

VINTAGE REPORT 2010 FROM GERMANY

10th November 2010

It was a long hard Winter, but the vines suffered no serious damage, although the temperature dropped to -16C (6F) late December which would have been even too cold to make Eiswein! Widespread damage occurred to the vines back in December 1979 when the temperature dropped suddenly after rainfall. The 1980 crop was only a mere 4.7 million hl.

A slower "start" to the growing season 2010 than in past years, and the average temperature in April was a disappointing 10 degrees lower than 2009, but sufficient moisture and warmth followed. The bud-break late April was accompanied by the massive eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano which grounded all air traffic in Europe. Apart from a nice blue, cloudless sky, we saw no ash, and the vines flourished! Flowering along the Rhine & Mosel "hit" a period of poor weather mid June which led to a severe, natural yield restriction. Some vineyards were luckier with flowering when fine weather returned late June; enough time for grapes to ripen before the harvest.

Weather conditions in August and September were far from ideal, with too much rainfall, and this certainly dampened prospects considerably for a successful crop, especially with early ripening varieties such as Müller-Thurgau and Dornfelder. The weather improved 2nd October, and the entire October stayed dry and sunny, apart from one rainy day (16th) and two days with light showers. Early October was warm with temperatures rising to 20C (64F), but then remained cold, without morning mist. It could not have been better! Riesling & friends reached physiological ripeness with more than 120 days between flowering and harvest (100 days being regarded as a minimum), and a naturally cold harvesting was possible. Unfortunately, this was all too late for the early ripening varieties and Germany has harvested the smallest crop since 1985. Costs of production have however risen drastically over the last 25 years, and the higher benchmark quality set by the estates also produces higher costs than 25 years ago. The financial pressure will thus provide the estates with some formidable problems.

On the other hand, the quality improved beyond expectation, thanks to the great October weather. Ripe Riesling grapes were harvested at high concentration of sugars and acidity. A similarity to the quality of the great 1990 vintage might well evolve? That was one of my favourites, highly concentrated, rich flavours with a powerful & tight, racy structure.

The total crop in Germany will be approximately 6.5 million hectolitres, 35% less than a normal crop.

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)

Rhine regions: the harvest started 20th September, and yields were disappointingly low, especially for Müller-Thurgau and Dornfelder. Better results were achieved with Silvaner, and Frank Heyden harvested good quantities between 83 and 94 Oechsle. The white Pinot varieties followed, and Volker Schäfer reported a normal crop, measuring between 75-85 Oechsle. Careful selective harvesting was necessary for all Pinot varieties, and especially for Pinot Noir. Both Volker Schäfer and Manfred Binz harvested at 88 Oechsle, compared to 100 Oechsle in 2009, but yields were also 25% below average. Because of the lower Oechsle and condition of the fruit, Frank Heyden focused his attention more on rosé this year. Klaus Molitor in Hattenheim was unable to harvest his St Laurent, but his Pinot Noir crop was successful, in comparison. A small crop of Gewürztraminer Spätlese was harvested at the Fitz-Ritter estate 30th September, and Markus Machmer harvested his Gewürztraminer in the Stein & Rosengarten sites of Bechtheim on 29th September and 18th October, at good Spätlese readings up to 98 Oechsle, and also with above average acidity levels which promise firmly structured wines. Selective harvesting was also necessary with Riesling which resulted in low yields, but at good readings above 80 Oechsle. Acidity

levels were fairly high during the first week of October, but the fine weather soon improved the ripeness. The main harvesting of Riesling had been completed by 18th October. Frank Heyden reported empty tanks, but Riesling reaching 103 Oechsle for great Spätlese and Auslese. Albrecht Schneider achieved good results in the Paterberg site of Nierstein, but very low yields in the Hipping. Due to the selective harvesting, most estates have harvested between 30 and 40% less than 2009.

Nahe: The Anheusers delayed harvesting and did not finish until 25th October, harvesting good Riesling Kabinett in Schlossböckelheim, and Riesling grapes in Kreuznach up to 100 Oechsle, at yields of 30% less than 2009. A fine Blanc de Noir was again gently pressed from Pinot Noir, but 50% less yield than 2009. The yield of Scheurebe was better, again producing a fine Qualitätswein. The 2010 harvest required more work than past vintages, and they nearly forgot to harvest the Gewürztraminer in the Kauzenberg site!

Mosel: The harvesting of Riesling started 11th October, and most estates had finished by 30th October. Yields were very low, especially in the middle Mosel. Stefan Bollig harvested 30% less than even 2009 (which was one of his smallest crops!), but his Riesling in Trittenheim, Dhron and Piesport was pressed at readings of between 85 and 120 Oechsle. He did not harvest Pinot Noir, and Max Ferger of Dr Thanisch also reported a complete loss of their Pinot Noir. JJ Karp has also harvested his smallest crop of Riesling in Brauneberg, but quality has excelled. Gerd Studert reported a crop of 60% less yield than normal in Wehlen and Graach, but all estates along the middle Mosel report excellent qualities. Somewhat of a consolation for the vintners.

A different situation can be seen in the **Saar** valley. The vines flowered one week later, in line with better weather, and did not suffer so much from the poor weather in August. Saar Riesling profited from the late ripening period in October. Karin Fischer is delighted with their results in Ockfen, and was able to harvest ripe healthy grapes, at yields only 15% below average. Fine Spätlese has also been harvested, and a selective picking has produced a great Auslese with above 100 Oechsle. A new and exciting era has also started at the Dr Fischer estate with the highly-qualified winemaker Matthias Walter

now assisting in the vineyards and cellars. At the Vereinigte Hospitien with vineyards both in the Saar and Mosel valleys, 40% less than average has been produced, but fine results have been achieved in the Scharzhofberger with readings up to 105 Oechsle. For the first time since 1959 (!), they have produced TBA in both their Scharzhofberger and Kanzemer Altenberg vineyards. Even Pinot Noir in Kanzem has been harvested successfully at a similar ripeness as 2009.

The other regions have also experienced small crops approximately 30% less than normal, but selective harvesting has achieved fine results.

Due to such small yields, no estates have prepared vineyards for Eiswein.

Vintage 2010 in Germany will provide great wines with splendid maturing potential for the friends of "Riesling & Co", but will also provide financial woes to the estates due to such a small crop. Remaining stocks of the fine vintages 2007-2009 will help, and to remain optimistic: according to past statistics, a larger crop follows a small crop (1985 with 5.4 followed by 1986 with 10.1 million hl).

Riesling regards,
Derek Vinnicombe

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Where was the ash? Nice clear blue sky in Nackenheim with the bud-break during the volcanic eruption

Nierstein 1st October 2010, waiting for Riesling.....



Piesport enjoying the October sunshine:



The 2010 harvest in Germany started late September, but Quo Vadis, where will we end up with the quality? Where will these steps lead to? Riesling Spätlese?

Kloster Eberbach, the former Cistercian monastery in the Rheingau, the cradle of fine wines in Germany and origin of the "Cabernet" quality.

*a wall of Riesling.....
The Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr
(11th October 2010)*



Ockfen enjoying the October sunshine