



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

Issue No 44 – January 2019

Mosel Fine Wines

The aim of Mosel Fine Wines is to provide a comprehensive and independent review of Riesling wines produced in the Mosel, Saar and Ruwer region, and regularly offer a wider perspective on Riesling produced in Europe.

Mosel Fine Wines appears on a regular basis and covers:

- Reports on the current vintage (including the annual Auctions held in Trier).
- Updates on how the wines mature.
- Perspectives on specific topics such as vineyards, Estates, vintages, etc.

All wines reviewed in the Mosel Fine Wines issues are exclusively tasted by us (at the Estates, trade shows or private tastings) under our sole responsibility.

Table of Contents

<u>Table of Contents</u>	Estates Covered in this Issue	4
<u>2017 Mosel</u>	A Look-Back	6
	Vintage Highlights	7
<u>2018 Mosel</u>	A Sneak Preview	18
<u>Mosel Perspectives</u>	Weingut Fritz Haag A Deep-Dive Interview	19
	Uhlen gUs / PDOs A New Era for German Wine?	27
<u>Beyond Wine</u>	Gueuze, Kriek & Co The Beer for Mosel Lovers	30
<u>Upcoming Issues</u>	Topics to be Covered	46

Contact Information

For questions or comments, please contact us at info@moselfinewines.com.

© Mosel Fine Wines. All rights reserved.

Unauthorized copying, physical or electronic distribution of this document is strictly forbidden. Quotations allowed with mention of the source.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

Understand Our Tasting Notes

The core of Mosel Fine Wines is to publish independent tasting notes. The particularity of Mosel and German wines made us adopt a specific structure in order to capture all the information needed for wine lovers to make informed choices based on our tasting notes which we explain below.

2015er	Willi Schaefer	Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese	13 16	Auction	97
--------	----------------	--------------------------------------	-------	---------	----

This wine immediately stands out as the airy precision of its elegant nose of white peach, a hint of cassis, herbs and spices is simply mind-boggling. The wine then delivers a gorgeous array of orchard and delicately exotic fruits on the zesty palate and leaves one with an explosion of minerals and herbs in a hauntingly deep and elegant finish. This is an epic effort on par with the best at this Estate. 2025-2055

1. NOMENCLATURE: For simplicity, consistency and clarity, we rely on the following to define a wine:

- We stick to the traditional "Village + Vineyard" denomination even for wines from VDP classified vineyards (where only the vineyard name appears on the consumer side of the label).
- We provide the grape variety, except for the few cases of a blend, in which case the blend details will be given in the tasting note.
- No Prädikat in the name means that the wine was bottled as QbA.
- GG stands for "Grosses Gewächs" and EG for "Erstes Gewächs."

You can find more information on how to decipher German wine labels in the article "Deciphering the modern German wine label" [here](#).

2. AP NUMBER: The AP Number is the unique number associated with any lot of German quality wine. We systematically provide this information (actually the last 4 or 5 "meaningful" digits of the AP) as wine growers sometimes differentiate between wines only through this AP Number. You can learn more about AP numbers [here](#). "N.A." means that the AP number was not yet available at the moment of publication.

3. AUCTION: We add the mention "Auction" for wines sold via the annual Auctions held in September as they are different from the ones sold via traditional channels. You can learn more about the annual Trier wine Auctions and these particularly fine expressions of Riesling [here](#).

4. DRINKING WINDOW: Riesling has a long development cycle and can be enjoyable for 20 years and more. Like other great wines from this world, Mosel and German Riesling usually go through a muted phase before reaching maturity. At the end of each tasting note, we therefore provide a drinking window, which refers to our estimation of the maturity period for the wine. This maturity period is based on the following principles:

- It consists of the "fruit" and "terroir" phases as defined in our review of Maturing Mosel.
- It does not explicitly mention the additional drinking window for fruity-styled wines which typically lasts for 1-3 years after the vintage.

You can find more about the different maturing phases of Mosel Riesling [here](#).

5. SCORE: The use of scores to evaluate wines has advantages (clearly communicating a perspective) and disadvantages (over-simplifying such a complex matter as wine). We believe the advantages prevail as long as a rating is put into the perspective of a tasting note. Here our principles:

- Scale:** We rely on a 100-point scale with the following overall principles:

95-100	Classic: A true classic that sets the standards for its style and terroir. Only few wines make it into this "super-class" of Riesling and no stone should be left unturned to find them.
90-94	Outstanding: Stands out as distinctive example of its style and terroir. It will offer immense pleasure and should be actively looked out for.
85-89	Good to very good: Is a good to very good wine with special qualities. It will be delicious and is worthy of any cellar, especially if the price is right.
80-84	Solid to good: Is technically correctly made and will be enjoyable in its simple solid way. Price is the key driver for the decision to buy.
Below 80	Not worth it: Does not show any distinction and may even have some flaws. Given the currently still quite reasonable price level for Mosel Riesling, there is no reason to bother.

- Assessment:** We evaluate complexity, balance and elegance ("more is not better") as well as respect of terroir and style (a great Kabinett will get a higher score than an average Spätlese). If the actual style does not match that on the label (say a Spätlese bottled as Kabinett), we will review the wine according to its intrinsic style (in the example as "the Spätlese it is") and add a remark about its true style in the tasting note.
- Timing:** Our ratings for young wines refer to the expected quality of the wine at maturity (i.e. during its drinking window) and not at moment of tasting.
- Firm Scores vs. Score Ranges:** Bottled wines get firm scores. Score ranges indicate tasting notes based on cask samples.

The principles above cover the basics. We remain at your disposal under info@moselfinewines.com should there be a question.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

Background Information

Each country has its own specificities regarding naming, labelling, style, etc. This is no different in Germany. We regularly publish articles on topics which may help readers get a first grasp at or deepen their knowledge in a particular aspect of German wine or winemaking. As these articles have appeared in different Issues and / or on our website since 2008, we insert here a [comprehensive list of background articles published to date](#) with the topic and where it can be found:

Theme	Topic	Issue	Website
Region	Mosel Visiting Guide	Mosel Visiting Guide 2019	-
Estates	Fritz Haag Depp-Dive Interview	Issue No 44 (Jan 2019)	-
Vineyards	Uhlen gUs / PDOs A New Era for German Wine?	Issue No 44 (Jan 2019)	Click Here
Vineyards	Ruwer on the Up Large Solely-Owned Vineyard in New Hands	Issue No 42 (Aug 2018)	Click Here
Vineyards	Vineyard Classification The Classification Before the Classification	Issue No 39 (Jan 2018)	-
Estates	Keller takes over Prime Mosel Vineyard	Issue No 39 (Jan 2018)	Click Here
Wines	Deciphering the Modern German Wine Label	Issue No 34 (Apr 2017)	Click Here
Estates	Bert Selbach 40 Years at the Service of Riesling	Issue No 33 (Jan 2017)	-
Winemaking	Karl Erbes Precursor of the Flying Winemaker	Issue No 33 (Jan 2017)	-
Estates	The Merkelbach Brothers Living Legends celebrating their 65th vintage	Issue No 33 (Jan 2017)	-
Estates	State Estates in Trier, Ockfen and Serrig Historic Estates Given a New Life	Issue No 33 (Jan 2017)	Avelsbach Estate Serrig Estate
Region	German Wine A Look at a Century Ago	Issue No 33 (Jan 2017)	-
Region	Grosser Ring The Mosel Branch of the VDP	-	Click Here
Wines	Let's Talk About Sekt – The Sparkling Joy of Riesling	Issue No 30 (Mar 2016)	Click Here
Vineyards	Vineyard Revivals - Lambertskirch by Peter Lauer - Neumagener Sonnenuhr is back - Trabener Zollturm, revival of a forgotten glory	Issue No 29 (Oct 2015)	Click Here Click Here Click Here Click Here
Wines	Winemaking in the Age of Climate Change	Issue No 28 (Jun 2015)	Click Here
Vineyards	Geisberg - The Revival of a Forgotten Saar Glory	Issue No 28 (Jun 2015)	Click Here
Wines	Maturing Mosel and drinking windows	Issue No 27 (Mar 2015)	Click Here
Wines	AP Number	Issue No 27 (Mar 2015)	Click Here
Wines	Eiswein	-	Click Here
Wines	Understanding German classification and associated labelling (Grosses Gewächs, Erstes Gewächs, Grosse Lage, Erste Lage, etc.)	Issue No 26 (Oct 2014)	-
Wines	Dry Mosel Riesling	Issue No 14 (Jan 2011)	-
Vineyards	Erdener Prälat	Issue No 10 (Jan 2010)	Click Here
Estates	Jos. Christoffel jr.	Issue No 7 (May 2009)	-

Past issues are available to subscribers on simple request at info@moselfinewines.com.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

Table of Contents – Estates Covered in this Issue

An alphabetic overview (based on last names) of the Estates covered in this Issue with an indication in which section(s) they appear:

Estate	Section of Issue No 44				
	2017 Look-Back	2017 Highlights	Fritz Haag A Deep Dive	Uhlen gUs	Gueuze
A.J. Adam		x			
Bischöfliche Weingüter Trier		x			
Blees-Ferber		x			
Richard Böcking		x			
Clemens Busch	x	x			
Cantzeim		x			
Falkenstein	x	x			
Fritz Haag		x	x		
Julian Haart		x			
Reinhold Haart		x			
Dr. Hermann		x			
Heymann-Löwenstein	x			x	
von Hövel	x	x			
Immich-Batterieberg	x	x			
Kees-Kieren		x			
Von Kesselstatt	x				
Knebel		x			
Peter Lauer		x			
Le Gallais		x			
Schloss Lieser		x			
Loersch		x			
Carl Loewen		x			
Dr. Loosen	x	x			
Lubentiusshof		x			
Matthias Meierer		x			x
Markus Molitor		x			
Egon Müller		x			
Stefan Müller	x	x			
"O."		x			

(continues on next page)

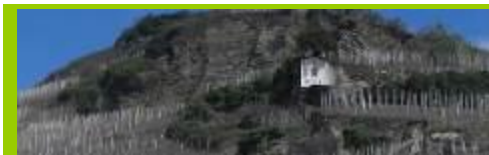


Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

Estate	Section of Issue No 44				
	2017 Look-Back	2017 Highlights	Fritz Haag A Deep Dive	Uhlen gUs	Gueuze
von Othegraven	x	x			
Paulinshof		x			
Joh. Jos. Prüm		x			
Max Ferd. Richter		x			
Selbach-Oster	x	x			
von Schubert		x			
Später-Veit	x	x			
Günther Steinmetz		x			
Studert-Prüm		x			
Wwe Dr. H. Thanisch – Erben Thanisch		x			
Van Volxem		x			
Vollenweider		x			
Wegeler		x			
Nik Weis – St. Urbans-Hof	x	x			
Weiser-Künstler		x			
Würtzberg		x			



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

2017 Mosel Vintage – Conclusions

After having tasted over 1,000 wines, many several times, we have a look-back at the remarkable 2017 vintage and put forward the highlights of the vintage.



2017 Mosel Vintage – Small but Beautiful

The 2017 vintage was small, courtesy of a frost which hit much of Northern Europe and affected the yields. But the vintage turned out to be a beautiful one, even if it was far from homogeneous as rot played a role at the beginning of the harvest.

The Kabinett wines do maybe not have the utter lightness of 2016 or 2014, but they make this up through stunning depth, raciness and mid-palate presence. The sweet spot of the vintage are the stunning Spätlese. The great acidity and aromatic purity makes for some superb wines of great depth and drinking pleasure. 2017 will go down in history as one of the grand vintages for noble-sweet Riesling. Almost every wine we tasted was superb and readers are well advised to stock up on the vintage's finest creations. Acidity and intensity made for some superb off-dry Riesling in 2017. In no other category are there so many new quality Estates to be discovered. Lastly, 2017 proved also superb for dry Riesling, but only at the top. The heterogeneity of the vintage really comes through here. Some dry Riesling bottlings are simply magical. But others are over-powering and ripe. The great ones are worth the search but one needs to follow tasting notes or taste for oneself.

2017 was not an easy vintage. Low yields led to rapid concentration of sugars during the summer. Rot also appeared during the summer and the harvest. The vintage really highlighted the winemaking skills which made all the difference. The versatility of Hofgut Falkenstein has proved simply remarkable. It managed to land vintage highlights in EVERY category, from dry to noble-sweet, thereby amply confirming its status as one of the region's finest grower. A few Estates produced what has easily been their finest collection in a generation. This includes Weingut von Hövel, Weingut von Othegraven, Weingut Selbach-Oster and Weingut Nik Weis – St. Urbans-Hof. Two up-and-coming Estates really delivered in 2017: Weingut Stefan Müller in the Saar and Weingut Später-Veit in the Middle Mosel. Both produced quality on par with that of the region's finest. Readers, especially those partial to elegance and finesse, should try these Estates out!

While we are focusing on the 2017 vintage, we also urge our readers to check out the superb late released dry Riesling which more and more Estates are doing now. In particular, the late releases by Clemens Busch, Heymann-Löwenstein, Immich-Batterieberg (the newly launched Reserve), and Dr. Loosen (GG Reserve) are some of the finest of any vintage! Also the von Kesselstatt Estate has recently decided to release its GG bottlings only 2 years after the vintage.

All in all, our early expectations about the 2017 vintage were fully met. Despite its heterogeneity, 2017 is a great vintage for the Mosel and lovers of racy and intense wines will find much to love in the offerings of their favorite growers based on our reviews.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

2017 Vintage – Dry Riesling Highlights

2017 DRY RIESLING | GREATNESS ... AT THE TOP

As we warned early on, 2017 was not an easy vintage for dry Riesling. Low yields resulted too often into power, and acidity into austerity. Harvest timing and local vineyard conditions often made the difference. As a result, no category is as heterogeneous as dry Riesling in the Mosel in 2017. One wine could be great, the next one rather average, even within the same collection.

