

VINTAGE REPORT 2000 FROM GERMANY

1st November 2000

Expectations for yet another outstanding vintage were high again, but dismal weather in July and October has spoilt the overall results, leaving us with a mix of mediocre wines, a high percentage of Qualitätswein and smaller quantities of fine predicate wines.

Cold weather prevailed in January, down to -10C (16F) on 25th and 26th, enabling estates to harvest great 1999 Eiswein in the Rheingau area. Schloss Schönborn recorded a monumental 182 Oechsle for their picking on 26th.

The vines suffered no winter damage and an early bud-break around 19th April (the same as 1999!) was a great start to the season. May and June were glorious months with temperatures up to 28C (77F) early May, and above 30C (80F) from 12-21st June. Intermittent thunder storms provided the necessary moisture for a growth explosion of the new shoots. The growers indeed had problems keeping up with their work in the vineyards. Flowering was completed very successfully under ideal conditions by mid-June, similar to 1999 and thus a great omen for the quality of the 2000 crop; a long vegetation period being a key factor for fine wines.

Hail unfortunately caused some very severe damage, especially 11/12th May in the Ruwer valley, and also to a lesser extent in the steep Rudesheimer Berg Rottland and Schlossberg sites. Luckily, most other areas suffered no harm. July was a disastrous month, apart from sunshine 21-24th, with far too much rainfall, and far too cool. Summer returned on 11th August, with temperatures rising to 25C (72F), but the nights were too cool end of August, and the vines had lost their 2 weeks lead, in comparison to previous top vintages. Early September was too cool and moist, but then improved, remaining dry until 29th in the Rhine area, the rain front from the North reaching the Mosel areas one day before. Extensive rotting had spread, especially with early ripening varieties. October unfortunately also followed the July pattern with 17 moist days! The harvesting from mid-September till today has thus produced very varying results, picking of Riesling neither completed in the Mosel areas, nor at the larger Rheingau estates.

RHEINHESSEN: the fine dry period in September during the main harvesting has produced some very fine results, especially in low-yielding sites, helped also by stringent negative selective harvesting of sour-rotting, unripe grapes. The Ernst Bretz estate was able to select Ortega Trockenbeerenauslese at 175

Oechsle on 26/27th September. Ortega and Siegerrebe were also harvested at top Beerenauslese levels, as also by the Sanders in Dexheim at 145 Oechsle, and the Schäfers in Mettenheim harvested Siegerrebe Auslese at 112 Oechsle and Ortega at 124 Oechsle with sufficient acidity levels. The Schales estate waited, picking their Siegerrebe on 17/18th October at just over 150 Oechsle, to be bottled as top Beerenauslese. Scheurebe has produced fine Kabinett readings, Kerner at good Spätlese readings, and the late-ripening pinot varieties (Weisser Burgunder, Grauer Burgunder, Chardonnay) remained healthy, leading to splendid Spätlese readings above 90 Oechsle. Gewürztraminer has also been harvested at readings up to 100 Oechsle, Markus Machmer picking fine Spätlese in his Stein vineyard. Red varieties such as Dornfelder and Spätburgunder were generally picked early at Qualitätswein readings to avoid problems with rotting. The Schäfers were however able to select Spätburgunder at 94 Oechsle. Riesling has been harvested from 80 Oechsle upwards, from Kabinett to Auslese levels, with Edelfäule (noble mould) assisting. The Seebrich and Schneider estates commenced Riesling picking in Nierstein on 9th October at readings over 80 Oechsle. Albrecht Schneider completed picking 24th October with good yields of Paterberg Kabinett at 83 Oechsle, and 92 Oechsle in the steep Hipping, even matching his great 1999 Spätlese.

PFALZ: further South than Rheinhessen, similar fine results have been achieved, but only with negative selective harvesting, albeit at low yields, especially with Riesling, pinot varieties and Gewürztraminer. The Fitz-Ritter estate has again harvested Gewürztraminer at 100 Oechsle in the Nonnengarten site.

AHR: the State Domain in Mariental has harvested about 30% less Spätburgunder than average, mostly at readings between 70-80 Oechsle.

RHEINGAU: Spätburgunder suffered from rotting and has produced poor results; Riesling generally so far at Qualitätswein and Kabinett levels.

NAHE: not so successful as the Rheinhessen region, Riesling also at lower readings.

