ON INGREDIENT DIVERSITY

Collected insights from Willy Burrell

Vodka has had a strange journey in recent years, with a craft renaissance that can, at least partially, be attributed to a fundamental shift in the approach small producers take to sourcing base ingredients. Willy talked us through his discoveries, and helped us understand just how subversive the humble potato could be.

So if you think that base spirit ingredients aren't that important, think again. Ferments and spirits should derive their flavours from their base ingredients. Diverse terroir, alongside diverse varieties, allow us to build a flavour array that is as healthy for the planet as it is delightful for the palate.

How does terroir work for us as an industry?

Flavour-finding – there's no need to filter spirits and ferments, stripping them of their natural flavour compounds, when we can use ingredients that reflect their terroir to build our desired flavour profile – no additives required!

Category-defining – As we've learned from the history of vodka in the global market, the way a category is defined can have far-reaching impact on the quality and variety of the products available. By introducing terroir into our category definitions, we can promote diversity without losing category cohesion.

Provenance-protecting – When it comes to regulation and regional appellations, one of the easiest criteria to define and apply is terroir. Categories that already have these protections in place are clearly ahead of the game in terms of soil health - why can't we all benefit from the same protections to get the best from our crops?

ACTION SECTION

What we learned...

Most of the spirits that are available in most bars are made from a handful of (mostly monoculture-derived) base ingredients, but it wasn't always that way, and it doesn't have to be that way now.

Why it's important...

When we destroy terroir and strip liquids of their natural flavours, we're giving up environmental, commercial and personal benefits.

How we can be better...

- Look for spirits that are transparent about their ingredient sourcing
- Don't judge a spirit by its category - more and more producers are pushing boundaries in planet positive ways, and the results can be extraordinary
- Challenge definitions that don't deliver real benefits – why should ANYTHING we consume be flavourless or odourless?



THE BARTENDER'S GUIDE TO SUPPORTING STRONG SOIL

1- Learn the basics – And if you're reading this, you're already more well informed than most. Having a basic understanding of what soil IS, what soil DOES, and what happens when we don't look after will help you make good decisions.

2- Ask the tough questions – Asking a sales reps, brand ambassador, or brand owners about the origin of their ingredients serves two important purposes: 1. you know exactly who and what you're supporting, and 2. it's a signal to them that this matters to you.

3- Support soil-friendly suppliers – You've asked the question, and now it's time to make a choice. We aren't saying you should throw all your customer favourites in the trash, but perhaps give a bit of that precious shelf space to brands that help our earth stay earthy?

4- Explore your local terroir – Wherever you live, chances are there are growers nearby who are engaged with the earth in a positive way. Why not pay them a (safe and/or virtual) visit and learn about the unique combination of soil, water, air, and stewardship that make your region special.

5- Share your love of the land – If you find a great product or two that are soil-supportive, let your friends know about it. This movement will only gain traction if it's commercially viable, and that can only happen when we hit critical mass.

STARTLING STATISTICS

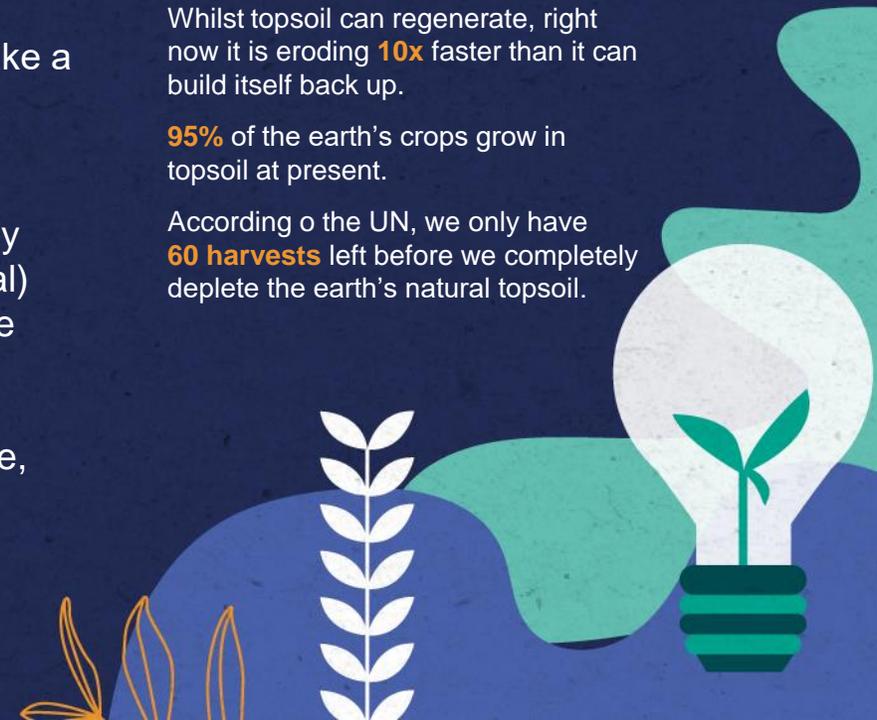
With everything going on in the world, why should we be worrying about soil right now?

50% of the entire planet's topsoil has been lost in the last 150 years, largely due to mistreatment of the land we use to grow our crops.

