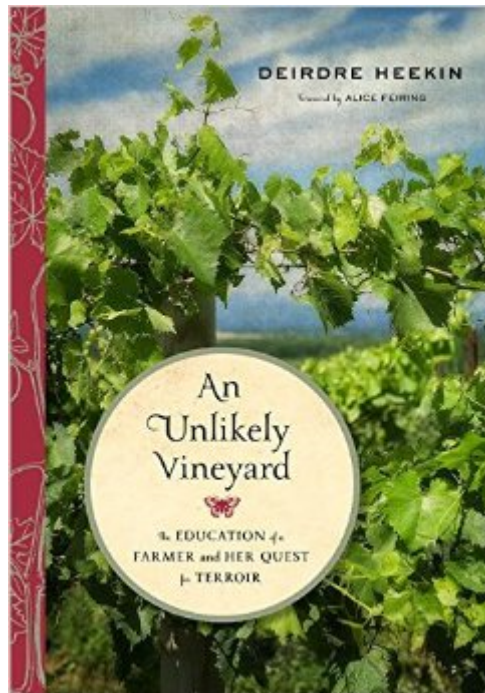


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# An Unlikely Vineyard: The Education Of A Farmer And Her Quest For Terroir



## Synopsis

Named one of the Best Wine Books of 2014 by The New York Times, *An Unlikely Vineyard* tells the evolutionary story of Deirdre Heekin's farm from overgrown fields to a fertile, productive, and beautiful landscape that melds with its natural environment. Is it possible to capture landscape in a bottle? To express its terroir, its essence of place—geology, geography, climate, and soil—as well as the skill of the winegrower? That's what Heekin and her chef/husband, Caleb Barber, set out to accomplish on their tiny, eight-acre hillside farm and vineyard in Vermont. But *An Unlikely Vineyard* involves much more. It also presents, through the example of their farming journey and winegrowing endeavors, an impressive amount of information on how to think about almost every aspect of gardening: from composting to trellising; from cider and perry making to growing old garden roses, keeping bees, and raising livestock; from pruning (or not) to dealing naturally with pests and diseases. As Eric Asimov, chief wine critic for The New York Times, writes, "I love this book, which conveys beautifully why the best wine is, at heart, an agricultural expression." Challenged by cold winters, wet summers, and other factors, Deirdre and Caleb set about to grow not only a vineyard, but an orchard of heirloom apples, pears, and plums, as well as gardens filled with vegetables, herbs, roses, and wildflowers destined for their own table and for the kitchen of their small restaurant. They wanted to create, or rediscover, a sense of place, and to grow food naturally using the philosophy and techniques gleaned from organic gardening, permaculture, and biodynamic farming. Accompanied throughout by lush photos, this gentle narrative will appeal to anyone who loves food, farms, and living well.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Here's a long overdue book -- one on organic, biodynamic gardening practices in the vineyard, the orchard, the kitchen garden and elsewhere on the sensibly sized homestead -- something less than, say, 10 acres. The author's educated herself through readings, workshops overseas, and the nuts and bolts of everyday failures and successes. Her approach is that each piece of land with its unique characteristics, has its own "terroir" and only a person sincerely immersed in that land will eventually find ways to live harmoniously with it as a producer of whatever has sensibly been chosen to grow thereon. Plenty of examples of what to do, what didn't work. At my tiny vineyard, I was disappointed to learn that black rot ruined my crop this year. I was a bit buoyed by Ms. Heekin's report that she too had black rot, but unlike me, she dug into the problems and found ways to combat them without resorting to chemical warfare--she found biodynamic ways to bring the dreaded black rot under control. That's the kind of book it is -- from apples to grapes to the whole of a good small farm. Indeed the integrating of garden into the vineyard, a holistic concept, strikes me as quintessential working biodynamics. Bravo, Deirdre! Good book.

A beautiful, informative, and well-researched book. Anyone passionate about food and wine (as I am) should read this. I've had a few of her wines, and they are amazing! Now, my hope is to visit their Osteria this summer.

Extraordinary and unexpected life story of farm building told in beautiful and often poetic prose. Read it and start your own farm or vineyard, or both!

I was expecting a tale of falling in love with viticulture and winemaking, but was sorely disappointed. Wish I could rate it more highly, but it was very dryly written--not compellingly enough for me to read further than the first chapter. Wish it had less arcane exposition and sociological polemicism and more of the personal aspects that made other first-person education-of-a-farmer-or-chef tomes such as, say, *Shucked* and *Heat* such good reads. Perhaps a ghostwriter--or a protagonist more passionate about her newfound profession--might have made a difference.

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