While one needs to underline the heterogeneity, one also needs to highlight the fact that 2017 yielded some superb wines with great raciness and finesse. In particular, Julian Haart, Immich-Batterieberg, Schloss Lieser, Carl Loewen, Markus Molitor (who delivered the wine of the vintage) and Van Volxem delivered some true gems.

The performance of Markus Molitor is particularly remarkable. The Estate largely avoided the trap of power in 2017 and landed no less than six (!) wines on the list of highlights. Also Clemens Busch, Carl Loewen and Van Volxem performed particularly well in 2017, each gracing us with three dry Riesling vintage highlights.

A huge positive surprise proved to be the performance of tiny and little-known Weingut O. in Traben-Trarbach. It produced a hugely impressive wine which is among the very finest dry Riesling of the vintage. The historic Bischöfliche Weingüter Trier continues to improve its quality. After 2016, it also produced one of the dry Riesling highlights in 2017.

All in all lovers of intense yet precise dry Riesling will find many great wines in 2017, even if the vintage is not an homogeneous success.

2017 DRY RIESLING | LIST OF VINTAGE HIGHLIGHTS

We provide here our list (ranked alphabetically by Estate) of dry Riesling highlights from the 2017 vintage:

2017er	A.J. Adam	Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Trocken	07 18	93
2017er	Bischöfliche Weingüter Trier	Trittenheimer Apotheke Riesling Spätlese Trocken	152 18	93
2017er	Clemens Busch	Pündericher Marienburg Falkenlay Riesling Trocken GG	31 18	93+
2017er	Clemens Busch	Pündericher Marienburg Fahrlay Riesling Trocken GG	30 18	93
2017er	Clemens Busch	Pündericher Marienburg Rothenpfad Riesling Trocken GG	29 18	93
2017er	Falkenstein	Krettnacher Altenberg Riesling Spätlese Trocken	07 18	93
2017er	Falkenstein	Krettnacher Ober Schäfershaus Riesling Spätlese Trocken	18 18	93
2017er	Fritz Haag	Brauneberger Juffer Riesling Trocken GG	24 18	93
2017er	Julian Haart	Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling	21 18	92+
2017er	Julian Haart	Wintricher Ohligsberg Riesling	22 18	94
2017er	Herrenberg	Wiltinger Schlangengraben Riesling Trocken Alte Reben	08 18	93
2017er	Immich-Batterieberg	Enkircher Zeppwingert Riesling Réserve	17 18	95
2017er	Immich-Batterieberg	Enkircher Ellergrub Riesling	05 18	93
2017er	Knebel	Winninger Uhlen Riesling Trocken GG	11 18	93
2017er	Schloss Lieser	Lieserer Niederberg Helden Riesling Trocken GG	23 18	94
2017er	Schloss Lieser	Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Trocken GG	26 18	93
2017er	Loersch	Trittenheimer Apotheke Riesling Trocken Devon-Terrassen GG	21 18	93
2017er	Loersch	Trittenheimer Apotheke Riesling Trocken Jungheld Holzfass GG	22 18	93
2017er	Carl Loewen	Longuicher Maximiner Herrenberg Riesling Trocken GG	11 18	94
2017er	Carl Loewen	Longuicher Maximiner Herrenberg Riesling Trocken "1896" Alte Reben	09 18	93
2017er	Carl Loewen	Thörnicher Ritsch Riesling Trocken GG	10 18	93
2017er	Markus Molitor	Bernkasteler Lay Riesling Auslese ** (White Capsule)	50 18	93



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

2017 DRY RIESLING | LIST OF VINTAGE HIGHLIGHTS

2017er	Markus Molitor	Erdener Treppchen Riesling Auslese *** (White Capsule)	90 18	96
2017er	Markus Molitor	Ockfener Bockstein Riesling Auslese *** (White Capsule)	91 18	92+
2017er	Markus Molitor	Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Auslese ** (White Capsule)	63 18	93+
2017er	Markus Molitor	Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese *** (White Capsule)	40 18	96
2017er	Markus Molitor	Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Kabinett Fuder 6 (White Capsule)		92+
2017er	O.	Trarbacher Ungsberg Riesling	06 18	(93-95)
2017er	von Othegraven	Kanzemer Altenberg Riesling Trocken GG	22 18	93
2017er	Max Ferd. Richter	Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Trocken GG	32 18	(91-94)
2017er	Max Ferd. Richter	Graacher Domprobst Riesling Alte Reben	31 18	(92-94)
2017er	von Schubert	Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Riesling GG	06 18	93
2017er	Selbach-Oster	Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Trocken ***	34 18	92+
2017er	Günther Steinmetz	Piesporter Treppchen Riesling von den Terrassen	21 18	93
2017er	Van Volxem	Scharzhofberger Pergentsknopp Riesling GG	20 18	94
2017er	Van Volxem	Wiltinger Gottesfuss Riesling Alte Reben GG	19 18	93+
2017er	Van Volxem	Wiltinger Volz Riesling GG	13 18	93
2017er	Vollenweider	Wolfer Goldgrube Riesling	09 18	93
2017er	Wegeler	Bernkasteler Doctor Riesling Trocken GG	11 18	93
2017er	Weiser-Künstler	Enkircher Steffensberg Riesling	07 18	92+
2017er	Weiser-Künstler	Enkircher Ellergrub Riesling Trocken GE	06 18	93



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

2017 Mosel Vintage – Off-Dry Riesling Highlights

2017 OFF-DRY RIESLING | DENSE PRECISION

The off-dry category is easily overseen, yet these wines can offer some truly remarkable Riesling experiences. They are versatile, age-worthy, and can taste dry or almost dry at maturity. 2017 brought density (through low yields) and precision (through zest and clean grapes), a winning combination for off-dry Riesling. And this is reflected in the huge number of vintage highlights.

The masters of the style delivered handsomely: A.J. Adam, Falkenstein, Immich-Batterieberg, Peter Lauer, Carl Loewen (who produced the off-dry Riesling of the vintage), Lubentiusshof, Selbach-Oster and Günther Steinmetz top the list in 2017.

The performance of one Estate is simply awe-inspiring: Falkenstein. The Webers managed to put no less than six (!) wines on the list of highlights. Many of these wines are among the finest of the vintage. Also Stefan Steinmetz at Günther Steinmetz underlines his talent at this stylistic direction. Directly or in collaboration with other growers, he puts three wines among the vintage highlights.

In no other stylistic directions are there up-and-coming growers putting their mark. Blees-Ferber, Richard Böcking, Cantzheim, Loersch, and Stefan Müller have seized the opportunities offered by the 2017 vintage to produce some true off-dry Riesling highlights.

All in all, off-dry Riesling is still an underrated category and 2017 offers plenty of opportunities to discover some gems. Happy hunting!

2017 OFF-DRY RIESLING | LIST OF VINTAGE HIGHLIGHTS

We provide here our list (ranked alphabetically by Estate) of off-dry Riesling highlights from the 2017 vintage:

2017er	A.J. Adam	Dhroner Hofberg Riesling von den Terrassen	08 18	93
2017er	Blees-Ferber	Trittenheimer Apotheke Riesling Spätlese *** Alte Reben	15 18	92
2017er	Richard Böcking	Trarbacher Burgberg Riesling	N.A.	92
2017er	Cantzheim	Saarburger Fuchs Riesling	04 18	92
2017er	Falkenstein	Niedermenniger Herrenberg Riesling Spätlese Feinherb	03 18	94+
2017er	Falkenstein	Niedermenniger Herrenberg Riesling Spätlese Feinherb	15 18	94
2017er	Falkenstein	Niedermenniger Herrenberg Riesling Spätlese Feinherb	23 18	93
2017er	Falkenstein	Niedermenniger Herrenberg Riesling Spätlese Feinherb	04 18	92+
2017er	Falkenstein	Niedermenniger Herrenberg Riesling Kabinett Feinherb	11 18	92
2017er	Falkenstein	Niedermenniger Herrenberg Riesling Kabinett Feinherb	21 18	92
2017er	Fritz Haag	Brauneberger Juffer Riesling Semi-Dry	19 18	91+
2017er	Fritz Haag	Brauneberger Juffer Riesling Feinherb	19 18	91+
2017er	Reinhold Haart	Piesporter Riesling	11 18	92
2017er	Immich-Batterieberg	Enkircher Batterieberg Riesling	06 18	93
2017er	Immich-Batterieberg	Enkircher Zeppwingert Riesling	04 18	94
2017er	Peter Lauer	Ayler Kupp Unterstenberg Riesling Fass 12		93
2017er	Peter Lauer	Ayler Kupp Neuenberg Riesling Fass 17		92
2017er	Loersch	Dhroner Hofberg Riesling Kabinett Feinherb	19 18	92
2017er	Loersch	Riesling Spätlese Feinherb Fels-Terrassen Fels 1	06 18	92
2017er	Loersch	Riesling Spätlese Feinherb Fels-Terrassen Fels 2	07 18	92
2017er	Carl Loewen	Riesling "1896"	12 18	95
2017er	Lubentiusshof	Gondorfer Gäns Riesling Alte Reben	05 18	93
2017er	Markus Molitor	Bernkasteler Badstube Riesling Auslese ** (Green Capsule)	64 18	92
2017er	Stefan Müller	Niedermenniger Sonnenberg Riesling Spätlese Feinherb	16 18	92
2017er	Paulinshof	Brauneberger Kammer Riesling Spätlese Feinherb	10 18	92



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

2017 OFF-DRY RIESLING | LIST OF VINTAGE HIGHLIGHTS (CONT'D)

2017er	von Schubert	Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Riesling Superior	04 18	92
2017er	von Schubert	Maximin Grünhäuser Herrenberg Riesling Superior	05 18	92
2017er	Selbach-Oster	Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese Feinherb Alte Reben	31 18	91+
2017er	Selbach-Oster	Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese Feinherb "Ur" Alte Reben	26 18	93
2017er	Günther Steinmetz	Wintricher Geierslay Riesling GW	15 18	93
2017er	Steinmetz und Gerlach	Katteneser Steinchen Riesling Liquid Fossil	19 18	92
2017er	Steinmetz und Hermann	Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Alte Reben	17 18	94
2017er	Nik Weis – St. Urbans-Hof	Wiltinger Riesling Alte Reben	29 18	92
2017er	Würtzberg	Serriger Würtzberg Riesling Kabinett Alte Kupp	13 18	92



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

2017 Mosel Vintage – Kabinett Riesling Highlights

2017 KABINETT | RACINESS WITH SPÄTLESE INTENSITY

The low yields in 2017 made for quite intense wines. Truth must be told, 2017 is not a vintage for feather-light Kabinett: The vintage was simply too ripe or intense for that. At their best, the 2017 wines bottled at Kabinett have the intensity of a Spätlese paired with the raciness of Kabinett, a winning combination for lovers of beautiful wines with racy elegance.

At the top, Julian Haart (who produced the Kabinett of the vintage), von Hövel, Peter Lauer, Egon Müller, Willi Schaefer and von Schubert - Maximin Grünhaus produced some stunning wines.

Also Falkenstein, Schloss Lieser, von Othegraven, Max Ferd. Richter, Daniel Vollenweider and Weiser-Künstler confirmed their status as leading producers of Kabinett-styled wines. Overall, Julian Haart, Peter Lauer, and von Othegraven underlined their savoir-faire by landing each three or more wines in our list of Kabinett highlights.

Two up-and-coming growers joined this elite club in 2017, Stefan Müller (with immediately TWO wines) and Später-Veit. These two Estates proved hugely impressive overall and are already now among the finest of the region.

We cannot review Kabinett without addressing the topic of declassification. Some growers bottled big creamy-sweet wines as Kabinett. Such wines may offer terrific value as cheaply priced Auslese. However, we see this as a misguided approach as customers, will not get the style of wine stated on the label. As it concerns quite a few wines, we urge our readers to carefully read our tasting notes before buying into 2017 Kabinett.

2017 KABINETT | LIST OF VINTAGE HIGHLIGHTS

We provide here our list (ranked alphabetically by Estates) of Kabinett highlights from the 2017 vintage:

2017er	Falkenstein	Krettnacher Euchariusberg Riesling Kabinett	12 18	93
2017er	Falkenstein	Krettnacher Euchariusberg Riesling Kabinett Alte Reben	08 18	93+
2017er	Julian Haart	Piesporter Schubertslay Riesling Kabinett	15 18	95
2017er	Julian Haart	Wintricher Ohlgsberg Riesling Kabinett	12 18	94
2017er	Julian Haart	Wintricher Ohlgsberg Riesling Kabinett Alte Reben	13 18	92+
2017er	Reinhold Haart	Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Kabinett	22 18	92+
2017er	von Hövel	Oberemmeler Hütte Riesling Kabinett	10 18	93
2017er	von Hövel	Scharzhofberger Riesling Kabinett	11 18	94
2017er	Peter Lauer	Ayler Kupp Riesling Kabinett Fass 8		93
2017er	Peter Lauer	Ayler Kupp Riesling Kabinett Fass 5		<i>Auction</i> 94
2017er	Peter Lauer	Ayler Lambertskirch Riesling Kabinett Fass 14		93
2017er	Schloss Lieser	Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Kabinett	10 18	93
2017er	Egon Müller	Scharzhofberger Riesling Kabinett	02 18	93+
2017er	Egon Müller	Scharzhofberger Riesling Kabinett Alte Reben	03 18	<i>Auction</i> 94+
2017er	Stefan Müller	Krettnacher Altenberg Riesling Kabinett	14 18	93
2017er	Stefan Müller	Niedermenniger Sonnenberg Riesling Kabinett Alte Reben	03 18	93
2017er	von Othegraven	Kanzemer Altenberg Riesling Kabinett	04 18	93
2017er	von Othegraven	Kanzemer Altenberg Riesling Kabinett	05 18	<i>Auction</i> 93
2017er	von Othegraven	Ockfener Bockstein Riesling Kabinett	02 18	93
2017er	von Othegraven	Wawerner Herrenberger Riesling Kabinett	03 18	93
2017er	Max Ferd. Richter	Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Kabinett	19 18	93
2017er	Max Ferd. Richter	Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Kabinett	18 18	93
2017er	Willi Schaefer	Graacher Domprobst Riesling Kabinett	03 18	95
2017er	Willi Schaefer	Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Kabinett	02 18	94
2017er	von Schubert	Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Riesling Kabinett	13 18	93



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

2017 KABINETT | LIST OF VINTAGE HIGHLIGHTS (CONT'D)

2017er	von Schubert	Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Riesling Kabinett Nr. 45	<i>Auction</i>	95
2017er	Später-Veit	Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Kabinett Armes	06 18	92+
2017er	Wwe Dr. H. Thanisch – Erben Thanisch	Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Kabinett	02 18	93
2017er	Vollenweider	Wolfer Goldgrube Riesling Kabinett	01 18	93
2017er	Weiser-Künstler	Enkircher Ellergrub Riesling Kabinett	03 18	93



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

2017 Mosel Vintage – Spätlese Riesling Highlights

2017 SPÄTLESE | SUBLIME RACINESS AND ELEGANCE

The low yields in 2017 made for quite intense wines. Once the botrytis was selected out, the remaining fruit allowed growers to produce some sensational wines. These have more presence and structure than in 2016 but still prove remarkably balanced thanks to the vintage's stunning zest. Spätlese is clearly a sweet spot of 2017 and this fact is reflected in the large number of highly rated wines.

