

VINTAGE REPORT 2001 FROM GERMANY

18th October 2001

.... we are keeping our fingers crossed, but with the 2001 harvest now approaching its crucial stage, the prospects for smiling winemakers are good. *What has the weather been like so far this year in the German vineyard areas?* Important facts which help to build the picture about the new vintage:

January and February were very rainy months coupled with mild temperatures, and only a few short frosty periods, but seldom below -8 C (19 F); thank goodness for the cold spell last 22/23rd December for the 2000 Eiswein harvest!

March was fairly mild, dismal rainy weather, but no damage to the dormant vines. Frosty weather around freezing point 12-22nd April gave cause to anxiety with the buds just opening, but damage was minimal; warm and sunny weather then followed.

The flowering was "on schedule" by mid-June, but hot summer weather did not take grasp of Germany till 20th July. Apart from a short cool and rainy intermezzo 4-8th August, and a few scattered thunder storms with some hail damage, the summer was glorious with temperatures reaching 35 C (88 F), and warm nights; ideal weather for the vines.

The first half of September was however very disappointing, with the temperature dropping to 5 C (40 F), and the prospects for a great crop began to diminish rapidly. Serious and very unusual hail damage hit the Rheingau hard late evening of the 2nd October between Johannisberg and Schloss Vollrads. The weather has however improved in all areas, and from 2nd October, warm & dry weather has prevailed till today! Those estates that employed diligent spraying, careful working of the vineyards, and escaping hail damage, have been rewarded with healthy ripe grapes. Picking of the main Riesling crop has commenced this week, but generally, yields are lower than previous years.

RHEINHESSEN: Binz in Nackenheim and Bretz in Bechtolsheim have reported a 30% lower than average yield with Dornfelder, but excellent quality and deep red colour. Silvaner was harvested at 78 Oechsle in Nackenheim; the harvesting of Riesling, Pinot Blanc and Chardonnay is now underway. Excellent readings of up to 90 Oechsle have been registered. The picture is similar in Nierstein at the Seebich and Schneider estates. Seebich harvested his first Riesling yesterday at 88 Oechsle. The Scheurebe in the Oelberg site was harvested at 84 Oechsle which will produce a fine Kabinett quality. The

Gewürztraminer grapes are still healthy and will be harvested later, hoping for a good Spätlese again. They will also prepare part of the Riesling in the Oelberg site for Eiswein production. Albrecht Schneider has harvested about 2/3 of the vineyards, Riesling now at 88-90 Oechsle and ideal must acidity levels (10-11‰), Riesling Kabinett from the Paterberg site has already been picked successfully. Fully-ripened and healthy grapes are still hanging in the prime Hipping site.

PFALZ: Konrad Fitz in Bad Dürkheim had harvested 1/3 of the healthy crop under ideal conditions by 16th October. Oechsle and acidity readings are optimal for their requirements. They still have to harvest 90% of the Riesling and all Gewürztraminer and Chardonnay sites. At the moment they are continuing with negative hand-picking of unsuitable berries or bunches. A medium yield of Pinot Blanc was harvested 16th October at 88 Oechsle and 8.2‰ to produce a fine dry Kabinett.

RHEINGAU: Klaus Molitor in Hattenheim reports about 50% less yield than last year, but fine Oechsle readings between 70-92 Oechsle so far. All pickings from 15th October are well into his Spätlese benchmark quality.

MOSEL-SAAR-RUWER: Harvesting of Riesling will commence this coming weekend, and the prospects are fairly optimistic. Karin Fischer measured 65-78 Oechsle on 16th October in Ockfen and will not start picking till 22nd October. The grapes are all healthy at the moment, with no rush to harvest. She hopes for dry weather through till mid-November for some fine Spätlese in her cool climate Saar vineyards. The picture is similar in the middle Mosel area with picking commencing this weekend. The Dr Thanisch estate has already harvested their Dornfelder successfully at 84 Oechsle.

A summary of the 2001 harvest is therefore not yet possible, but as can be seen from the results so far, the prospects for a fine vintage are optimistic. Fine healthy ripe grapes and lower than average yields ought to produce attractive wines with good concentration of complex mineral flavours and crisp fruit acidity.

8th November 2001

Excellent dry weather prevailed through till 2nd November, and indeed October 2001 has been the best October over the past 100 years with 21 continuous days of fine dry weather! Growers from the middle Mosel area are comparing the 2001 with the great 1990 vintage! *It is indeed very exciting.* Unfortunately, picking has not yet been completed (Mosel-Saar-Ruwer estates require another 3-5 days), and dismal wet weather has set in since 3rd. We are hoping for some dry periods to complete the harvest.

14th November 2001

The weather improved on the 9th, and the estates were able to successfully complete harvesting by 12th November.

