

VINTAGE REPORT 2007 FROM GERMANY

3rd November 2007

A perfect harvest has ended this week. Perfect in all respects, with healthy ripe grapes that enjoyed the longest-ever ripening period, and higher yields than the small 2005 & 2006 crops.

Record-breaking mild weather in March enabled an early bud-break before 4th April, and both months April and May were so warm that flowering began earlier than ever before. The earliest recorded date had been 2nd June 1993 in the Rheingau, but flowering was completed this year under ideal conditions before the end of May, more than one month ahead of normal. An omen for a potentially great vintage. The following Summer months were however too rainy and too cool, but ideal for the hardy vines! They suffered no drought damage, and sufficient moisture allowed the roots to transport minerals from deep down. Usually, 100 days are regarded as a minimum period from flowering to harvest to achieve enough physiological ripeness. The 2007 grapes ripened 120-150 days. Due to the cooler weather, sugar levels did not reach such high levels as during those hot years 1959, 1976 or 2003.

Extensive hail damage occurred 25th May in the Mosel region, mainly restricted to Tritenheim. Stefan Bollig lost most of his crop in that area, but none of his vineyards in Dhron and Piesport were affected. He will unfortunately thus not be able to produce any Eiswein this year.

Picking started 13th September in the Rhine areas with early-ripening varieties, followed by Riesling end of September, and 8th October in the Mosel & Saar vineyards. Throughout the harvesting until 31st October, only 4 rainy days were registered. Temperatures remained fairly cool, which enabled the grapes to be picked and transported under ideal conditions. Warm weather between 1st and 3rd October started the spread of Botrytis as noble mould, but this process was slowed afterwards by cool temperatures. Due to the very healthy state of the grapes, it was indeed an easier time for the vintners, and there was no rush as in 2006.

The yields for all varieties were higher than in 2005 or 2006, but those had been much too low. The 2007 grapes tasted very aromatic with fine acidity, and due to the ideal

conditions, fine qualities with high extract levels and good concentration of flavours can be expected. First tastings are already confirming these anticipations.

The total crop in Germany will amount to nearly 11 million hectolitres, with good results in all regions, being almost 20% larger than the small 2005 or 2006 crops.

In order to demonstrate the higher benchmark set by the estates, these are the official minimum Oechsle (Brix) for Riesling, which take the climatic and regional differences into consideration:

Riesling	Rhine	Rheingau	Mosel
Spätlese	85 (20.4)	85 (20.4)	80 (19.3)
Auslese	92 (22)	95 (22.6)	88 (21.1)
BA	120 (28)	125 (29.1)	110 (25.9)
TBA	150 (34.3)	150 (34.3)	150 (34.3)

RHEINHESSEN: With no rush, the harvest spread itself over nearly six weeks of picking, an unusually long period, to obtain the optimum physiological ripeness for each varietal. **Franz Karl Schmitt** in Nierstein harvested and processed his Pinot Meunier grapes (named Schwarzriesling in Germany) at 103 Oechsle in the Paterberg for his red wine (mash fermentation), and at 99 Oechsle in the Findling as Weissherbst (rose) for early 2008 release. Powerful Riesling Kabinett and Spätlese were again harvested in the Kranzberg, Oelberg and Hipping sites from 92 to 96 Oechsle, and specially selected Pinot Blanc at 95 Oechsle. He delayed harvesting the best parts of the Hipping and Pettenthal to be rewarded with Auslese at 117 Oechsle, and a great Riesling TBA at 178 Oechsle in the Hipping after 4 days of meticulously selecting berries with his team. A benchmark tradition set by Franz-Karl's grandfather back in 1900; then the first Riesling TBA in Rheinhessen.

Jochen **Seebrich** was very satisfied with the yields, harvesting all qualities between top Kabinett and Auslese, as well as a Riesling Oelberg Beerenauslese at 130 Oechsle on 16 October. Scheurebe was harvested at 86 Oechsle and a larger than usual quantity of Gewürztraminer at 100 Oechsle. Albrecht **Schneider** harvested Riesling in the Paterberg at 90 Oechsle for Kabinett, and above 92 Oechsle in the Hipping, Orbel and Oelberg sites. His red varieties (Pinot Noir, Dornfelder and Saint Laurent) all gave better results than last year. Nearby vineyards in Oppenheim produced similar high Oechsle readings. Frank

Heyden at **Dr. Heyden** harvested his Riesling at 90 Oechsle and higher, and a small quantity of selective picking at 120 Oechsle, but this has been added to the Auslese. Selected Pinot Gris was harvested at 102-104 Oechsle.

In Nackenheim, Manfred & Rainer **Binz** harvested healthy and fully ripened Pinot Noir (Spätburgunder) at 105 Oechsle. Riesling averaged 95 Oechsle and Pinot Gris at 98 Oechsle, followed by Pinot Blanc, Chardonnay and Merlot at above 100 Oechsle. Volker **Schäfer's** benchmark for a Spätburgunder Auslese in Mettenheim was exceeded, with readings between 100 and 113 Oechsle. Markus **Machmer** in Bechtheim harvested a fine Gewürztraminer crop at 94 Oechsle for Spätlese in his Stein vineyard (bottling will again be with the glass Vinolok seal). In Bechtolsheim, Horst & Harald **Bretz** harvested Sauvignon Blanc at 91 Oechsle, Riesling at up to 96 Oechsle on 10th October, and their first major crop of Gewürztraminer beforehand at 94 Oechsle from the 5 acres in the Petersberg. Fermentation has already been stopped by cooling to produce a Spätlese with natural sweetness (bottling will be with Stelvin). Ortega was hand-picked in the Petersberg for TBA at 180-210 Oechsle, and Huxelrebe at 156 Oechsle for top Beerenauslese in the Sonnenberg.