The region's star producers lead the table, with Fritz Haag, Schloss Lieser, Egon Müller (who produced the Spätlese of the vintage), Joh. Jos. Prüm, and Willi Schaefer all producing stunner.

But the vintage also saw a myriad of modern-day classic Spätlese by the likes of Falkenstein, von Hövel, Julian Haart, Peter Lauer, Max Ferd. Richter, Wwe. Dr. H. Thanisch (Erben Thanisch), Daniel Vollenweider, and Weiser-Künstler.

Overall, there is much to like among the 2017 Spätlese and readers are well advised to backpack some of the finest offers. The depth of quality is very high. Should none of the wines here below be available in your part of the world, there are plenty of brilliant Spätlese reviewed in our Issues this year. Happy hunting!

As for the 2017er Kabinett Highlights, there has also been some heavy de-classification of Auslese at Spätlese level. Readers are well-advised to read our tasting notes in order to make sure that the wine reflects the expected style.

2017 SPÄTLESE | LIST OF VINTAGE HIGHLIGHTS

We provide here our list (ranked alphabetically) of Spätlese highlights from the 2017 vintage:

2017er	A.J. Adam	Dhroner Hofberg Riesling Spätlese	12 18		94
2017er	Falkenstein	Krettnacher Euchariusberg Riesling Spätlese	06 18		95
2017er	Falkenstein	Krettnacher Euchariusberg Riesling Spätlese	14 18		95
2017er	Le Gallais	Wiltinger braune Kupp Riesling Spätlese	05 18	<i>Auction</i>	94
2017er	Fritz Haag	Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese #14		<i>Auction</i>	96
2017er	Julian Haart	Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Spätlese *	09 18		95
2017er	Dr. Hermann	Erdener Herzlei Riesling Spätlese GK	09 18		93+
2017er	von Hövel	Kanzemer Hörecker Riesling Spätlese	17 18	<i>Auction</i>	95
2017er	von Hövel	Oberemmeler Hütte Riesling Spätlese	12 18		94
2017er	von Hövel	Scharzhofberger Riesling Spätlese	11 18		94
2017er	Peter Lauer	Ayler Kupp Riesling Spätlese Fass 7			94
2017er	Peter Lauer	Ayler Kupp Riesling Spätlese Fass 23		<i>Auction</i>	95
2017er	Peter Lauer	Biebelhausener Feils Riesling Spätlese Fass 24			94
2017er	Schloss Lieser	Bernkasteler Doctor Riesling Spätlese	28 18	<i>Auction</i>	96
2017er	Egon Müller	Scharzhofberger Riesling Spätlese	06 18		97
2017er	von Othegraven	Kanzemer Altenberg Riesling Spätlese	09 18	<i>Auction</i>	94
2017er	Joh. Jos. Prüm	Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese	19 18	<i>Auction</i>	96
2017er	Max Ferd. Richter	Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Spätlese	17 18		94
2017er	Max Ferd. Richter	Veldenzer Elisenberg Riesling Spätlese	04 18		95
2017er	Max Ferd. Richter	Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese	12 18		93+
2017er	Willi Schaefer	Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese	05 18		96
2017er	Willi Schaefer	Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese	10 18		95
2017er	Willi Schaefer	Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese	13 18	<i>Auction</i>	96



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

2017 SPÄTLESE | LIST OF VINTAGE HIGHLIGHTS (CONT'D)

2017er	Willi Schaefer	Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Spätlese	08 18		95
2017er	Willi Schaefer	Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese	17 18		94+
2017er	Selbach-Oster	Zeltinger Schlossberg Riesling Spätlese *	14 18		94
2017er	Selbach-Oster	Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese *	22 18		94
2017er	Wwe Dr. H. Thanisch – Erben Thanisch	Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Spätlese	04 18	<i>Auction</i>	95
2017er	Wwe Dr. H. Thanisch – Erben Müller-Burggraef	Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Spätlese	14 18		93+
2017er	Vollenweider	Wolfer Goldgrube Riesling Spätlese	02 18		95
2017er	Nik Weis – St. Urbans-Hof	Ockfener Bockstein Riesling Spätlese	10 18		94
2017er	Weiser-Künstler	Enkircher Ellergrub Riesling Spätlese GK	02 18		95



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

2017 Vintage – Noble-Sweet Highlights

2017 NOBLE-SWEET | A MAJOR VINTAGE OF EPIC DIMENSION

Readers know this since our first report this June on the vintage: 2017 is a major vintage for noble-sweet Mosel. This is hardly surprising as yields were low (courtesy of the frost), there were multiple occasions for harvesting botrytized grapes, and the growers had the time to do this, as the weather proved overall nice during the harvest. How great is reflected in the sheer number of modern-day classics produced.

All the leading Estates produced some stunning Auslese which share intensity, precision and great raciness. At the top, Fritz Haag, Julian Haart, Egon Müller (who produced the Auslese of the vintage), Joh. Jos. Prüm, and Selbach-Oster produced some modern-day legends of epic dimensions. Beyond the established names, fine but maybe less well-known Estates such as Kees-Kieren, Später-Veit and Studert-Prüm also made it on the list of Auslese highlights of the vintage

2017 gave growers the opportunity throughout the harvest to pick some dried berries for the rare (and expensive) BAs and TBAs. Almost all leading Estates did raise to the occasion and produced some stunning noble-sweet wines which shine through complex, precise and delicately racy flavors. At the top, one needs to praise the amazing performance of Christian Hermann at Dr. Hermann. He landed no less than 6 (!!!) BAs and TBAs on the list of vintage highlights (including the noble-sweet wine of the vintage).

Also Fritz Haag, Markus Molitor, Max Ferd. Richter, Selbach-Oster and Nik Weis - St. Urbans-Hof each produced several vintage highlights. Weingut Egon Müller did not miss the occasion to produce another stunning perfect TBA. We were particularly pleased to see that the biodynamic Weingut Melsheimer and the up-and-coming Weingut Loersch also produced some of the finest TBA in 2017.

All in all, beyond these highlights, it is very hard to find some bad Auslese, BAs and TBAs in 2017. The vintage is simply too good for that. The hunt is on for finding some of these treasures!

2017 NOBLE-SWEET | LIST OF BA AND TBA HIGHLIGHTS

We provide here a list (ranked alphabetically by Estate) of BA and TBA highlights from the 2017 vintage:

2017er	Fritz Haag	Brauneberger Juffer Riesling Beerenauslese	25 18		96+
2017er	Fritz Haag	Brauneberger Juffer Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese	21 18		99
2017er	Fritz Haag	Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese	18 18	<i>Auction</i>	98+
2017er	Dr. Hermann	Erdener Herzlei Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese Alte Reben GK	17 18		99
2017er	Dr. Hermann	Erdener Prälat Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese Alte Reben lange GK	19 18		100
2017er	Dr. Hermann	Erdener Prälat Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese Alte Reben	18 18		98
2017er	Dr. Hermann	Erdener Treppchen Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese GK	15 18		98
2017er	Dr. Hermann	Erdener Treppchen Riesling Beerenauslese GK	14 18		96
2017er	Dr. Hermann	Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese GK	16 18		96+
2017er	Knebel	Winninger Röttgen Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese	09 18	<i>Auction</i>	98
2017er	Loersch	Trittenheimer Apotheke Riesling Beerenauslese Alte Reben	17 18		96
2017er	Melsheimer	Reiler Mullay-Hofberg Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese	10 18		96+
2017er	Markus Molitor	Erdener Treppchen Riesling Beerenauslese	151 18		97
2017er	Markus Molitor	Kinheimer Hubertuslay Riesling Beerenauslese	152 18		96+
2017er	Markus Molitor	Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Beerenauslese *	153 18		98
2017er	Egon Müller	Scharzhofberger Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese	09 18		100
2017er	Max Ferd. Richter	Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese	08 18		97+
2017er	Max Ferd. Richter	Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Beerenauslese	07 18		98
2017er	Selbach-Oster	Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Beerenauslese	06 18		97
2017er	Selbach-Oster	Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Beerenauslese *	09 18		99
2017er	Selbach-Oster	Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese	08 18		97
2017er	Vollenweider	Wolfer Goldgrube Riesling Beerenauslese	05 18		98
2017er	Nik Weis – St. Urbans-Hof	Mehringer Layet Riesling Beerenauslese	38 18		96+
2017er	Nik Weis – St. Urbans-Hof	Ockfener Bockstein Riesling Beerenauslese	39 18		97
2017er	Wegeler	Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese	15 18		97



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

2017 NOBLE-SWEET | LIST OF AUSLESE HIGHLIGHTS

We provide here a list (ranked alphabetically by Estate) of Auslese highlights from the 2017 vintage:

2017er	A.J. Adam	Dhroner Hofberg Riesling Auslese	13 18		95
2017er	Falkenstein	Krettnacher Euchariusberg Riesling Auslese	05 18		95
2017er	Geltz-Zilliken	Saarburger Rausch Riesling Auslese	03 18	<i>Auction</i>	94+
2017er	Geltz-Zilliken	Saarburger Rausch Riesling Auslese GK	02 18		95
2017er	Geltz-Zilliken	Saarburger Rausch Riesling Auslese lange GK	01 18	<i>Auction</i>	96+
2017er	Fritz Haag	Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese GK #9			96
2017er	Fritz Haag	Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese GK #12			97
2017er	Fritz Haag	Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese lange GK #15		<i>Auction</i>	97
2017er	Julian Haart	Piesporter Schubertslay Riesling Auslese	03 18		96
2017er	Julian Haart	Piesporter Schubertslay Riesling Auslese ***	04 18		97+
2017er	Julian Haart	Wintricher Ohligsberg Riesling Auslese ***	07 18		97
2017er	Dr. Hermann	Erdener Prälät Riesling Auslese GK	12 18		96
2017er	von Hövel	Scharzhofberger Riesling Auslese -48-			95
2017er	Kees-Kieren	Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese ***	26 18		96
2017er	Knebel	Winninger Uhlen Riesling Auslese	08 18		96
2017er	Peter Lauer	Ayler Kupp Riesling Auslese	30 18	<i>Auction</i>	95
2017er	Peter Lauer	Ayler Kupp Riesling Auslese Fass 10			94+
2017er	Peter Lauer	Ayler Kupp Riesling Auslese lange GK	32 18	<i>Auction</i>	96+
2017er	Le Gallais	Wiltinger braune Kupp Riesling Auslese	10 18		95
2017er	Schloss Lieser	Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese GK	29 18	<i>Auction</i>	96
2017er	Dr. Loosen	Erdener Prälät Riesling Auslese GK	28 18		94+
2017er	Dr. Loosen	Erdener Prälät Riesling Auslese lange GK	48 18	<i>Auction</i>	(95-98)
2017er	Markus Molitor	Erdener Treppchen Riesling Auslese *** (Golden Capsule)	137 18		95
2017er	Markus Molitor	Kinheimer Hubertuslay Riesling Auslese *** (Golden Capsule)	47 18		96
2017er	Markus Molitor	Saarburger Rausch Riesling Auslese *** (Golden Capsule)	99 18		95
2017er	Markus Molitor	Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese *** (Golden Capsule)	49 18		95
2017er	Egon Müller	Scharzhofberger Riesling Auslese	07 18		96
2017er	Egon Müller	Scharzhofberger Auslese lange GK	08 18	<i>Auction</i>	100
2017er	von Othegraven	Kanzemer Altenberg Riesling Auslese	13 18		95
2017er	von Othegraven	Kanzemer Altenberg Riesling Auslese GK	14 18		96
2017er	Joh. Jos. Prüm	Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Auslese GK			95
2017er	Joh. Jos. Prüm	Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese GK	21 18	<i>Auction</i>	95
2017er	Joh. Jos. Prüm	Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese lange GK	22 18	<i>Auction</i>	99
2017er	Max Ferd. Richter	Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese	13 18		95
2017er	Willi Schaefer	Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese	15 18	<i>Auction</i>	96+
2017er	von Schubert	Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Riesling Auslese Nr. 56		<i>Auction</i>	95
2017er	Selbach-Oster	Zeltinger Schlossberg Riesling Auslese Schmitt	16 18		95
2017er	Selbach-Oster	Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese Rotlay	03 18		97
2017er	Selbach-Oster	Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese ***	36 18		96+
2017er	Später-Veit	Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Auslese	07 18		95



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

2017 NOBLE-SWEET | LIST OF AUSLESE HIGHLIGHTS (CONT'D)

2017er	Studert-Prüm	Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese ***	07 18	96
2017er	Wwe Dr. H. Thanisch – Erben Müller-Burggraef	Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Auslese	15 18	94+
2017er	Nik Weis – St. Urbans-Hof	Leiwener Laurentiuslay Riesling Auslese	46 18	95
2017er	Nik Weis – St. Urbans-Hof	Ockfener Bockstein Riesling Auslese	47 18	96
2017er	Nik Weis – St. Urbans-Hof	Schodener Saarfelser Marienberg Riesling Auslese	37 18	96
2017er	Wegeler	Bernkasteler Doctor Riesling Auslese	12 18	96



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

2018 Mosel Vintage – Kissed by the Sun?

What does 2018 have in store? In fact the question we got so far has been far more direct: The summer 2018 was the driest and hottest on record. Is 2018 going to be another 2003? There is certainly an element of 2018 being kissed by the sun. But 2018 could well become quite a remarkable vintage.



