

VINTAGE REPORT 2012 FROM GERMANY

3rd December 2012

Global warming in the German vineyards? Yes, but we are experiencing more extreme weather, and 2012 was no exception. Extremely cold weather hit Germany 31st January, and prevailed until 13th February with temperatures not above -10C (16F), even during the daytime (most unusual!), dropping to -18C (3F) at night, dangerously close to causing severe and widespread damage to the vines. Luckily, it had been dry beforehand, and the buds survived better than expected. March arrived with one week of warm weather, followed by a cool and extremely dry April; no *April showers*. The bud-break came mid April, with less damage than anticipated, but the weather remained too cool. May was a mix of warmth, severe thunder storms, but thankfully without hail damage, and also near to a repeat of the 2011 frost damage, with temperatures down to only 2C (35F) on 13th May. The month of June improved, and flowering was successfully completed by mid June, early enough to provide more than 100 days before harvest. July was however miserable with cool weather, and too much rainfall, requiring carefully attention to spraying against mildew. The orchards suffered, and the crop of cherries and apricots was decimated.

What had started as disappointing Spring & Summer weather completely surprised us with a glorious hot & dry August, thanks to the high pressure Achim, with a record 39C (94F) as late as 19th August, and also a great September, followed by fine weather in October, with a record high temperature of 23C (69F) on 18th October. Ideal conditions to fully ripen the grapes, and no widespread severe hail damage this year.

Our belated Summer continued until late October, and harvesting of Riesling was completed by early November. Unusually cold weather with temperatures down to -4 C (25F) 28th October brutally stopped any further photosynthesis, but did not harm the grapes, but also not cold enough for Eiswein. Riesling had already reached an excellent physiological ripeness, and some fine noble mould (*Botrytis*) spread along the Mosel and its tributaries Saar & Ruwer. The grapes remained otherwise very healthy in all vineyards that had survived the mildew, and tasted delightfully fruity. A good omen for the

quality of the 2012 wines. Unfortunately, some vineyards have experienced very large losses due to wild boar and deer. Paul Anheuser remarked that the crop of acorns and fruit in the forests was near to nothing which has forced hungry stomachs to visit vineyards.

A new aspect when producing wine: *you need acorns to be able to harvest grapes!*

Apart from Eiswein, the harvest was completed by 7th November, and *all's well that ends well*. A very fine crop to follow the great 2011 vintage.

The Rhine areas have been able to harvest more than last year, thanks to less damage by hail and frost than last year, but unfortunately we have seen a 15-25% lower crop than last year in the Mosel, Saar, Ruwer and Ahr valleys.

The total crop in Germany will be not more than 9.0 million hectolitres, 10% 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: Achim Eberle at **Fitz-Ritter** in Bad Dürkheim was able to harvest Gewürztraminer 3rd October at a Spätlese ripeness of 98 Oechsle (23.6 Brix) in their monopole Abtsfronhof vineyard, the yield being higher than in 2011 or 2010. In the Rheinhessen region, Albrecht **Schneider** and Frank **Heyden** are pleased with their Riesling results and able to cellar a larger crop than last year, mainly Kabinett and Spätlese, and no BA or TBA due to lacking noble mould. The crop of Silvaner was also higher than last year. Manfred **Binz** in Nackenheim has also cellared good quantities of Riesling between 85-90 Oechsle (21-23 Brix) and Pinot Noir with 95 and 100 Oechsle (23 & 24 Brix). In general, yields of Pinot Gris/Blanc were much lower than last year, as seen by Markus **Machmer**, but a higher yield than last year of

fine Gewürztraminer, harvested 6th October at 102 Oechsle (24 Brix) in his Bechtheimer vineyards. Volker **Schäfer**, Mr Pinot Noir in Mettenheim, is also pleased with his reds, harvesting Pinot Noir up to 102 Oechsle (24 Brix), but finished harvesting earlier on 18th October due to the danger of migrating starlings. Whilst in the Rheingau, Tilbert Nägler of **Dr Nägler** completed his harvest 31st October in Rudesheim with good yields of Riesling 85-90 Oechsle (21-22 Brix), but 40% less Pinot Noir than last year.

Nahe: The **Anheusers** completed their harvest 24th October, with some grapes still hanging in the Narrenkappe vineyard for Eiswein. The yields of Riesling were good, apart from the heavy losses due to wild boar and deer, especially in Schlossböckelheim, where a fine Kabinett with 88 Oechsle (21 Brix) has been cellared. Riesling Spätlese in Kreuznach, and some Auslese in the Krötenpfuhl whilst the Pinot Gris/Blanc crop was more than 30% less than last year.

Mosel: Stefan Bollig (**Bollig-Lehnert**) harvested Riesling from 24th October – 6th November, and has cellared a slightly smaller crop than in 2011, with up to 15% noble mould, as also JJ Karp (**Karp-Schreiber**) in Brauneberg. Max Ferger of **Dr Thanisch** started harvesting Riesling 16th October at 88 Oechsle (21 Brix) for their estate Riesling, finishing 7th November and has cellared fine Kabinett and Spätlese, but no BA or TBA, and no grapes for Eiswein due to the total crop being too small, 20% less than last year. The **Vereinigte Hospitien** have also cellared a much smaller crop than last year, and in the Saar valley, Karin **Fischer** estimates a 25% lower crop than last year, but was surprised about the high quality, when picking started 22nd October at 89 Oechsle, unusually high for Ockfen. Excellent results for fine Spätlese at 90 Oechsle, and some selective picking of Auslese with noble mould. The total crop being also too small to take the risk of producing Eiswein. Rainfall on 3rd November in the Mosel & Saar valleys ended any reason to delay harvesting for even higher qualities.

Württemberg: Markus Drautz (**Drautz-Able**) started harvesting 24th September with the early-ripening varieties and has successfully cellared his red Lemberger and Trollinger. “Es wird ein guter Jahrgang”, it’s going to be

a good vintage, according to his mother, Monika Drautz.

Baden: Unlike other regions, the South suffered from some heavy rain in April, hail damage during the Summer, and a short period of heavy rainfall in September. Markus Wöhrle **Stadt Lahr** finished the harvest 25th October and his grapes *weathered* the September rainfall astonishingly well, producing fine results, although his crop of Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir was lower than last year.

Franken: the region suffered from the May frost damage in 2011, but has produced both fine quality and higher yields this year. 2012 will mark a great vintage for Silvaner, as also for **Michael Fröhlich** in Escherndorf. The **Juliuspital** in Würzburg, although one of the largest estates in Germany, is “sold out” due to the small previous crops and has already started to bottle 2012 wines.

Riesling regards,
Derek Vinnicombe

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