PFALZ: the **Fitz-Ritter** estate in Bad Dürkheim had no problems this year, with conditions similar to Rheinhessen. Both Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris were more successful than last year, and a fine crop of Gewürztraminer in the Abtsfronhof was picked early October at 100 Oechsle. Due to the abundant crop, Gewürztraminer with noble mould was also hand-selected for Beerenauslese from one of their 40 year-old vineyards. Normal pickings of Riesling exceeded 90 Oechsle and a Great Growth Riesling was hand-picked in the Michelsberg on 11 October.

RHEINGAU A similar story repeats itself in the Rheingau with the main harvest of Riesling being picked at 90-96 Oechsle, and Pinot Noir even reaching 105 Oechsle for normal pickings, according to Klaus **Molitor** in Hattenheim. The yields were also above average, and acidity levels at a crisp level, higher than 2003.

MOSEL-SAAR-RUWER: Stefan Bollig (**Bollig-Lehnert**) harvested only 2 Fuder at 87 Oechsle from his hail-damaged Trittenheim vineyards, but great results from Dhron and

Piesport have compensated these losses, with good yields of Riesling, all above 90 Oechsle, from Kabinett to Auslese, and Pinot Blanc at 98 Oechsle. Equally successful results have been registered further down the river on the other middle Mosel steep vineyard slopes in Brauneberg, Bernkastel, Graach, Wehlen, Zeltingen and Ürzig. At the **Dr.H.Thanisch** estate (Müller-Burggraef), harvesting began early October at 80 Oechsle, with the main harvest of Riesling between 90 and 105 Oechsle, and up to 114 Oechsle in the Lay for Auslese. No Beerenauslese has been selected due to the healthy grapes, especially as great BA's have now released from the 2006 crop. Some grapes are still hanging in the Berncasteler Doctor for further ripening, or to risk producing some Eiswein. 2007 also marks one of their most successful Pinot Noir crops in their Lieserer Schlossberg site at 108 Oechsle, but not for release until 2009. Gerhard & Stephan Studert, **Studert-Prüm** in Wehlen, began harvesting 8th October and have also cellared a fine crop of Riesling from 90 to 108 Oechsle, as well as selecting berries with noble mould at TBA level of 186 Oechsle, albeit a very small quantity.

Karin Fischer, **Dr Fischer** in Ockfen (Saar) started hand-picking Riesling at 70 Oechsle on 8th October with her team, finishing 30th October in the Bockstein, as in 2006. The yields were higher than in previous years, but this has not "diluted" the quality. No Auslese will be released from the 2007 vintage (not enough Botrytis), but mainly fine Kabinett with a large production of a new dry Saar Riesling estate wine. Her new dry Riesling will be released March 2008 with stelvin closure and a modernized label. In the Scharzhofberger site of the **Vereinigte Hospitien**, Riesling was harvested at up to 88 Oechsle for Kabinett and Spätlese, a good-sized crop after the hail damage in 2006, and otherwise between 77 and up to 95 Oechsle in their Piesport vineyards.

NAHE: At the Paul **Anheuser** estate, Rudolf and Paul (the 14th generation) also had no problem to cellar a very fine crop between 90 and 110 Oechsle, whether Scheurebe in the Mönchberg, or Pinot Blanc and Riesling in their Kreuznacher and Schlossböckelheimer sites. A larger quantity of dry white Blanc de Noir has this year been pressed from their Pinot Noir grapes for early release in 2008, due to the success of their first production 2006. A small

quantity of Riesling was berry-selected in the Krötenpfuhl at 160 Oechsle, for a top BA.

The success story for the 2007 harvest continues into the other regions of Baden, Franken and Mittelrhein.

EISWEIN: The prospects for 2007 Eiswein are better than last year, with healthy grapes and cool weather still prevailing today. Riesling, Chardonnay and Spätburgunder are waiting for frost at the Bretz estate in Bechtolsheim; Riesling in the Niersteiner Rosenberg (Seebrich), and in the Oelberg at the Franz Karl Schmitt estate in Nierstein; also at Anheuser's Kreuznacher Narrenkappe and in the Doctor vineyard of Dr Thanisch.

Riesling regards,
Derek Vinnicombe

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31 years of vintage reports 1976-2007



Earliest flowering ever, 23rd May 2007



Ripe Riesling, 29th Oct. 2007



*Chardonnay already past bud-break
17 April 2007 (Nackenheim)*



*Vines in the sun above the clouds....(Saar valley)
15th Oct. 2007*



Dürkheimer Abtsfronhof, 18th April 2007



Ripe brown pips in Nierstein