The growing conditions can be summarized with one word: Sunshine!

A cold February and March brought a slight distraction to what would be essentially the warmest vintage on record. The average temperature were far higher than long-term averages and the region had 100 more sunshine hours than in such recent warm vintages as 2015, 2011 but not as much as in such extreme vintage as 2005 or 2003. With exceptions, the vintage was on the dry side, as were 2015, 2011, 2009, 2005 or 2003. Fortunately, yields were high (a side-product of a warm growing season without real draught) and this tamed the sugar concentration in the grapes.

Given the almost too good growing conditions, it is not surprising that harvest started, once again, earlier than ever before.

Flowering happened early and the development of the vines was exceptionally fast in the summer. The result was another record early harvest. For the first time ever, VDP and Bernkasteler Ring growers found their harvest colliding with their annual Trier Auctions. The harvest happened under almost perfect conditions, with however acidity levels going down fast as October neared. By mid-October, the harvest was truly done and over, i.e. at a time where most harvests would only have started 10 or 20 years ago.

The result is less a foregone conclusion that the hot summer suggests: There are some truly beautifully elegant wines in the making.

So what does all this mean for the style of the 2018 wines? We have been able to taste a few casks at some of the region's finest growers and the vintage's stylistic signature may not be as uniform as the summer sun may suggest. We tasted dry to sweet, Kabinett to late harvested fruit. The style of the wines ranged from "moderate acidic and driven by melon" (as in 2003 or 2005) to "juicily ripe yet zesty" (as in for instance 2002). Some noble-sweet wines left a shiver down our spine: There could well be some truly awe-inspiring stuff in the oven! In addition many Estates were able to produce good quantities of high-end noble-sweet wines, including TBA.

We are particularly curious for the dry wines. Firstly, many wines are unusually slow at fermenting, something growers put down to the summer heat which gave less nitrogen (a fuel necessary when you do wild fermentation) than usual. Secondly, several growers who do usually not produce any dry Riesling said they would (try to) do so as they feel that 2018 yielded the moderate acidity required for making balanced dry Riesling.

It remains of course early days. But one thing is clear about the 2018 vintage: Despite being kissed by the sun, it is not a remake of 2003. This could well be a dream of a vintage for growers: High quality AND good yields!

Stay tuned!

www.moselfinewines.com

page 18

Issue No 44 - January 2019



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

Weingut Fritz Haag | A Deep-Dive Interview

Which came first? Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr or Weingut Fritz Haag? The Estate is so deeply associated with this mythical vineyard that the question may be asked.

We met with Oliver Haag for an interview to better understand his Estate, vineyards, winemaking philosophy, professional career ... and, of course, wine preferences! Oliver is not the most expansive of wine growers. But when a topic is close to his heart, he can get all fired up, as we noticed in the interview!



MFW: “ Tell us about the history of your Estate? ”

The Haag have a long historic connection with winemaking as the lineage goes back over more than 10 generations to at least 1605. Historically, the Haag came from the village of Burgen, which is situated a few miles inland from Brauneberg (see it on the map on next page). Here, the family was active in the mixed agriculture activity that was common back then in the Mosel. Besides winemaking, our family was also tending fields and raising livestock.

In the latter part of the 19th century, my great-great-grandfather, Friedrich Wilhelm Haag, married one of the heiresses to the Peter Chr. Conrad-Fehres Estate which held prime vineyards on the Brauneberger hill. This Estate was to become a founding member of the Grosser Ring. My great-grandfather Ferdinand Haag was to take it completely over soon after that and started to sell his wines under the label Conrad-Fehres-Erben (F. Haag) at the annual Trier Auctions (see the label of the 1928 bottle here above).

We always had a fine reputation. But it was under the reign of my father Wilhelm Haag that the Haag Estate really “took off.” He had to take over the family Estate very early, in 1957, at the tender age of 20, when my grandfather Fritz Haag suddenly fell ill.

Up to that point, the Haag family was still active in mixed agriculture. It was my father who decided to focus our activity only on winemaking. In the mid-1960s, the Ferdinand Haag Estate was eventually split up between his two sons, Fritz Haag and Willi Haag (the latter Estate is now managed by my cousin Markus Haag).

My father then continuously developed the Fritz Haag Estate over the decades. I joined the Estate in 2004 and took it formally over in 2005.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

MFW: “ How large is your Estate today? How are the vineyards distributed? ”

The Estate extends over 24.5 ha today. Weingut Fritz Haag is traditionally associated with the Brauneberger Juffer and Juffer-Sonnenuhr where we continued to consolidate our holdings over the years. We do tend a full 12.5 ha there today.

The remaining 12 ha are split as follows:

- Brauneberg: Just over 6 ha in the steep, south-east-facing part of the Klostergarten.
- Burgen: 2.5 ha mainly in the south-facing Römerberg.
- Kesten / Monzel: Just under 1 ha on this steep south-facing hill west of the Juffer / Juffer-Sonnenuhr.
- Mülheim: 2.5 ha in the west-facing Sonnenlay.

Some of these vineyards may not be well known to the wider public. But they are all historic vineyards situated on steep hills and on slate.



© www.weinlagen-online.de, Mosel Fine Wines "The Independent Mosel Review"

MFW: “ What grape varieties do you have? ”

We are a Riesling Estate: All our vineyards are planted with Riesling. Well, nearly all: As an experiment and out of curiosity, I replanted a small vineyard with Weissburgunder which will yield its first wine in 2018. But don't read anything deep into this: It's Riesling that runs through my veins! [Laughing]



Mosel Fine Wines

“The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling”

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

MFW: “ How old are your vines? ”

I have hardly ever replanted a vineyard since I took over the Estate. I only retrained some vineyards to wire. The last major replanting happened in the 1980s when the Brauneberger hill went through the *Flurbereinigung* process [Note from the authors: a process which rationalizes the vineyard ownership so that each Estate can rely on larger parcels].

Consequently, the vineyards are almost all over 25-30 years old. But some parcels, especially in the hart of the Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr, are over 50-80 years old. It is actually hard to tell.

“Weingut Fritz Haag is traditionally associated with Brauneberger Juffer and Juffer-Sonnenuhr ... We do tend a full 12.5 ha there today”

(Oliver Haag)

MFW: “ How are your vines trained? ”

All our vineyards, with very few exceptions, are trained on wire. This allows one to work with the *Weinbergsraupe* [a mechanized caterpillar type of machine which allows to work in ultra-steep hills as found in the Mosel]. This is a very effective method, which limits the number of times we have to walk through each vineyard and hence limits erosion and soil compactification. This is important, as the Brauneberger hill is naturally not retaining water easily: Any compactification would be really detrimental.





Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

MFW: “ How do you work the vineyards? ”

We are working the vineyards conventionally but with a close eye on the impact on our vineyards. For instance, we do limit the development of botrytis, as we want a style which relies on purity and precision, but do this through shacking the grape bunches after flowering to loosen up each bunch, halving the bunches to further airing inside of the bunch, lime powder-based products to dry out, etc.

MFW: “ How do you handle the harvest? What is your base plan? ”

We harvest everything by hand, in the classical *Bütte* [the tradition recipient held on the back of a harvest picker] and do the selections in the vineyard, not in the cellar. For this, we rely heavily on multiple passes through the vineyards, so that we harvest the right grapes for our different wines (Estate wines, Kabinett-styled wines, etc.). The basis of our success is that we pre-harvest, i.e. do a negative selection, every single vineyard before the main harvest.

There is no set plan as to which vineyard is destined for which type of wine, except that we will harvest a bit earlier our wines from all vineyards beyond the main Brauneberger hill (i.e. those in the Brauneberger Juffer and Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr) as their fruit is destined for our Estate wines. Of course, in principle, vineyards higher up on the main Brauneberger hill are more for Kabinett. But over the last few years, Mother Nature has often crossed these plans.

“Most of our wines see some stainless steel. This suits the slender nature of Brauneberger Juffer and Juffer-Sonnenuhr wines” (Oliver Haag)

MFW: “ How do you ferment you wines? ”

Most of our wines are fermented with ambient yeasts as this adds complexity to the wines ... even if some customers continue to be surprised by the sometimes reductive flavors that this type of fermentation gives to the wines in their youth. Only my Estate wines are fermented with cultured yeasts as these wines should reflect not only the quality of the Estate but also prove more readily approachable. I may also rely on some cultured yeasts to finish the fermentation of some of my dry wines, if necessary.

We do have some traditional Fuder but most of our wines see stainless steel tanks. This suits the slender nature of Brauneberger Juffer and Juffer-Sonnenuhr wines. However, some of our dry wines, in particular our GGs, often see some traditional Fuder casks, none new of course.

MFW: “ Do you rely on pre-fermentation cold soak? ”

Most of our wines are made without any pre-fermentation cold soak. We do use this approach to add body and structure to our top dry wines. However, we used it parsimoniously, for not more than 6-18 hours.

MFW: “ What lees management do you do? When do you bottle? ”

My wines are left on the fine lees until at least March after the vintage, and until the summer for my GGs. However, I don't stir the lees, as I don't want this type of creaminess and malolactic fermentation in my wines.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

MFW: “ Which wines do you produce? What is the proportion of dry / off-dry / sweet? ”

I produce a large portfolio of wines, which consists of four dry Riesling, three off-dry wines and a whole range of fruity-styled and noble sweet wines ... right up to TBA if the vintage allows for it. Dry and off-dry are an important part of the portfolio today, as both together represent 50%. This was not the case when I joined the Estate as we used to produce more fruity-styled wines.

“ I want to produce wines that people actually drink ” (Oliver Haag)



MFW: “ What are the style principles behind your wines? ”

Overall, I want to produce wines that people actually drink! Kabinett wines need to convey lightness and elegance. This has become an increasing challenge with climate change, but we usually pick some ripe fruit earlier. The grapes need to have some ripeness and not be green. So the fruit we pick usually has 83-88° Oechsle.

Spätlese and Auslese are wines without any botrytis at our Estate. I want my wines to remain purity, elegance and precision. Here the fruit is usually harvested at around 90° Oechsle for Spätlese and mid-to-late 90° for Auslese.

It is only as of Auslese GK that botrytis gradually plays a role. Auslese GK generally “only” have between 20 and 50% of botrytis, whereas the BA and TBA are made from 100% of botrytis.

My GGs are made from very clean grapes, as I don't want to see any botrytis-affected berry in the buckets for my dry wines. It is usually one of the last wines to be picked, as I want clean but really ripe grapes where the acidity has mellowed away. Riesling is about acid but it needs to remain playful and subtle.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

MFW: “ You didn’t mention Eiswein: Is it not an option for you? ”

Indeed, Eiswein is not really an option for us. The Brauneberger hill is one of the warmest vineyards in the whole region. It is therefore one of the most unlikely places to focus on Eiswein.

This being said, it is funny that you mention Eiswein ... because I left some grapes hanging out in the hope of some Eiswein this year, but I am not sure if this will materialize, as the weather remains remarkably warm for the season.

MFW: “ Which are your favorite vintages? ”

I love the classic Mosel vintages such as 2008 and 2004. They are very pure and elegant and scream Mosel.

If you are going for greatness and complexity as well as aging abilities, 2017 (I really believe in this one), 2015, 2009, 2006 and 2005 are modern-day legends in the making.

However, there are no “overall” great vintages. If you would ask me about dry Riesling, I would put forward 2011, 2007, 2005 and, most likely, 2016. Also, and this may come as a surprise, I’m very confident that 2010 will be a great vintage for dry Riesling ... once the wines will have emerged from their shell.

But I could add many more vintages to all these lists: There are hardly any bad vintages anymore.



Oliver Haag, here above, together with his father Wilhelm Haag.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

MFW: “ Was it always clear for you that you would become a winemaker? ”

Yes, it was and it is actually not surprising. You need to remember that I grew up in a family where wine was everything. Besides being a gifted winemaker, my father is also an avid wine lover so we were immersed into great wines right from a young age. My parents were very open and never really pressurized us but both my brother [Thomas Haag, who manages the Schloss Lieser Estate] and I were drawn naturally into a winemaking career.

“ I grew up in a family where wine was everything ” (Oliver Haag)

MFW: “ What is your vitae? ”

After school, I started a classic *Lehre*, [Note from the authors: The German system of apprenticeship] first at the now defunct Biologisches Bundesanstalt, a state-owned Estate promoting organic growing methods which was based in Bernkastel, and later at Dönnhoff. I did my alternative year to the military service at the winemaking and Sekt-making Estate run by the German Red Cross with handicapped people in Graach and I worked a few months at the Karthäuserhof Estate. I then did my winemaking studies, also classically, in Geisenheim before doing some internship on the common projects by Bernhard Breuer (Weingut Georg Breuer) and Bernd Philippi (then Weingut Koehler-Ruprecht), first in South Africa and later in Madeira. This was quite fun and a huge dose of fresh air for a young guy like me!

In 2000, I took on the role of Estate manager at the historic Wegeler Estate, which, at the time owned three Estates: One in the Rheingau, one in the Pfalz and one in the Mosel [Note: Wegeler now only runs the Rheingau and Mosel Estates].

In 2004, I returned home in order to take over the family Estate in 2005.

MFW: “ Was it not too difficult to take over the Estate from your father? ”

Absolutely not, on the contrary! My father gave me a free hand while helping me out where he could. Actually, I am proud that my father is still actively helping out as “senior boss” on the Estate.

[Note: As if this had been choreographed, at precisely that moment of the interview, Oliver’s mobile phone rings and his father is on the phone, calling from the cellar and wanting to discuss some technicalities of the 2018 vintage!]

