

## Wine Estates in Germany



### Fitz-Ritter Bad Dürkheim (Pfalz)

**Region:** PFALZ (english also Palatinate)  
**Vineyards:** Dürkheim (Abtsfronhof, Hochbenn, Hochmess, Spielberg, Feuerberg), Ungstein  
Hönigsäckel, Herrenberg)  
**Varietals:** Riesling (65%), Gewürztraminer, Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir,  
Dornfelder, Cabernet Dorsa  
**Owner:** Johann Fitz  
**Remarks:** characteristic wines from a traditional producer, member of the prestigious VDP group

The Spa (english for *Bad*) town of Dürkheim, embedded into the foothills of the Palatinate forest, marks the heart of the fertile Middle Haardt region of the Pfalz. The area is especially favoured by a warm macroclimate in the broad Rhine valley, protected from cold winds by the bordering Pfalz hillside forests. Countless almond trees can thus flourish between the vineyards, their delicate pink blossom heralding the end of the winter. The Fitz-Ritter family estate dates back to 1785 and is today owned and managed by the 9th generation in succession, Johann Fitz. Konrad Fitz and his wife Alice, have now retired, but are still actively involved. Konrad's predecessors made names for themselves in their era, one being a member of the first German Parliament in the Pauls Church in Frankfurt, while another was the spokesman for the vintners at the Hambach Festival of 1832, which is accredited as being the first hour of German democracy.

The old estate mansion with its courtyard, underground cellars and surrounding garden (rare trees include the oldest and largest *Ginkgo Biloba* in Germany) provide a suitable birthplace for fine wines. The Abtsfronhof vineyard, formerly belonging to the Abbey, is indeed solely owned by the estate and is situated near the Spa town park and salines. The long period of vegetation and fertile soil in this area enable the grapes to fully ripen, even in lesser years. Yields are kept moderately low at the estate to produce aromatic, full-bodied and well-structured rich wines with good concentration of taste. Johann has turned the entire estate to organic farming since the 2008 vintage with European certification due for the 2012 crop. The yields have thus decreased considerably with a higher benchmark quality. Ideal conditions in the vineyards for the spicy and full-bodied Gewürztraminer with its delicate rosebud aroma, but also for Riesling, producing wines with less tartness and more body than the comparatively light Mosel Riesling wines.

The estate also houses one of the oldest sparkling wine producers in Germany. It was founded as the *Dürkheim Champagne Factory* in 1837 by Johann Fitz, who after being forced into exile following his outspoken involvement at the Hambach Festival in 1832, spent time in Reims/Champagne before returning home.