Whilst topsoil can regenerate, right now it is eroding **10x** faster than it can build itself back up.

95% of the earth's crops grow in topsoil at present.

According to the UN, we only have **60 harvests** left before we completely deplete the earth's natural topsoil.





IN VINO VERITAS - THE TRUTH ABOUT TERROIR

THE REAL PRICE WE PAY FOR CHEAP WINE IS HARD TO SWALLOW

Collected insights from Julian Kirk

It's impossible to talk terroir without talking about wine. 'Old World' wine regions like France and Italy have set the standard for staunch protection of soil and fervent defense against changes in the production process, from the ground up.

Julian shared numerous best practices when it comes to winemakers as guardians of terroir, but we always came back to the core challenge – mass consumer demand and those eager to supply them with what they want.

Teaching consumers to care about these two things could change everything:

The place your wine comes from

Is it a place that can accommodate vines? Is there sufficient water to grow them without disrupting the surrounding ecosystem? Is the regional community invested in protecting the land?

How the producer is treating the place your wine comes from

Are they mindful of their vineyard's biodiversity? Have they chosen appropriate varieties for their location? Are they nurturing the microorganisms in the soil or destroying them?

People will probably continue to want cheap wine, but if we can get them thinking differently about how the wine gets to be that cheap, they might make a few small decisions that, together, make a big impact.

ACTION SECTION

What we learned...

Vines are resilient and can grow almost anywhere, but that doesn't mean they should be grown everywhere.

Why it's important...

As mass-produced wines continue to grow in popularity, the impact of these industrial vineyards on their surrounding environment can be catastrophic, especially when the land is ill-suited to support vines.

How we can be better...

- **Educate yourself** – there are fundamental differences between producers, and it's worthwhile finding out about them. Even amongst the larger scale producers, there are those who are taking steps in the right direction.
- **Educate your customers and guests** – Without a drastic change in consumer perception, we can't drive change in retail or in production.



STOP TREATING SOIL LIKE DIRT

APPLYING TERROIR PRINCIPLES TO ALL CROPS IS GOOD FOR OUR PLANET AND OUR TASTEBUDS

Collected insights from Stephanie Jordan

While many of us may be aware of the connection between terroir and flavour in wine, we often overlook its influence on other consumables, and on the planet as a whole.

Why is this issue so important to the health of our global ecosystems? Stephanie explains the connection between terroir and sustainability.

Terroir isn't just another bouji buzzword that justifies a higher price point - it signifies the recognition that a place has a unique impact on its produce. Not only the soil, but also the microclimate, the accumulated expertise of its people – all factors that make up the unique character of a terroir.

But that's only part of the story.

Terroir can also be vital in our fight to reverse the damage we've done to our environment. We've already seen the positive outcomes that can come from terroir designation in places like Normandy, as it often leads to increased regional regulations and less interference with natural processes.

1- Supporting biodiversity particularly in fruit-growing regions, terroirs have resisted the monoculture movement to preserve traditional methods of ferment and spirit production.

2- Perpetuating permaculture protected terroirs are more likely to be minimally landscaped, with extra care taken to naturally control overgrowth, plant complementary indigenous plants, and encourage bee populations.

3- Ditching the pesticides hasn't always been a focus for the regulating bodies that protect terroir, but there are producers like Avallen who are trying to affect change that is sustainable for people and planet.

ACTION SECTION

What we learned...

Terroir is about more than wine and soil. It encapsulates a system that works with nature, instead of subverting it.

Why it's important...

The concept of terroir helps us understand the interplay between the elements, which can help us make better decisions for our soil and ourselves.

How we can be better...

- **Ask questions** – if you're in a bar or a shop, and you're not sure if the bottle you're buying lives up to the standards you set for yourself, ask.
- **Support the supporters**– find the bars, restaurants and shops that feature sustainable products with transparent supply chains. The more we support them, the more we'll see of them.
- **Take a step** – it's not all or nothing. If you can substitute just one bottle that hurts the earth with one that helps the earth, it's an excellent start.



BUT IF YOU CAN ONLY DO THREE THINGS...

Think twice about terroir – whether a bottle is in your grocery cart or on your back bar, take an extra moment to look at the place of origin. If it's not listed, there might be a good (or bad) reason. Ask your local BA or sales rep. Extra points if you email the distiller or brand owner!

Pick a product that comes from somewhere – now that you're looking at labels, why not make a conscious decision to support brands that prioritise transparency and look after the ground that nourishes their base ingredients? The best way to drive change is with your purchase power.

Give the soil a little love – it's not possible everywhere, but if there is a compost initiative in your area, take advantage. If you are lucky enough to have a garden, consider getting some cute little worms of your very own – you'll save loads on gardening mulch, and your seedlings will thank you.





GREAT! NOW WHAT?

Our aim was to get you excited about digging deeper into dirt. Did it work?

Whether it's listing a soil-friendly spirit, asking more questions about ingredient origins, or finding the closest compost drop point - if we managed to trigger even the smallest environmentally positive actions, then our job here is done. On to the next!

Let us know your thoughts about our Positively Charged series, topics you'd like to see featured, favourite Avallen cocktail recipes - anything you'd like to share, we'd love to hear from you!

Email us at: thebees@avallenspirits.com