MOSEL-SAAR-RUWER: poor results for early pickings, and poor weather during the main Riesling harvest which commenced 16th October has not helped. Depending on spraying sequence, some Riesling have remained healthy, selective picking otherwise of sour rot and noble mould being important. Stefan Bollig has harvested Riesling so far at 73-82 Oechsle at far lower yields than 1999,

mostly for Hochgewächs and Kabinett, with some Spätlese; similar results also at the Bernkastel and Wehlen estates. Karin Fischer's grapes have remained very healthy (an exception in the Saar area), a large percentage being at Qualitätswein levels with some Kabinetts at 76 Oechsle and slightly above. Fine Edelfäule has developed with readings at 100 Oechsle, but rainfall has so far hampered the prospects of harvesting Spätlese and better qualities.

FRANKEN, BERGSTRASSE, BADEN and WÜRTTEMBERG: yields and quality lower than 1999, but at satisfactory readings.

Riesling, Silvaner & Spätburgunder vineyards have been prepared for the harvesting of Eiswein in all regions, and the estates now await a cold arctic depression.

The total quantity of the 2000 crop will probably be around 10 million hectolitres with a huge split in quality of the crush, up to 25% less than the large 1999 harvest, but the individual qualities are more important than the total quantity. The long vegetation period, good extract contents and selective picking of healthy fruit will provide wines to meet the high benchmark of quality now expected from German estate wines.

Eiswein Harvest Report 2000

Hopes were diminishing fast for a vintage 2000 Eiswein, with the weather miserably wet and far too warm. Unprepared vineyards thus suffered albeit complete losses due to rotting. The experienced ice wine producers counteract with special late Summer spraying or protection by covering the vines with plastic film. Cold weather however arrived just in time for Christmas!

The thermometer dropped to zero C on 20th December, and to -4 C (25F) before dawn on 21st, but this was not low enough for Eiswein. A clear night sky followed in the Rheinhessen and Pfalz areas and the harvesting of Eiswein commenced Friday 22nd December before dawn at -9 C (17.5F). The Mosel and Saar valley was unfortunately protected by low cloud, but this also cleared the following night and the temperature dropped to -7 C (20F) on Saturday. Fascinating photos of the harvesting can be seen on our web-site.

Ernst Bretz, Bechtolsheim (Rheinhessen)

Riesling at 130 Oe and Späetburgunder Weissherbst at 140 Oe in the Bechtolsheimer Homberg site; Silvaner and Chardonnay at up to

145 Oe in the Klosterberg site on 22nd December. Harald Bretz is pleased about the reasonably healthy state of the fruit. This is now their second Chardonnay Eiswein, following the remarkable 1997 vintage.

Christmann-Roll, Gau-Heppenheim (Rheinhessen)

Silvaner Eiswein at 150 Oechsle in the Schlossberg site on 22nd December.

G & M Machmer, Bechtheim (Rheinhessen)

Riesling at 135 Oe and Gewuerztraminer at 130 Oe in the Bechtheimer Rosengarten site were harvested on 23rd December.

Sander, Dexheim (Rheinhessen)

Silvaner Eiswein at 140 Oe in the Dexheimer Doctor on 22nd December.

Weber, Saulheim (Rheinhessen)

Silvaner at 132 Oe in the Saulheimer Hoelle on 22nd December. Thomas Weber has been producing Eiswein since 1989 and mentioned the curious fact that the temperature usually drops a further 1 degree C in December just before dawn. This year he measured -8 C at 5:30am and -9 C at 7:30am.

Fitz-Ritter, Bad Duerkheim (Pfalz)

Riesling Eiswein in the Duerkheimer Hochbenn at 140 Oechsle and 10g/l acidity on 22nd December.

Bollig-Lehnert, Trittenheim & Piesport

Jill and Stefan Bollig were both out in their Trittenheimer Altaerchen vineyard at 4am on 23rd December (they "win" for the earliest start!) and are delighted with the result, their best Riesling cask this year at 120 Oechsle. The quantity is however less than their successful 1999 Eiswein.

Dr Fischer, Ockfen (Saar)

After two sleepless nights, Karin Fischer was harvesting her Riesling in the Ockfener Bockstein at 6:15am on 23rd December, her nicest Christmas present! The team of 10 pickers completed the task by 9am and were rewarded with hot Gluhwein and breakfast.

Riesling regards,
Derek Vinnicombe

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