MFW: “ Which other wines do you like? Which wine did flash you recently? ”

I regularly drink from other Estates and exchange bottles with colleagues, in particular against red wines. In Germany, I like the wines from Weingut Rudolf Fürst, Meyer-Näkel and Friedrich Becker very much. But I also enjoy for instance Burgundy very much, even if prices have become eye-watering lately. Just the other day, I had a superb bottle of white Burgundy from Domaine Roulot.

But, if I may praise some of our own wines, I was left speechless by a 1979er Spätlese from our Estate which a friend brought us recently. Mature Mosel wines are so nice!



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

MFW: “ Where do you see the Estate in 10 years? ”

This is a question I regularly ask myself as well. Winemaking is a generation business. What should I leave to my children?

After much thought, I doubt very much that the Estate will be structurally different than today in 10 years. I don't think that I will extend onto other Grand Cru vineyards. The name Fritz Haag stands for Brauneberger Juffer and Juffer-Sonnenuhr. I don't think that I will develop a *Négociant* business, as some of my colleagues do with great success. I want to retain a human side and remain in control of the whole process.

Never say never, but I see the Estate growing a little bit, depending on great vineyards I could take over on my home hills. I will certainly also try to perfect our wines even more, in particular in the dry sector. As everybody else in the Mosel, we will need to address the challenges of climate change, so that, among others, our Kabinett remains "Kabinett-like."

[Laughing] It does sound boring, doesn't it? Everybody tells you that you need great plans. But our plan for the future is to continue to do what we have done so well since decades.

This is what I think is best for our Estate.

“ Our plan for the future is continue to do what we have done so well since decades ” (Oliver Haag)



© Mosel Fine Wines
The Independent Mosel Review



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

Uhlen gUs / PDOs | A New Era for German Wine?

Three different sectors of the Winninger Uhlen have been recently given **gU / PDO** (**geschützte Ursprungsbezeichnung / Protected Denomination of Origin**) status:

- Blaufüsser Lay.
- Laubach.
- Roth Lay.

The approach and structure of this approval process could signal the start of a new era for German wine.



gU / PDO | THE BASIS FOR VINEYARD DEFINITION IN THE EU

The **PDO** (**Protected Denomination of Origin**) is a way for **EU** (**European Union**) Member States to ensure that certain unique products and processes rooted in terroir get equal recognition and protection within all EU Member States (and with other trading nations or trading blocks, when such provisions are foreseen in the trading deals).

These PDOs were first introduced in France (**AOC**, for **Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée**) and Italy (**DOC**, for **Denominazione di Origine Controllata**), and generalized as a principle throughout the EU over the last years. They apply to all sorts of products, but are central to the terroir-driven product called wine.

UHLEN | TERROIR-DRIVEN RECOGNITION AS gU / PDO

In October 2018, the last hurdle was taken for the approval of three more gUs / PDOs by the EU: The "Uhlen Blaufüsser Lay," "Uhlen Laubach" and "Uhlen Roth Lay." A small step for the EU but a big step for Germany: These are the first German single-vineyards to have received this status together with the Bürgstadter Berg (in Franken) and the Monzinger Niederberg (in the Nahe).



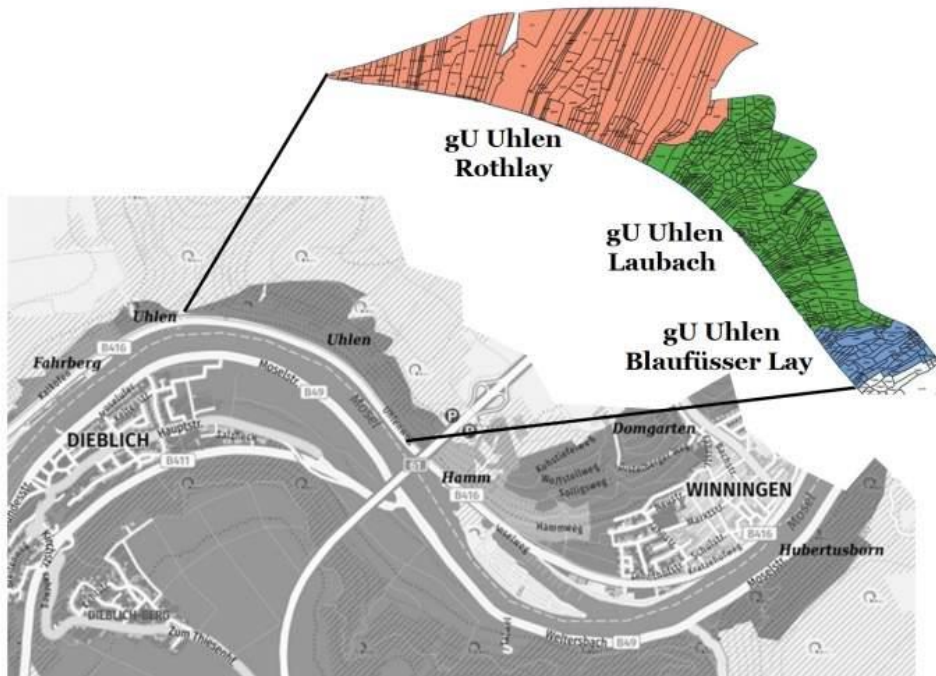
Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

"Uhlen Blaufüsser Lay," "Uhlen Laubach" and "Uhlen Roth Lay" refer to three different parts of the Winninger Uhlen vineyard in the Terrassenmosel (see picture here below). While contiguous to each other, the special geology of the Winningen area makes that these three sectors have completely different soils and thus the wines have a different aromatic profile:

- Blaufüsser Lay is on a blue slate.
- Laubach is on a grey and iron-rich slate.
- Roth Lay is on a red-colored slate.



© Weingut Heymann-Löwenstein, Mosel Fine Wines and www.deutschevine.de - All Rights Reserved



UHLEN gUs | NORMATIVE QUALITY REQUIREMENTS

The driving force behind the approval of these gUs / PDOs was Reinhard Löwenstein from Weingut Heymann-Löwenstein. He had secured the support of other leading growers in Winningen. As Reinhard pointed out, the fact that a vineyard is classified as gU is not per se the important breakthrough, but what they did with it: "A gU gives some protection but it is only as good as what you make of it. The Mosel as a region has also been granted the status of a gU. But the overall definition criteria of the Mosel gU are rather generic. The completely new thing with the registration of the Uhlen gUs was that we relied on the more French / Italian principles of geology and terroir, production methods and taste profile to establish the specifications for the gUs."

Not any wine from these three parts of the Winninger Uhlen hill will therefore be allowed to be bottled under the gU label.

Stylistically, Uhlen gU wines will need to be either dry or just off-dry tasting (less than 18 g/l of residual sugar), noble-sweet (Auslese, BA, TBA or Eiswein) or as Sekt. Unlike with the provision in the generic wine law, the noble sweet wines will need to satisfy minimal levels of residual sugar: 90 g/l (Auslese), 150 g/l (for BA and Eiswein) and 180 g/l (for TBA).

No Prädikat Kabinett and Spätlese will be allowed as Reinhard Löwenstein explained: "One needs to know one's strengths: The Uhlen terroir is situated near Koblenz and is much warmer than the Middle Mosel, Saar or Ruwer. Simply put, it is not really predestined for elegant and playful Kabinett or Spätlese. Here we made the deliberate choice to focus on the terroirs' strengths."

The Uhlen gU wines will need to satisfy some quality criteria that reflect true ripeness. This is expressed, among others, through truly strict maximal yields not only by ha (70 hl / ha). Also, the grapes should show a must sugar level of minimum 88° Oechsle (when without Prädikat), 105° Oechsle (for Auslese), 130° Oechsle (for BA and Eiswein) and 180° Oechsle (for TBA). These are significantly higher than those foreseen in the generic German wine law.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

Lastly, a whole series of modern winemaking methods are forbidden. This includes notably alcohol removal, must concentration (be it via inverse osmosis, spinning cone or cryo-extraction), sweetening with grape concentrate, wood chip products and the use ascorbic acidity. Needless to say, these techniques are all legal in the generic German wine law.

One provision seems quite surprising at first site. The Uhlen gUs foresee a maximal sugar concentration in the grape must of 41% of potential alcohol. Reinhard smiled when explaining why: "In fact, the reason is quite simple. The form required a maximum level. I took the highest figure ever measured."

UHLEN gUs | A QUIET REVOLUTION FOR GERMAN WINE

The registration of some gUs / PDOs may seem an anodyne administrative process, as there are dozen PDOs approved every year. But the registration of the Uhlen gUs represents a quite revolution for German wine.

First of all, the contours of the Uhlen gUs were drawn based on profound geological studies. Hardly any such study was made when the contours of the single vineyards were set in 1971 (we know of only two vague "terroir" studies, both in the case of disputes on the contours of the vineyard, namely the Erdener Prälat and the Bernkasteler Doktor). "Political consensus" (as one grower once aptly put to us) was rather the driving principle back in 1971 when deciding on the delimitation of single-vineyards. This led to the creation of huge vineyards, spreading sometimes over several hills, which blend together different terroirs with very different tasting signatures.

In addition, the Uhlen gUs prescribe some taste profiles expressed in grape ripeness, wine sweetness and wine acidity. Of course, the German wine law says that if a wine is called Trocken, it has to be dry (i.e. less than 9 g/l of residual sugar, if the acidity is at least of 7 g/l). But the law says nothing for a wine simply labelled as "Wehlener Sonnenuhr." Such a wine can have anything between 0 g/l and 500 g/l of residual sugar.

In practice, thanks among others to the efforts of the VDP association, some unwritten rules have crystallized over time on how names are used on German wine labels. We discussed these in detail in our article "Deciphering the Modern German Wine Label" (see Mosel Fine Wines Issue No 34 – April 2017). But, from a legislative point of view, a situation in which the way wines are labelled is defined by market habits can hardly be considered satisfactory. Not only are these rules written nowhere in a legal text, they are far from unequivocal and universal, as we explain in our article in April 2017.

UHLEN gUs | THE START OF A NEW ERA?

Recently, the EU Member States agreed to overhaul the wine regulations and structure them along the more prescriptive gU / PDO model. Also Germany is rethinking the structure of its wine law.

The deployment of a gU logic for all prime vineyards in Germany would create vineyard names with more homogeneous terroir structure and ensure more clarity on the taste profile of any wine. This, in turn, would lift the barrier of uncertainty with which a consumer is faced today in a shop somewhere in the world: Is this wine dry or not? Will it taste full-bodied or light-bodied? Providing clear taste guidelines can only boost sales.

We sincerely hope that the pioneering work done by Reinhard Löwenstein and supported by its peers in the Uhlen vineyard will lead to this more Roman and consumer-friendly labelling of German wines. Everybody would benefit from it!

It is not a done deal. As Reinhard Löwenstein explained to us, it took him the best part of 8 years to get this through the grinds of public administration and quite some diplomatic astuteness to navigate through the political interests of all concerned. But the effort was worth it!

UHLEN gUs | WHAT WILL THIS MEAN IN PRACTICE?

As of the 2018 vintage, there will be Uhlen Blaufüsser Lay, Uhlen Laubach and Uhlen Roth Lay formally allowed on the label. The gU does not stipulate the village (also because technically they are on the soil of two separate ones: Winningen and Kobern). Hence, no village indication will be found anywhere on the label.

The only snag to the construct is that, next to these three gUs, there is still the legal possibility for any wine grower to bottle the fruit as Winninger Uhlen (but then without terroir indication). The new gUs do not replace the provisions from the wine law of 1971. According to the law of 1971, this grower could also decide to bottle some Winninger Uhlen Kabinett or Spätlese.

Some growers with too little holdings in each of the three terroirs may decide to their produce as Winninger Uhlen until they accumulated enough vineyards in each sector to warrant separate bottlings. It could therefore well be that these three newly introduced gUs will take some time to take off.

Overall, while these gUs clearly add clarity, their full beneficial impact will only be felt once all remaining vineyards from Winningen will have gone through some gU status as well and the old system dating from the law of 1971 will have been abandoned. This will take time. But then, Rome was not built in a day either.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

Gueuze, Kriek & Co | The Beer for Mosel Lovers

"There is beer and there is Gueuze." This comment overheard in a bar pretty much sums up the unique status of this beer style from the area around Brussels. Beer is often associated with industrial processes. Gueuze, and more generally Lambic beers, are anything but that. The finest Lambic beers age like fine wine, over 10 to 20 years (and more!). At their best, they offer a festival of complex flavors pepped up by quite an acidic kick not unlike that of Mosel (the beer is a "sour" beer, as it is called in the beer world). In addition, the finest Gueuze, Kriek & Co are almost as rare and sought-after as fine Burgundy and Mosel: the world of fine drinkers and collectors has unfortunately caught up with the quality of Lambic beers.



© Mosel Fine Wines
The Independent Mosel Review

Lambic-based beers have a huge tradition around Brussels. As Frank Boon (Boon) explained, "in the 1940s, there were still 43 brewers and over 200 Lambic blenders active in the Brussels area. Each village had his own brewers or blenders. That was the way that beer was done back then. By the 1980s, this was down to a handful only."

After having almost faced extinction in the 1980s, this beer style has gained incredible traction worldwide since. The annual tastings at the leading producers draw an international crowd which would put to shame many wine events. Special releases from such iconic producers as Cantillon or 3 Fonteinen sell out instantly. Customers from all over the world come to Brussels and its outskirts ... simply to fetch their bottles. Some of these beers are hugely valuable and can fetch hundreds of dollars on the secondary market ... again, as fine wine does (and in this case unfortunately).

"Lambic beers are a festival of complex flavors pepped up by an acidic kick not unlike that of Mosel wine."

We have been fascinated by these beers since many years now (one of the authors lives in Brussels). The structure and balance have so much in common with Mosel Riesling. Consequently, we took the rather unusual decision to write a background piece on these unique beers from the Brussels region in the hope to entice some of our readers to "have a go." Those of our readers who have already been exposed to these unique beers may learn a little bit more about the historical background, the brewing and the producers, as well as some recent developments and new creations. And, as you will read, there is even a direct link with Mosel Riesling!

