

VINTAGE REPORT 1993 FROM GERMANY

1st October 1993

The main harvesting of the new 1993 crop commenced 2 weeks ago with the early ripening varieties and splendid sunshine weather since 26th September, despite dismal weather forecasts, awakens hopes for a great vintage. The vines suffered no damage during the winter and with temperatures rising up to 19C (62F) after 10th March and continuing throughout April, the growth period began with dynamic force. The bud burst was as early as mid-April and the vineyards were lush green by the end of April!

The flowering took place successfully during the first week of June, the earliest recorded since 1959, and even earlier than the great 1990 vintage. July was cooler, slowing down the rapid growth pace, but bringing some much desired rainfall, with no serious hail damage. Summer ruled throughout August with gloriously hot weather, but rainfall was desperately needed and the growth of the grapes slowed again. Rain finally arrived on 8th September, but only sufficient to moisten the parched soil. The deficiency of moisture has resulted in small firm healthy berries, naturally preventing any over-cropping. The intermittent rainy weather 13-25th September gave rise to some anxiety, but conditions are now ideal again for the picking.

Fully ripened and healthy grapes, well above the minimum required Oechsle degrees, have been harvested so far, and with the final pickings of Müller-Thurgau and Silvaner, the main harvesting of Riesling is now commencing. Dry weather is now needed for the coming three weeks to allow the pickers to bring in a great vintage, perhaps joining the magnificent 1959-1971-1976-1990 sequence. In any case, we can expect wines with a fine ripe aromatic and appealing taste. The fruit acidity levels have stabilized and with average to lower yieldings, good concentration can be expected with must readings reaching and exceeding 90 Oe, if the weather holds. The regional must readings are already more than 5 Oechsle higher than last year and a large percentage of the crop will be in the predicate levels, with noble rot now spreading. The total quantity will probably be similar to 1991, about 20% less than 1992 and this has led to a stable price situation on the market. Our report with a first assessment of the 1993 vintage will follow after picking has been completed.

11th November 1993

Never before in the history of viticulture in Germany has there been such a concentration of excellent vintages! Each of the great vintages 1988, 1989, 1990, 1992 and now 1993 has its special merit, as revealed in our vintage reports (now covering 20 consecutive years): the 1989 vintage with its monumental array of rich and honeyed top predicate *Spitzenweine*; the great 1990 vintage with massive concentration of ripe complex flavours, tightly held in a powerful structure, ensuring the Spätlese and Auslese from the leading estates an almost perpetual maturing potential; the 1992 vintage, exceeding even the fine 1988 vintage, with its fine elegance and good concentration of ripe appealing fruit and stable structure.

Indications for a great 1993 vintage were detailed in our early October report, with expectations of quality levels landing even between the 1989-1990 wines. Intermittent rainfall throughout October did however slightly dampen these optimistic expectations. Solid rainfall between 2nd-4th October was followed by very warm weather which enhanced the spreading of noble rot (*botrytis cinerea*) and steadily reduced the yield. Excellent picking results were nevertheless achieved thanks to the fact that most daytimes remained dry and sunny, drying out the moisture. Completely dry periods (e.g. 9-11th and 18-20th October) have enabled some exciting results, although selecting berries for Riesling BA/TBA was hardly feasible. The total crop will probably be around 9.5 million hl, about 30% less than last year with yields at acceptable levels for generic wines. The yields in the classic vineyards for estate wines vary between 45-70 hl/ha, lower than 1992, and partly similar to 1990.

RHEINHESSEN/PFALZ/NAHE: Virtually all Riesling with must readings exceeding 90 Oechsle at acidity levels between 7.5-9 g/l (about 15% less acidity than 1990), eg. Oppenheimer Sackträger 100 Oe, Niersteiner Hipping 96 Oe, Bassermann-Jordan 90-104 Oe in their Forster sites; Scheurebe at 92-95 Oe; Schales in Dalsheim with some Riesling TBA at 170 Oe, Huxelrebe between 100-170 Oe with high acidity and Siegerrebe yielding only 35hl/ha, well above 100 Oe.

RHEINGAU: Some estates picked early to match market demand for classic styles, resulting in a spread of 30% Kabinett and 70% Spätlese above 90 Oe; low yields with high must readings at estates such as Schloss Schönborn and even one cask of Steinberger promises to meet the State Domaine's Auslese benchmark (the first since 1990).

MOSEL-SAAR-RUWER: A good crop of Riesling above 80 Oe and ample acidity during normal picking, culminating in musts of 90 Oe and 10g/l acidity during w/c 24th October. The stalks of the bunches remained remarkably healthy, allowing the picking to be delayed till dry weather gave best results.

FRANKEN: Must readings for Müller-Thurgau and Silvaner all above minimum for predicate levels at 5-7g/l acidity and normal yields for Bocksbeutel wines.

BADEN/WÜRTTEMBERG: Also a successful harvest with a high percentage of predicate musts and normal yields, averaging up to 70hl/ha.

First sampling in cask after fermentation show full-bodied wines with crisp, clean and aromatic fruit. To meet market demands many a Kabinett will again be a downgraded Spätlese, and a borderline Auslese will become a Spätlese. Estates such as Schales and Ernst Bretz are again taking the risk to produce Eiswein later this year, mainly with specially selected Riesling vineyards. An arctic depression is however not in sight!

Riesling regards,
Derek Vinnicombe

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