RHEINHESSEN: Albrecht Schneider completed picking 27th October in Nierstein and compares his results to the 2000 vintage (which scores high marks in our ratings). On average, the 2001 grapes were healthier, which is a great quality omen; Riesling was harvested at 85-90 Oechsle in the Paterberg, Findling and Brueckchen sites, but at low yields; higher Oechsle readings of 90-92 were achieved in the top Hipping, Oelberg and Pettenthal sites, and a great Auslese was also selected at 106 Oechsle in the Hipping. The Schaefer in Mettenheim are also delighted with their results, harvesting red Spaetburgunder (pinot noir) at 95 Oechsle for Spaetlese. The Ernst Bretz estate in Bechtolsheim completed the harvest on 25th October, and Horst rates it higher than the previous vintage, having harvested 2001 Riesling Auslese at 102 Oechsle. Beerenauslese was selected from Ortega and Siegerrebe from 130 Oechsle upwards, Trockenbeerenauslese between 160-170 Oechsle. Red Dornfelder yielded 25% less than last year, but at readings up to Spaetlese. The Chardonnay was harvested at top Spaetlese readings to ferment dry, and a virgin crop of red St.Laurent is maturing in new oak casks, a new addition to their growing red wine family, which already includes Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, apart from their wide range of red and white pinot varieties. Riesling and Spaetburgunder grapes in the Homberg, and Silvaner in the Klosterberg site are waiting for cold weather -- Horst & Harald Bretz will again attempt to produce Eisweins... same procedure every year!

PFALZ: Fitz-Ritter harvested Riesling at 102 Oechsle on 30th October, and in the days before, Gewuerztraminer Spaetlese in the Nonnengarten and Abtsfronhof sites at splendid 97-98 Oechsle;

part of the Abtsfronhof crop being specially selected for their top dry Gewuerztraminer. Chardonnay Spaetlese in the Spielberg site excelled at 100 Oechsle! Quantities are similar to the 2000 harvest results, i.e. only 50% of a normal crop. Rieslaner has been selected again for Beerenauslese, as in 1999.

RHEINGAU: Riesling also profited from the glorious October in the aristocratic Rheingau area, and harvesting was completed by end of that month. Indeed, all Riesling pickings at Schloss Schoenborn were above splendid 90 Oechsle from 22nd October onwards at ideal acidity levels of 8.2 - 9.5 g/l. 25 helpers worked there for 4 weeks, and selective picking produced some small quantities up to 120 Oechsle. As in 1990, there was no extensive Botrytis, just fully-ripened grapes! The average yield was low at around 50hl/ha. The State Domaine at Kloster Eberbach experienced similar results, with readings of 85-96 Oechsle in their monopole Steinberg site. We can look forward to some fine Kabinett and Spaetlese, but no trade quantities of Steinberger Auslese. 8 helpers combed their steep Raenthaler Baiken vineyard for several days, hand-picking a monumental and immortal Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese at 235 Oechsle, which will slowly ferment over the coming 3 or more months. This is the 2nd highest reading since that great 1921 vintage (260 Oechsle). A few bottles will be released for the VDP auction, but otherwise the wine will "disappear" into the treasure library for future generations of connoisseurs!

MOSEL: As already indicated, the 2001 can be classed as a truly great vintage in this particular region! Gerd & Stephan Studert of the Studert-Pruem estate in Wehlen have harvested 75% of their Riesling crop at Auslese and 25% at Spaetlese readings! Do not be surprised at their 2001 "Kabinett" showing the fullness and length of a Spaetlese! Riesling Beerenauslese at 135 Oechsle and Trockenbeerenauslese at 170 Oechsle were selected in their Wehlener Sonnenuhr. Spectacular results also at the Dr H.Thanisch (Mueller-Burggraeff) estate, with Riesling up to 186 Oechsle in the Doctor site. With a total average yield not above 50 hl/ha, the average Oechsle was 85, the highest average since the greatest vintages 1921 (first-ever Riesling TBA on the Mosel!), 1959 and 1976. Indeed, the estate already compares the 2001 to the monumental 1959 vintage, whereby the 2001 has an even better acidity structure. Stefan Bollig at the Bollig-Lehnert estate (Piesport & Trittenheim) has cellared his greatest crop ever, even better than his 1990 vintage, with readings of 90-95 Oechsle in Dhron, 85-95 in both Piesport and his Trittenheimer Apotheke site. The yields are low, giving high flavour concentrations, and with the crisp fruit acidity, we can expect exciting

results. The Vereinigte Hospitien also report a great harvest in their Piesporter Goldtroepfchen site and will need to de-classify Spaetlese for a Kabinett bottling! Selective picking has also resulted in a Beerenauslese.

SAAR: After 3 weeks of picking from 22nd October - 11th November, Karin Fischer is pleased with the crop at the Dr Fischer estate, and is now hoping for cold weather to produce Eiswein in the Ockfener Bockstein site. The healthy Riesling grapes ripened well in October, and Kabinetts averaging 76 Oechsle, as well as Spaetlese from 82-87 Oechsle are now fermenting slowly in old oak casks. The yields are even lower than the 2000 vintage, so we can expect wines packed with plenty of crisp mineral flavours. Nearby in Wiltingen, the Scharhofberger site has also produced some fine results. The Vereinigte Hospitien have cellared Kabinett, Spaetlese and some Auslese. Egon Mueller also completed his harvest on 12th November. In 1999, the Saar excelled above other regions, but this year, the middle Mosel has apparently won the race!