We would especially like to thank Frank Boon (Boon Brewery), Gert Christiaens (Oud Beersel Brewery), Armand De Belder (3 Fonteinen Brewery), Karel Godeau (De Cam Steekerij), Tom Jacobs (Antidoot Brewery), Raf Souvereyns (Bokkereyder Blendery), Pierre Tilquin (Tilquin Gueuzerie) and Jean Van Roy (Cantillon Brewery) for their invaluable time and the kindness with which they greeted us and patiently responded to our "weird but fascinating questions," as one of them put it to us with a big smiling face.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

Gueuze, Kriek & Co / A Unique Beer Rooted in Tradition

Let's start with the basics: What is a Gueuze? A Gueuze is a traditional beer produced in the area around Brussels, Belgium, one of the world hot beds for beer. What makes Gueuze so special? We asked the question to Jean Van Roy (Cantillon), owner of one of the most admired brewery in the Brussels, Cantillon, situated in the heart of Brussels.

"Lambic beers rely on the unique wild yeasts and bacteria found in the Brussels area." (Jean Van Roy, Cantillon)

Jean Van Roy (Cantillon) first set out to clarify some basic wording: "First and foremost, I am a Lambic brewer. Lambic is the base beer which defines our beer style. It can be bottled separately but is mainly used as basis for our flagship beers of our region that are the Gueuze, Kriek, etc. What makes Lambic so special? Lambic beers are the result of a special production process rooted into the history of beer around Brussels (and in the past, this was done way beyond the Brussels area, right up to the Netherlands) [Note from the authors: the painting here below by Peter Breughel depicts the same jugs as those still used for Faro today]. The process relies on the unique ambient yeasts and bacteria found around Brussels. This generates much deeper and more complex beers than those made with cultured yeasts, as is the norm in the beer world. These yeasts and bacteria are special to the Brussels area and they give our Lambic-based beers their unique taste. It is the combination of a unique technique and local terroir. To take an analogy, one can make Riesling elsewhere than in the Mosel. But one can only produce Mosel in the Mosel. It's the same with our Lambic-based beers."



So what is Jean Van Roy (Cantillon) talking about? The best way to understand these beers from around Brussels is by looking at the brewing process. Overall, making beer is a simple, millennium-old process. You grind and cook (brew) some cereals to release sugars and flavors. The resulting "broth" (called "wort" in the beer world) is then cooled down and set to ferment. After the fermentation, the beer is packaged and sold to customers. The actual beer brewing process is of course more complex: You usually add hops and possibly some spices, herbs, etc. You need to filter the resulting liquid (not an easy thing!) and possibly want to "lager" the resulting beer or age it in some taste-giving barrels, etc. But the process boils down to one principle: you ferment a brew of cereals.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

Gueuze, Kriek & Co | Beers Made Traditionally with Ambient Yeasts and a Multiple-Year Fermentation

The availability of the base ingredients for brewing (i.e. cereals, hops, yeasts and possibly spices, fruits, herbs, etc.) has made it possible to industrialize the production of beers throughout the world. Lambic beers are anything but industrial. On the contrary said Jean Van Roy, "they rely on methods from another age." In fact, they have much in common with those used for producing fine wines."

"Lambic beers rely on methods from another age." (Jean Van Roy, Cantillon)

STEP 1 | WHEAT-BASED TURPID MASHING



Lambic is made with a significant proportion of un-malted wheat, typically one third. Relying on wheat is not a widely spread practice in the beer world but has quite some tradition around Brussels and the neighboring city of Leuven (for those familiar with wheat beer, Hoegaarden, one of the best-known Belgian "white beers," refers to a village close to Leuven).

The brewer adds some aged hops. This enhances the preservative properties of the beer without adding any taste (young hop can add quite some flavors).

The brewer cooks the resulting brew in a long and completely unique manner (called turpid mashing) which loads the liquid with sugars and preserves some starch, i.e. long chains of sugar. It is these long chains of sugar which play a central role in the way that this sugary liquid will ferment and, ultimately, give Lambic its unique taste, Frank Boon explained.

"A specific long mashing releases the type of sugars which will give Lambic its unique taste." (Frank Boon, Boon)

STEP 2 | INOCULATION WITH AMBIENT YEASTS



The resulting sugary liquid is then left to cool down for a few hours without any protection. As Armand de Belder (3 Fonteinen) mentioned, "Lambic brewers actively look for this to happen as this will inoculate their beers with the wild yeasts and bacteria which will ultimately be responsible for the fermentation."

Yes, you read it correctly: Lambic is made with ambient yeasts, as is much of Mosel wine.

In order to maximize the inoculation and speed up the cooling process, this part of the process is done in a large flat recipient called a Koelship (which means cooling ship in Dutch).

This shallow but wide recipient augments the surface in contact with air. This increases the inoculation potential with ambient yeasts and bacteria, and accelerates the cooling-down process.

"Lambic is left to cool without any protection, to get inoculated by wild yeasts." (Armand de Belder, 3 Fonteinen)



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

STEP 3 | YEAR-LONG FERMENTATION IN OAK BARRELS



The resulting inoculated liquid (called wort) is then transferred to oak barrels. Historically, these casks were seasoned, i.e. neutral in taste, as it was also the case for instance for Mosel Riesling.

The fermentation can last for up to three years, i.e. "even longer than that of most wines," as Pierre Tilquin (Tilquin) mentioned with a little smile.

The spontaneous fermentation involves bacteria and later on some yeasts. After an initial classic beer fermentation, there will be an additional lactic fermentation (this transforms sugars into lactic acid and add an acid zing to the beer). This will be followed by a Brett fermentation, whereby *Brettanomyces* transform long sugars (hence the special mashing method) into alcohol and add some complex and delicately funky elements to the flavors.

"Lambic matures in oak for up to three years, i.e. longer than most wines." (Pierre Tilquin, Tilquin)

The resulting beer is called Lambic. As Gert Christiaens (Oud Beersel) explains, Lambic is a still beer: "Given that fermentation is done in casks without trapping the CO₂, Lambic is completely still ... as where all beers before the technological advances made in the late 18th and 19th century to trap or pump CO₂ into recipients."

For Armand de Belder (3 Fonteinen), part of the attraction of Lambic among beer lovers undoubtedly comes from the fact that this beer is made with truly ancient methods: "Historically, beer was produced pretty much like we still produce Lambic today. Oak barrels were the traditional recipient before stainless steel came in. All beers were fermented spontaneously (yeasts were only discovered in the 19th century) and cooled naturally (before modern heat exchanger were developed). This is something which appeals to beer lovers looking for a more natural product than those produced by the large breweries."

Relying on these ancient methods is not without its load of constraints, as Karel Godeau (De Cam) pointed out during our interview: "It's not really possible to fully control the process when natural yeasts are at work. There are always some surprises and one needs to remain attentive. Relying on ambient yeasts means that brewing Lambic is really only possible in the winter, when it's cool enough to limit the risk of bacteriological infections. This is the way that beer in general, and not just Lambic, was brewed before the age of cooling systems and cultured yeasts."

"Relying on ambient yeasts means that brewing Lambic is really only possible in the winter." (Karel Godeau, De Cam)



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

Gueuze, Kriek & Co | The Many Shades of Lambic

Lambic is the equivalent of a still wine in Champagne. It is the basis for the different beers that have made the fame of the Brussels area. It is impossible to cover every variation of Lambic-based beers as many are added every year. We review here the most important ones.

Please note that besides "the real deal" which we will present here below, there are also some Lambic-based beers which are produced using much simpler methods. We will review this (and how to recognize them) in a separate section at the end of this chapter.



GUEUZE

The Gueuze is probably the flagship of the Lambic beers. A real Gueuze from the traditional producers is made by blending together Lambic of different age and have it undergo a second fermentation. This is traditionally done in a champagne-styled bottle. Lately, through the development of refrigerated non-draft plastic casks called Kegs, this second fermentation can also be done in Keg by some producers.

Typically, most Lambic blenders rely on a mix of one, two and three year-old Lambic for their Gueuze for their beers sold in bottles (the mix is usually younger when Gueuze is served on tap (there is a dedicated chapter for Lambic on tap). Blending younger with older Lambic is done for two reasons: Younger Lambic will ensure that there is still enough residual sugar for a secondary fermentation to kick off (much as in a "Pet Nat" process). It also will add a fruitier side to the beer. Older Lambic will add presence as well as complexity and funk to the resulting Gueuze.

"Traditional Gueuze is an untampered blend of Lambic going through a second fermentation ... like Champagne." (Gert Christiaens, Oud Beersel)

This second fermentation typically lasts for a few months. Unlike Champagne, the resulting Gueuze is not disgorged. So traditional Gueuze is effectively bottled unsweetened, unfiltered, unpasteurized and unsulfured.

A Gueuze made the traditional way will develop a remarkably complex taste which may remind one of cider. Typically, one will find a touch of almond, some flowery elements, cooked apple, possibly a hint of apricot, as well as a hint of barnyard, all wrapped into some zesty acidity. Gueuze beers have a pH of 3.0. This is much higher than for normal beers but corresponds roughly to the acidity levels found in Mosel Riesling. Depending on the producer, the beer will have more or less power, and possibly show a touch of acetic acid (while there is no absolute "right or wrong," most producers find that too much of this tone is undesirable).

A younger Gueuze (say in its first 12 months after bottling) will be fruitier, but also sharper in acidity. An aged Gueuze (say after 3-5 years) will be mustier but also mellower as the feeling of acidity will have receded (... as is the case in Mosel wines as well).



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

KRIEK / SCHAARBEEKSE KRIEK

Nobody really known why and how the idea emerged to blend fruits into beer. Armand de Belder (3 Fonteinens) believes it is because, at the time, beer was expensive while fruits were essentially free ("that has changed massively lately!").

There is a long tradition of blending fruits into Lambic. The most popular one has been to do this with sour cherries, which are called Kriek in Flemish. Historically, the variety used was one called cerise de Schaerbeek or Schaarbeekse Kriek in Flemish. However, when these became rare, producers turned to the more available Morello variety for this.

For a Kriek, one adds fresh or frozen cherries to Lambic (typically 200-400kg per 1,000 liter of Lambic) and leaves the mixture to macerate. The age of the Lambic used depends on the style of the brewery and the bottling, whereby older Lambic is usually used for more ambitious bottlings. We wondered why producers of traditional Kriek use whole cherries. Karel Godeau (De Cam) explains this by the additional complexity it gives to the beer: "The beer transcends the simple and overtly fruity taste of cherries and gains an element of freshness." Those familiar with Burgundy will see many parallels here with destemmed grapes vs. whole-cluster fermentation for Pinot Noir.

"Traditional Kriek is made from whole cherries macerated in Lambic which then undergoes a second fermentation."

The duration of the maceration varies widely between producers. Some leave it for 2 months, others for up to a year. The resulting product is then de facto racked and bottled, where it will undergo a secondary fermentation without any disgorgement. Yes, also a traditional Kriek is bottled unsweetened, unfiltered, unpasteurized and unsulfured.

A young Kriek will taste of sharp cherries with a distinctive almond-infused note. With age, the better bottlings of Kriek will gain a distinctive Burgundian note, with fading rose, under-brush and funk (from Brett) as well as fine herbal and spicy elements.

FARO

This beer is based traditionally made from young unpasteurized and unfiltered Lambic which is sweetened with Candi sugar. This beer was traditionally made as a thirst quencher and allegedly also served to kids (!). Younger Lambic does not have much alcohol and the sweetening takes the sharpest edge of the acidity away.

Faro is not often seen on the market but some brewers and blenders offer it commercially. More often than not, Faro is done on a home basis, for instance on an open day event or beer festival as the beer will not be able to hold up for long, because the liquid would quasi immediately start to re-ferment and the amount of sugar could make the bottle explode if unpasteurized or unfiltered.

OTHER LAMBIC-BASED BEERS

Besides the classics, Gueuze and Kriek, there are many different other Lambic-based beers. Kriek has been the most popular of the fruit-based Lambic. However, there has been a long tradition of fruit-Lambic made with other berryed fruit as well. In particular, a raspberry one (Framboise) has an equally long tradition. Lately, brewers have experimented and developed fruit-Lambic with a wide variety of fruits. This includes the typical berries (blueberry, blackberry, red currant, strawberry, etc.). Besides this, many other fruit-Lambic has emerged over the years. This includes prune, apricot, peach, quince, pear, etc. one small Blendery even specializes in Lambic macerated with Japanese fruits and herbs!

Invariably experiments were also done with wine grapes. Today, there are regular bottlings on the basis of Merlot, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Gris. Many other grape varieties which have served at least as experiment. And yes, this includes also Riesling (more on this in a separate section of this article).

"There are also many other untampered Lambic beers based on almost any fruit, herb, spices or oak recipient imaginable."

Breweries also experimented with other flavorings than fruits. The biggest range includes herbs, from which there are several examples. There have also been quite a few experiments with aging Lambic in different recipients (for instance Jura casks or Sherry casks) or blend it with other beers (for instance Tilquin makes a blend of a stout beer with some Gueuze).



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

The possibilities are almost endless. Some even experimented with vegetables, as Jean Van Roy (Cantillon) remembers with a laugh: "I once had the idea to do one with Brussels sprouts. Don't ask me why but at that moment, I thought: What is more Brussels than Brussels sprouts? Well, the result was not really convincing ... but it was fun!"

LAMBIC-BASED BEERS ON TAP

Over the last few years, Lambic-based beers have increasingly been offered on tap. This is made possible by the Keg, a modern packaging method which uses gas pressure to push the liquid up towards the tap. As Frank Boon (Boon) pointed out, this proved a breakthrough: "Traditional Lambic-based beers are not filtered but are best enjoyed without their sediments. By pushing the beer up, the beer comes out clean from the tap."

