

EISWEIN

ICE WINE FROM GERMANY

It is late November or December and the thermometer is well below freezing point. In the vineyard it is still dark, but now is the time to make ice wine! Only a few estates, dedicated to producing the highest quality wines, will take the risk of not picking some of their finest grapes at vintage time, but to cover the vines with nets or plastic to protect from hungry birds or adverse weather and wait for winter.

The grapes have to be picked and pressed when still naturally frozen, the ideal temperature being about 9 C (17 F) which crystallizes out the water in the grapes, leaving a massive concentration of grape sugars, fruit acids and extracts. The few drops of highly concentrated sweet must are then fermented to obtain this great German rarity.

The difficult task of nursing the must to the finished wine requires the uttermost of experience and care from the wine-maker, but the golden liquid then excels in richness and fine sweetness, nicely balanced by the sizzling & exhilarating acidity.

It is this concentration of extract, sweetness and acidity which enables the wine to remain fresh over many years. The maturing process is slow and a good ice wine can still be unveiling its secrets, even after 20 years.