Reports from the Ahr, Franken and Baden are also very positive, and on average, the 2001 crop in Germany can be regarded as outstanding, as far as estate wines are concerned. Several growers did however experience crop failure due to the difficult weather conditions in September. This will be reflected in their offerings next year. The total quantity will be far lower than 2000, perhaps only around 8.5 million hectolitres.

Vintage Report 2001 (14/15th December 2001)

The warming political Bush-Putin atmosphere did not stop the cold Russian front hit Germany this past weekend. The vintners welcomed it with joy! The approaching frostiness was well forecasted and the estates rallied friends and helpers to be "on standby" for the gruelling task of harvesting, at a temperature when most people enjoy to sit by a warm fireside, at a time when most people are still asleep! Both Friday and Saturday, 14/15th December, were suitable for picking Eiswein in Germany. The temperature dropped to -9 C (17 F) in the Rhine valley on that Friday morning.

Heinrich Seebach, Nierstein: Riesling was harvested in the Oelberg site at 130 Oechsle and 10.4g/l acidity on Friday, 14th December. In spite of the risk, they had not protected the grapes with nets against hungry starlings, flying south along the Rhine.

Ernst Bretz, Bechtolsheim: out in the Rheinhessen countryside, away from the sheltered Rhine valley, the temperature dropped to -12 C (13 F) on Friday, and Harald Bretz was in the vineyards with his team at 6am. Silvaner was harvested in their Klosterberg site, Riesling and Spätburgunder (pinot noir) in the Homberg. The yield was one third less than last year, but the quality better with Oechsle readings up to 147.

Sander, Dexheim: the Sanders harvested Silvaner early Friday in their Dexheimer Doktor site. The Oechsle reading reached 170 Oechsle, higher than 1999 or 2000, but at a lower must acidity level of 9g/l.

Schales, Dalsheim: Arno Schales has reported their 43rd and 44th Eiswein since 1961. The estate was one of the first in Rheinhessen to experiment in the late fifties, and their first release was the 1961, an Auslese Eiswein at 108 Oechsle. The 2001 crop of Riesling Eisweins was harvested early Friday from 1.5 hectares (3.75 acres). producing two batches at 150 and 170 Oechsle.

Weber, Saulheim: Thomas Weber harvested Silvaner in his Saulheimer Hölle vineyard on both Friday and Saturday at -9 C (17 F). The readings varied between 130 to 155 Oechsle.

Fitz-Ritter, Bad Dürkheim: although renowned for its warm microclimate, the cold front even reached the Pfalz region. 14 friends and helpers harvested Riesling in the Hochbenn vineyard on Friday from 7-8:30am, at 145 Oechsle and -9.5 C (17 F). Alice Fitz was again responsible for the traditional big breakfast afterwards.

Bollig-Lehnert, Trittenheim: In the Mosel valley, Stefan Bollig was picking Eiswein in the Altärchen site on Friday. At 5am it was "too warm" at -6 C (22 F), but as commonly experienced, the temperature drops before dawn, and between 6 and 8am the thermometer showed -8 C (19 F). On Saturday the cold weather did not hold and picking had to stop. Stefan might well have to be picking over Christmas!

Anton Zimmermann, Bernkastel-Kues: Josef Zimmermann harvested Riesling in his Kardinalsberg site, at the top of the slope, early Friday at -10 C (16 F), with 125 Oechsle and 10g/l acidity.

Dr H.Thanisch (Müller-Burggraeff): the top part of the steep Bercasteler Doctor vineyard (the higher, the colder) was reserved for Eiswein production, and Riesling was harvested at 130 Oechsle and 11g/l acidity on both Friday and Saturday at -10 and -8 C (16 & 19 F). Meanwhile in the Saar valley:

Dr Fischer, Ockfen: the temperature did not drop low enough on Friday and Karin Fischer was in a state of despair at 5am on Saturday when the thermometer showed only -6 C. However, by 6am the temperature had dropped to -8 C (19 F) and held steady until 8:30. With 10 friends and helpers she harvested Riesling in their Ockfener Bockstein site at 140 Oechsle and 10g/l acidity. A good breakfast followed with hot Glühwein..... and the [photo](#) shows how pleased Karin is about her Eiswein.

Update 24th December 2001

Stefan Bollig had his best Christmas present ever! We had a "white" Christmas in Germany, the first time for many years, and Stefan and his team (Jill) were out in the Trittenheimer Altaerchen, picking Riesling at -12 C (13 F). His best Eiswein ever!

Riesling regards,
Derek Vinnicombe

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