Not all Lambic producers are happy with this development of Lambic-based beers on tap. Notably Karel Godeau (De Cam) has been vocal on this topic, arguing that it devalues the product: "Lambic-based beers are said to be the Champagne of beer. Would you drink Champagne from the tap?" However, many producers, including Cantillon, have embraced this technology and Lambic on tap is highly popular with the beer loving community.

"Lambic beers on tap are not necessarily the same as their equivalent in bottle."

Whether one approves or not of this development, readers should note that Lambic-based beers offered on tap are not necessarily the same as their equivalent in bottle. Pierre Tilquin (Tilquin) has always been very open about it: "My bottled Gueuze is all produced according to the stricter specifications of Oude Gueuze. The Gueuze I offer on tap is made from younger Lambic and is therefore an easier and more accessible beer that can be enjoyed young: It is not sold as Oude Gueuze but simply as Draft Gueuze." Jean Van Roy (Cantillon) also sells some of his beers in Keg. Besides the benefits of logistics, he also sees the Keg as an efficient way to reach out to his large fan base worldwide: "My beers are highly sought after, especially the special blends I do. Packaging them in Keg allows me to make these beers available in an efficient manner worldwide, at events such as beer festivals. Everybody gains from it. Some of my beers in Keg are meant to be aged before being released. For instance, I released a Kriek Lou Pepe 2011 in Keg only this year at an event in Brussels."

So the message is clear: In many cases, a Lambic-based beer offered in Keg is a different beer from its equivalent offered in bottle. But some of the kegged beers can be truly magical. A Cantillon Gueuze aged in a Vin Jaune barrique from Stéphane Tissot has been one of our most memorable Lambic moments ever.

RECOGNIZE TRADITIONAL LAMBIC-BASED BEERS

We now need to go for a short moment of time to the dark side of beer: Besides traditional Lambic, there are unfortunately also a whole range of semi-industrial beers bearing the same name. Unfortunately, the names Gueuze, Kriek, Faro, etc. are only loosely protected as a "production method." There is no requirement for turpid mash, using a cool ship to inoculate the beer, long aging of the Lambic. Lambic beers can be pasteurized, sweetened and fruit concentrate can be used for fruit-Lambic and these can still be called Gueuze, Kriek, etc. Lastly, there is not even a requirement for Gueuze, Kriek to be brewed around Brussels ... or even in Belgium!

This means that besides the real deal as described above, there are many products on the market which carry these names but are only a pale imitation. There are industrial-styled Gueuze or Kriek beers which may be pasteurized, filtered, sweetened. Instead of fresh or frozen fruit, fruit juice and concentrate as well as sweeteners can be used. Instead of being dry, these beers which are allowed to be called Lambic, Gueuze, Kriek, etc. are sweetish and have the charm of alcoholic lemonade.

"Besides traditional Lambic, Gueuze, Kriek, there is a whole load of sweetened and aromatized beers bearing the same name."

So how can one recognize the real deal? There are really only two ways to do it:

- For a start, stick to the list of producers we provide at the end of this article (this may be a bit restrictive on the long run but it will keep you out of trouble while you find your way around Lambic).
- Look for the words Oude Gueuze or Oude Kriek on the label. Most of the traditional Lambic beer producers (the only exception is Cantillon) have grouped themselves into an association called HORAL. This organization had the names Oude Gueuze and Oude Kriek (meaning old Gueuze or old Kriek) protected as TSG (Traditional Specialty Guaranteed) in the European Union back in the 1990s. These products are unsweetened and unpasteurized.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

Gueuze, Kriek & Co | There are Brewers ... and Blenders

The process of producing the Lambic wort requires some specific equipment (brewing tanks, heating and cooling facilities, cereal storage facilities, etc.) which is quite capital intensive. Also this activity requires core brewing knowledge.

The process of fermenting the wort in the cellar and eventually produce the different Lambic-styled beers is more akin to that of a cellar master in wine. You need to nurture the cask and its content during fermentation, select the Lambic to be blended into Gueuze or for maceration with fruits or herbs, etc.

It is therefore not surprising that the Lambic production has been not only in the hands of Lambic producers as such (i.e. brewers who brew the wort AND age the Lambic), but also of Lambic blenders, as they are called. These blenders buy the wort from one or several brewers and ferment and age it in their own cellars.

*"There are Lambic brewers and Lambic blenders ...
just as there are wine growers and wine Négociants."*

This process is very reminiscent of that of a vine grower (who will grow and harvest the grapes and possibly age and bottle the wine) and a wine Négociant, who will buy the wine and age (and later blend it) in his own cellar. The age-long tradition of Lambic blenders buying some wort from Lambic brewers has continued to this day, with Lambic brewer Cantillon, Boon, De Troch, Girardin, Timmermans and Lindemans selling on some of their wort to blenders such as De Cam, Hanssens, 3 Fonteinen and Tilquin.

Usually blenders focus on the maturation process. However, one does both: The 3 Fonteinen brewery sources some Lambic wort from other brewers but also brews part of its Lambic itself.



A blender usually sources its Lambic wort from different brewers. In order to remember which cask contains the wort from which brewer, the source of each cask is indicated by a sign on the side of the cask (as is depicted on the casks above).

Usually a blender will just take the wort as it is usually produced by the supplying brewery. However, there is a trend to specify some elements of the brewing process to get a wort specific to the needs of the blender. In particular Gert Christiaens (Oud Beersel) has his wort made to order: "Boon brews us a wort made according to our recipe which is designed to make for Lambic-styled beers which can be enjoyed young." Also others, among which Pierre Tilquin (Tilquin), try to influence the recipe of the wort brewed for them.

These blenders then have the role to supervise the fermenting and aging of the Lambic in their cellars and to produce the Lambic, Faro, Gueuze, Kriek, etc. beers from these casks. So a blender has a triple role: Source wort (made or not to own recipe), manage a cellar for producing Lambic of different ages and operate some maceration facility for producing fruit or other types of flavored Lambic beers.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

Gueuze, Kriek & Co | A Beer to Appreciate like Fine Wine

Lambic-styled beers should be appreciated in much the same way as fine wine, i.e. after a little aging and with the right serving protocol, in order to make the most of them.



When is the ideal moment to enjoy a Lambic? Similarly to fine wines, personal tastes play an important role. However, a minimum aging will be beneficial to allow the Lambic beer to develop its full complexity.

For Gueuze, the figure of 3 years regularly came back during our interviews. Pierre Tilquin (Tilquin) would rather enjoy his Gueuze a bit earlier, Jean Van Roy (Cantillon) possibly his a little bit later. Karel Godeau (De Cam) sees the optimum for his beers after 6-7 years. However, whatever one's preference, the message is clear: Lambic significantly gains from aging. As lovers of mature wines, we personally enjoy our Gueuze with a little bit more age, typically with 10 years and more. Recent highlights include a 2009 Oude Gueuze by Hanssens, a stunning 2004 Gueuze from Cantillon and a superb 2008 Oude Gueuze by 3 Fonteinen. All these bottles of Gueuze were at their peak of elegance and finesse, yet still had many more years to go.

"Lambic beers are like fine wine, they need to mature and be served correctly to be at their best." (Armand de Belder, 3 Fonteinen)

The general consensus seems to be that there is little point to age fruit-Lambic beers beyond 3 years, except for the special Schaarbeekse Krieken bottlings, which can age magnificently well over a decade and more. This aging ability was nicely underlined by a recent 2009 Kriek Lou Pepe by Cantillon and a 2011 Kriek Schaarbeekse Krieken by 3 Fonteinen. Both beers had developed a truly Burgundian character. Pierre Tilquin (Tilquin) also underlined that his Lambic-beers macerated with fruits do age well, but one should not be put off by the fact that the beers will lose their pigments.

Lambic beers are re-fermented in bottles without any disgorgement. It is therefore important to open and serve the beer with great precaution so as not to stir the deposit. These are best served the way one would serve classic mature red Bordeaux, Burgundy or Piedmont. The bottle should ideally be put upright a few days in advance and then handled carefully. As this is not always possible, Lambic-styled bottles are usually served in a little basket, which minimizes the movement of the bottle from the cellar to serving.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

What is the best glass to serve these beers? Here the finality of the enjoyment was the decisive factor in the answer from the Lambic brewers and blenders. For Karel Godeau (De Cam), "the traditional Gueuze glass is ideal for young Lambic because it removes the sometimes slightly off-putting Brett flavors. However, aged Gueuze or fruit-Lambic is best enjoyed in a wine glass in order to capture all the nuances. At 3 Fonteinen, the beers from the "cellar list" are all served in large Burgundy wine glasses (as in the picture on the previous page).

Except for real cask ale in the UK, beer is mostly served rather cold. This is not ideal for Lambic-based beers. As Pierre Tilquin (Tilquin) explains, the ideal serving temperature is 10-12°C, not much colder. Lambic is a rather subtle and complex beer. There is no point in serving it ice-cold." Jean Van Roy (Cantillon) even goes further and recommends 15°C ... and even 17-18°C for his wine-based Lambic beers.

Gueuze, Kriek & Co | Adored to the Point of Becoming Speculative Objects ... like Fine Wine

The recent history of Lambic beer has been quite a roller-coaster. In the 1940s, there were almost 250 Lambic brewers and blenders active around Brussels. By the 1980s, there were only a handful left. The taste had turned to sweeter beers and Lambic was simply no longer in demand, except with older customers and a tiny community of aficionados. For Pierre Tilquin (Tilquin), it is pretty simple: "Without the stubbornness of people like Armand De Belder, Frank Boon and Jean Van Roy, traditional Lambic beer may not have survived that period."

Things took a definitive turn for the better in the 1990s. The reasons for this were multiple, according to Jean Van Roy (Cantillon): "The vin nature, Champagne Extra-Brut, etc. developments only emerged at the end of the 1990s. Also, the whole organic and slow food movement made people rediscover our beers. It is clear that also the development of internet allowed such a niche product as Lambic to reach out to its admirers worldwide. But this transformation did not happen overnight. The sweet Lambic beers had deformed the palate of the beer lovers. Drink 11 sweetened Lambic beers and then a real one, chances are high that you would consider the last one as deficient. It took us a long time to educate our customers. The fact that our brewery was transformed in a Museum proved of great help." Other factors also played a role, one being the consistency in quality, as Frank Boon mentioned: "Truth must be told. In the old days, Lambic production was often a hit-and-miss affair."

At the end of the 1990s, Lambic producers set up an association to defend their beers called HORAL. This organization then also got some of the traditional Lambic beers protected under the terms Oude Gueuze / Vieille Gueuze and Oude Kriek / Vieille Kriek.



Steadily, Lambic beers regained a market which they often share with natural wines, as Lambic beers are also not sulfured, filtered or pasteurized. We see here many parallels with such niche wine markets as Burgundy or Mosel. Not everyone loves these styles of wines, but those who do are usually particularly "deeply in love."

The same has happened with Lambic. Today, there is world-wide interest for traditional Lambic beers. The limited editions by Cantillon, 3 Fonteinen, Tilquin and others generate a frenetic following. As is the case in Burgundy, ex-cellar prices for these prized Lambic beers have remained reasonable but demand created a secondary market for all these rare bottles. A special release beer from Cantillon may cost €15-20 at the brewery. It would instantly sell for the equivalent of €100 (if not more) on the secondary market.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

Much as Burgundy growers do, Lambic producers are eager that their precious liquids are actually enjoyed by beer lovers and do not end up as speculation objects. They go to extreme lengths to limit the secondary market. Special releases can often only be picked up on site or obtained via a few selected distributors. Some breweries only deliver their beers to bars, which need to sell them for drinking on site. Others only accept payment via card and limit the number of bottles that can be bought with the same card each year, etc.

Some of these rare and highly sought-after Lambic beers are truly remarkable and have the finesse of fine wines. Anyone interested in acquiring these rarities will need to invest some time to follow the release dates by the breweries online and spent some time arranging delivery.

Not everyone has the dedication to go to such extremes. If you are in this situation, we have good news for you: Most of the prized and rare beasts are Lambic beers infused with special ingredients (herbs, fruits, etc.). However, as much as we love these beers, we feel that the truly finest expression of Lambic beer remains the Gueuze. The good news is that the Gueuze from the different producers are usually the one which is NOT that hyped (yet ...) and easier to source.

Gueuze, Kriek & Co / The Blend with Riesling ... in Particular Mosel Riesling

Lambic can be blended with many things, including grapes ... and even Riesling ... and even Mosel Riesling! Here is the story.

CANTILLON

Jean Van Roy did experiment with Riesling a few years ago, as he explained: "I used some organic grapes from Zusslin in Alsace. The result was nice." The beer was a one-off. In other words, it did not really pass the brewery-internal high bar for making it on the repeat brewing list.

BOKKEREYDER

One young blender, Raf Souvereyns, is also experimenting with Riesling at his Bokkereyder Blendery in the outskirts of Hasselt, a city situated at approx. 80 km (50 miles) east of Brussels. He set up his operation in 2012 and bases his Lambic on wort bought at De Cam, Timmermans and Boon. Raf Souvereyns specializes on local fruit and grape varieties, but is also fascinated by Riesling: "I love Riesling and I love a good Mosel Riesling. I got in contact with Matthias Meierer, a young dynamic wine grower in Kesten, and harvested some grapes which I blend into Lambic."



© Mosel Fine Wines
The Independent Mosel Review



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

So far, he has released a Lambic-based blend of Muscat and Mosel Riesling called Wijngaard (here above right on the picture) but has yet to release a pure Riesling-based Lambic: "One does not get the distinctive taste of Riesling in my Wijngaard bottling [note from the authors: we can confirm this, the taste of Riesling is not noticeable] yet something would be missing without it. Overall, the unique flavors of Riesling don't come through so far in my experiments when I use it as sole ingredient. Riesling is such a fascinating grape that I will continue to experiment with it. I am currently drying some Mosel Riesling grapes, as some wine growers do it for instance in Italy, in order to intensify the taste. Also, I got some remarkable grape material in 2018 which is quite intense taste-wise and may well yield my first pure Mosel Riesling Lambic!"

ANTIDOOT

Raf Souvereyns is not the only one to experiment with Mosel Riesling. A few kilometers away, his friend Tom Jacobs (Antidoot) is also fascinated by Mosel Riesling and has been harvesting some grapes in the Piesporter Grafenberg this autumn. Tom has been producing cider since a while but has only officially started his micro-brewery a few weeks ago. He immediately attracted a lot of interest as he spends quite some time on sourcing all ingredients (fruits and grapes) locally. He even planted his own vineyards next to his orchard (see below).

Regarding the Mosel Riesling, he has macerated it together with some Alsace Muscat in a beer brewed along Lambic principles on site (he does however not want to call his brews "Lambic" – even if he could do so legally – as, in his eyes, Lambic is indigenous to the Brussels area). Tasted on cask, the muscat element comes through as well as the zingy side of Riesling but, as for the beer by Bokkeryder, not the distinctive taste of Riesling, be it cassis and grapefruit or almond and apricot. This may still develop (the beer will only be released in a few years' time).



It will be fascinating to see if more Lambic and Lambic-style brewers and blenders will pick up Mosel Riesling for their brews and if Bokkeryder and Antidoot (or another brewery!) will be able to develop and refine a pure Riesling-based Lambic beer over the coming years.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

The Future

Gueuze, Kriek & Co / A Bright Future ... with Blurring Lines to the World of Fine Wines

Lambic beers are on the roll and this since 20 years. We asked all producers we met where they see their operations in 10 years. It was fascinating how a series of common traits emerged.

No revolution, evolution: All want to continue to work the traditional way and grow organically, if at all, and certainly in no disruptive way. Tradition is quite at the heart of their thinking.

Increased focus on ingredients: Some blenders are playing with the idea to become also a brewer. Most want to put more emphasis on the quality and specifications of their raw materials, in particular their fruit. The HORAL association has launched an initiative to plant trees for Schaarbeekse Krieken, the emblematic cherry fruit behind the original Kriek. Gert Christiaens (Oud Beersel) has done the same behind his brewery. Jean Van Roy (Cantillon) is doing this in Brussels. But also the cereals going into the beers are an increasing topic of interest. For instance, 3 Fonteinen has engaged into a project in this direction together with a local university.

Companion to fine food: For Jean Van Roy (Cantillon), Lambic beers are increasingly recognized as an alternative to wine to be enjoyed with food: "Our beers marry exceptionally well with food. This is getting increasingly noted but we need to make our beers the equivalent of wine in the heads of the sommeliers and the consumers." The increasing success of "vin nature" will undoubtedly facilitate this evolution.

New brewers and blenders: Besides the established players enhancing the quality and recognition of Lambic, it is highly likely that more brewers, in particular established craft brewers, will enter the Lambic market. Brussels Beer Project, one of the main craft beer breweries in Brussels, has hinted in an interview that they may experiment with spontaneous fermentation in the future. We would not be surprised if Brasserie de la Senne, a superb craft brewery in the North of Brussels, will take the plunge at its current location, once it will have moved its craft brewing operation to its new site (spontaneous and cultured fermentations do not mingle well ...). Beyond the borders of Brussels, others are also playing with this idea. Besides Antidoot and Bokkeryder, Jef from Hof ten Dormaal, a well-known craft beer brewery near Leuven, told us that he bought a coolship and will start to experiment with Lambic-styled beers.

Geographical protection: Overall, Lambic-based beers will undoubtedly gain in popularity over the coming years in the same way as natural wines have become increasingly popular in the wine world. The real risk to the development of Lambic is its lack of protection in terms of geography. Where does the natural region for Lambic end? Is it only the Zenne Valley? Is in fact Lambic brewed elsewhere also "worthy" of the name? Only Belgium? Low Lands? Europe? The world? The beer world is not used to the denomination of origin principle as most beers are made along recipes including yeasts, which allows them to be produced anywhere in the world. But, it is obvious that Lambic relies on terroir, namely the unique micro-biological elements in the air around Brussels. It will be fascinating to see if, in the future, some geographical protection will be achieved. It would be truly desirable.

The rise of the Gueuze: The hype of the moment is about producing Lambic beers infused or macerated in fruits, herbs, spices or special kinds of barrels. Truth must be told: These beers can be truly stunning. However, the true magic of Lambic remains (for us) the Gueuze, nicely aged and "pure." Much as we love Riesling and Burgundy for their transparency, we admire the purity of an "un-adulterated" Lambic. We believe that this remarkable and original expression of Lambic will ring a cord with the public and gain in recognition.

Generally, we feel that lines between the world of fine wine and Lambic are quite blurred. Both develop with age, both are great to accompany food and, on top, Lambic beers are often imported by fine wine importers (often those which specialize on "vin nature").

Most Lambic producers are also wine lovers. During our conversations, it emerged that Armand De Belder (3 Fonteinen) loves – among others – a good Mosel Riesling, Frank Boon (Boon) is quite partial to lighter wines from France (for instance from the Loire), Jean Van Roy (Cantillon) grew up in wine-loving family: His grandfather drank (Luxembourg) Mosel at aperitif and his father was an avid Bordeaux collector.

Overall, the similarity and convergence between Lambic beers and fine wines is not really surprising. When we met with the Lambic producers, the interaction and thought process of these brewers was incredibly similar to that of wine growers. We were having similar discussion to those we would have with the top wine growers ... only that we would be discussing the fermentation and aging of fine beers.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

Gueuze, Kriek & Co | Our Favorites

We share here a personal selection (presented in alphabetic order) where we focus on the traditional Lambic producers. As we wrote throughout this article, we deeply believe in the greatness of the "simple" Gueuze and some of the classical fruit-infused Lambic beers and have put an emphasis on these and not on the rare bottlings done by Cantillon, 3 Fonteinen, Tilquin, Bokkeryder and others. Lovers of Lambic beers are of course encouraged to make every effort to lay their hands on some of these rare beers (or attend a beer festival where these brewers are present).

BROUWERIJ BOON



Boon is one of the larger brewers of Lambic, all being relative of course (it is still a small affair by beer standards). Frank Boon took over an ailing Lambic brewery in the 1970s and painstakingly professionalized (read: improved the quality) the Lambic production. The brewery relies on modern equipment but carries out the processes according to the ancient proven methods. The wort ferments in large oak casks.

The brewery produces a full range of beers, which are all very pure and clean. We particularly enjoy the basic Oude Gueuze (typically aged 3-5 years / the vintage is indicated on the label on the neck of the bottle). However, also the Mariage Parfait bottlings, in particular the Gueuze one, are delicious.

If you can find them, their limited release "Single VAT" set of Gueuze are superb. One needs to note that the Mariage Parfait and single VAT bottlings are typically stronger, more forceful and bigger than your run-of-the-mill Gueuze.

BRASSERIE CANTILLON



Cantillon is arguably one of the most iconic breweries in the world. Its history dates back to the 19th century and it has been in the hands of the Van Roy family, who married into the Cantillon brewery, since the 1970s. The brewery is tucked into a side street near the South railways station, in the middle of the city of Brussels. It relies on ancient equipment for brewing (some is from the 19th century and most is over 50-60 year old). Many of its ingredients are organic. The wort is fermented in small oak casks. Jean Van Roy, its current owner, has been instrumental in experimenting with Lambic and different fruits, herbs and spices while remaining firmly rooted in the traditional way of doing things.

We particularly like the basic Gueuze, even if it is often not as approachable when young as the Gueuze from other producers. This is one which definitely needs a few years of bottle aging, but then it often proves one of the finest expressions of Lambic money can buy. The Kriek remains one of our favorites and is one which proves quite enjoyable young. Also the Rosé de Gambrinus (made from raspberry) can be stunning, especially after 2-3 years.

The brewery releases a series of rarer Lambic beers (made with peach, rhubarb, grapes, etc.) which can be great, especially in their youth. Access to these beers is however not easy.

OUDE GUEUZE STEKERIJ DE CAM



This tiny Blendery is run by Karel Godeau, who took over an ancient and abandoned brewery about 20 years ago. He is a fervent adept of doing things the traditional way (he is, among others, very critical about the development of Lambic beer on tap). He sources his wort from Girardin and others and does everything by hand.

We are quite partial to the beers produced by this Blendery. His Oude Gueuze is remarkable but requires quite some time to develop its full potential. Overall, its fruit-based Lambic beers are also remarkably good: Karel Godeau sources all his fruits in Belgium. We have a soft spot for the deliciously zingy and balanced Trosbessen (red currant). De Cam beers are unfortunately not easily accessible but worth every effort to unearth them.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

BROUWERIJ 3 FONTEINEN



This highly regarded Brewery is the brainchild of Armand De Belder, one of the mythical figures among the brewers. His father had taken over a brewery in the 1950s and Armand developed it into one of the finest addresses in the trade today. He has now officially retired but keeps a watchful eye on what is his baby.

The brewery has two main ranges of beers. The regular one (made from bought-in wort) and the "Armand and Gaston" range, made from own wort. Both ranges are superb. Both Oude Gueuze develop some superb tertiary flavors with age yet remain focused and elegant. Although very hard to find, the Oude Kriek Schaarbeekse Krieken bottlings are regularly among the finest Kriek available. This one truly benefits from aging.

The brewery also releases some limited edition beers under the label "Speling van het Lot" (twist of faith) with some experimental beers (in terms of oak aging, special fruits, etc.). These can also be superb but access is an issue.

BROUWERIJ GIRARDIN



The Girardin brewery is rather special. Based at the outskirts of (modern) Brussels, this operation is really a working farm (the Girardin see themselves as farmers) with a brewery on site. Consequently, the family does not really spent much time in marketing and public relations (do not try to find a website or an email address online). The Girardins largely rely on their own wheat for their mash and ferment their wort in large casks. They are a main source for wort for blenders.

The brewery focuses on the basics and produces Lambic, Gueuze, Kriek and Framboise. We particularly enjoy the Gueuze Black label (which is bottled unfiltered). This beer ages superbly well and 10-year old examples are always stunning, with lots of complexity.

LAMBIEK FABRIEK



We may be taking a risk to put this brewery based in the outskirts of Brussels on our list of favorites so early after its launch: It only released its first Lambic beer at the end of 2017. It is the brainchild of some beer lovers turned brewers (they had been producing their own experimental Lambic for several years before taking the plunge of going commercial). The brewery produces its own wort at the facilities of the Belgoo brewery and ferments it in small oak casks at their own separate location.

The first batches of its Oude Gueuze Brett-Elle were so successful that we have to mention them in our list even if the beers will be hard to find at this early stage. Hopefully, the Lambiek Fabriek beers will eventually become more available worldwide as they increase production.



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

BROUWERIJ OUD-BEERSEL



This medium-sized operation (of course by Lambic beer standards, it is still tiny by beer standards!) was revived by Geert Christiaens, a Lambic beer lover who gave up his job in telecoms to take over this traditional brewery a decade ago with the helping hand of the brewery's former brewer, Henri Vandervelde. He relies on wort produced to his own specifications at Boon and ferments it mostly in large oak casks.

The range is focused on the traditional portfolio of Lambic beers. We particularly enjoy the Oude Gueuze and the Oude Kriek. The Oude Gueuze is one best enjoyed a bit younger (Gert Christiaens purposefully produces his beers so that they can also be enjoyed young) and the Oude Kriek will please lovers of big and fruit-driven expressions of cherry.

GUEUZERIE TILQUIN



Pierre Tilquin started in agricultural research before turning his passion for beer into a profession. After some work at Huygens (known for the Delirium Tremens beers), 3 Fonteinen and Cantillon, he launched his own Blendery in 2011. He sources his wort from Girardin, Timmermans, Lindemans, Boon, ... and Cantillon (a promise he got when he left the brewery). The fermentation is done in small oak casks.

We love the Oude Gueuze, which is one of the most focused and precise of all. This sense of focus makes Tilquin's Oude Gueuze already quite enjoyable after 2-3 years. We also very much enjoy the Oude Prune (made with Belgian organically farmed prunes) and the Oude Quetsche (made with de-pitted French prunes harvested ripe as destined for drying), both of which we feel give their best in their youth.

Pierre Tilquin is also an avid experimentalist and has recently released some superb Pinot Gris and Groseille Rouge (red currant). These are however highly allocated and could prove difficult to access.

OTHER LAMBIC AND LAMBIC-STYLED FAVORITES

International readers who are exposed to beer will know that there has been experiments with spontaneous fermentations and Lambic styled beers outside Brussels and Belgium as well.

We are deeply impressed by the beers by Bokkereyde but access is almost impossible unless you live near one of the few bars in Europe where these beers are sold. Antidoot only started its first releases of beers a few weeks ago so it is still early days for them. The few casks tasted were however immensely impressive, very Lambic in style (even if they will not be called Lambic).

Beyond the shores of Belgium, we also immensely enjoyed the Lambic beers by Burning Sky (UK), a brewery which, incidentally, works with Lambic wort produced by one of the classic Lambic brewers.

Beyond Europe, we would go out of our way to be able to enjoy some spontaneously fermented beers along the Lambic method by Jester King (USA), Russian River (USA) and, more recently, Pen Druid (USA). We are certain that there are many more (in particular in Canada but also in the USA) who also produce some remarkable Lambic-styled beers. The market seems to bring out new exciting breweries every week!

We hope that we have enticed you to have a go at this unique drink and wish you much pleasure hunting down and tasting some of the above gems!






Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

Upcoming Mosel Fine Wines Issues: Topics to be Covered

Here is an *avant-goût* on what will be covered in the upcoming Issues:

March-April 2019	Mature Riesling <ul style="list-style-type: none">2009 "10-Years-After Retrospective"Notes from the Cellar
June-October 2019	2018 Vintage Report <ul style="list-style-type: none">Vintage ReviewDetailed Estate Reviews & Recommended WinesAuctions coverageDry German Riesling
In Parallel	Regular Postings on our Website and Social Media , including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">NewsWines of the MonthVintage Highlights2019 Growing ConditionsUpdates of our TN database (via CellarTracker)Interesting Articles from other Sources <p><i>Follow us on social Media (click on logo)</i></p> <div style="text-align: center;"></div>