

T H E
W I N E R Y

Rheingau Tasting 23.09.19

You might have noticed that we have been in Germany more than once this summer. We just got back late last week with another vanload. Tonight we have given over our entire tasting to glorious Riesling and Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) from the Rheingau.

The Rhine takes a sharp turn west at Mainz, not far from Frankfurt, before turning north again at Rudesheim. The south-facing slope on the north bank between the two is the Rheingau, thick with castles, convents and vineyards. This is the classical home of Riesling. Evocative names like Steinberg, Marcobrunn, Johannisberg and Hochheim - the home of Queen Victoria's "Hock", back when German wines were the most expensive in the world.

A few words on geology and terroir. In its ancient history, from 36 to 12 million years ago, the Rheingau was the northern shore of the Mediterranean – known as the Mainz Basin - a rift in the earth's crust formed by the earlier collision of the two continents Laurussia (Europe & America) and Gondwana (Africa, India, Australia & the Antarctic). This effectively made the Rheingau a beach, with sand, clay and quartz. At the western end of the region there are slate formations - the same as on the Mosel. Fossils of sea creatures are often found – shellfish, sharks and sea lions.

Fast forward several million years and, in addition to its rich and varied geology, the region's slopes are well served by springs and streams. Many vineyards are named after their water sources, for example, Nussbrunnen, Wisselbrunnen and Marcobrunn.



SPARKLING

Riesling Sekt Brut 2013, Peter Jakob Kühn BIODYNAMIC 25.99

Despite seeming (at first) quite shy, Peter Jakob Kühn is a highly visible figure on the German biodynamic wine scene. Peter Jakob, his wife Angela, their son Peter Bernhard and the ever expanding family are from Oestrich in the heart of the Rheingau.

Peter Jakob had a complete change of direction in 1999, was certified organic in 2004 and then went the whole way to biodynamism.

What is Biodynamism? Organic viticulture taken to the extreme, ruled by the lunar calendar - man, moon and earth in perfect harmony. Based on a series of lectures given by the Austrian Philosopher Rudolf Steiner to a group of German farmers in 1924, it's a self-sustaining, self-nourishing system, in which decisions are synchronised with the Lunar Calendar. Depending on the position of the moon and planets, the lunar month is divided into four types of days. Fruit, Flower, Leaf and Root.

Biodynamics captures the imagination with its strange-sounding rituals, such as dynamising rainwater or burying a cow horn filled with cow manure through the winter, and its widespread use of yarrow, nettle, and dandelion.

This is the Kühns' biodynamic sparkling Riesling. Picked earlier, from cooler parts of their vineyards. Stored on their lees for 24 months and released with bottle age to add further complexity.

WHITE

Jacobus Riesling trocken 2018, Peter Jakob Kühn BIODYNAMIC (magnums 49.99) 19.99

The Kühns' dry Rieslings are utterly distinctive - standing quite apart from other Rheingau wines. They can challenge our idea of how Riesling should taste. The aromas can evoke incense, orange peel and hedgerows. There's an oiliness without ever being cloying. Occasionally you might get a sense of tannin – something you expect in red wine but not in white. We often recommend putting their top Rieslings in a decanter several hours before serving.

Named after Jacobus, their founding forefather, eleven generations and 230 years ago, this is a wonderful 2018 – ripe, mouthfilling, generous, with a touch of incense.

WHITE *(continued)*

Nussbrunnen Erste Lage Riesling trocken 2018, Schloss Schönborn 23.99

Schloss Schönborn is one of the grand old estates of the Rheingau, tracing its vineyard ownership back to 1349. Today it is owned by the current Earl, Paul Graf von Schönborn and managed with a light (yet thoroughly supportive) touch by his son, Alexander. He and his family have another wine estate, a castle and agricultural land in Franken (check out the Bocksbeutel bottles on our shelves). They own top-notch vineyards at either end of the Rheingau (Rüdesheim and Hochheim) and in the middle (in Winkel, Hattenheim and Erbach). We have been visiting with increasing frequency to plunder their deep cellar of mature vintages. Their cellar-master Marcel von den Benken asked if we'd like to taste something more recent. "Sure!" As a result we have brought back this fabulous Nussbrunnen Erste Lage (1er Cru), some sensational GGs (Grand Crus) and a Spätburgunder (coming up later in tonight's line-up).

Riesling "Edition" 2002, Querbach 16.99

Peter Querbach was a long-time member of the VDP (the Premier League of German growers). He eventually found the rules too restrictive and handed his membership back: a big step – like a chef handing back Michelin stars. So, the Rheingau Bad Boy is now free to do what he pleases. And what he pleases pleases us. Peter likes to age his Rieslings. We were delighted to find this mature 2002 in his cellar.

RED

Spätburgunder "Tradition" 2015, Schloss Schönborn 15.99

Spätburgunder = Pinot Noir. Mainly Oestricher Doosberg with a splash of Hochheimer Reichstal. A charming, light coloured Pinot with hints of autumn leaves and bracken in the nose, salty minerals in the mouth. Good texture.

Assmannshausen Pinot Noir 2011, Chat Sauvage 32.99

We were having dinner at Zum Krug in Hattenheim in the Rheingau ten years ago, when Josef Laufer Junior (Zum Krug's excellent chef) flashed a bottle in front of us that looked suspiciously like Burgundy. "You really have to try this!" he said. Try it we did and next day we were rattling the gates of Chat Sauvage in Johannisberg. Günter Schulz is from Hamburg, made his fortune in the construction trade and developed a bit of a Burgundy habit. An expensive DRC type habit (Domaine de la Romanée Conti, the most sought-after Burgundy there is). Given that DRC isn't for sale and also that he didn't want to leave Germany, he set up a young winemaker, Michel Städter, with some excellent old vines and a brief for uncompromising quality. Unfiltered and unfinned, we were startled by the style and polish of their Pinots.

Assmannshausen is a village long known for its Spätburgunder/Pinot Noir, with vines in a sheltered side valley, just around the corner from Rüdesheim as the Rhine turns northwards.

We love the autumnal notes and distinctive mouthfeel of these wines. Slightly funky, smoky flavours, evocative of autumn leaves and dark red fruits.

Hölle Pinot Noir 2013, Chat Sauvage 62.99

We visited Chat Sauvage again this summer. Verena Schöttle is celebrating her third anniversary since taking over the reins from Michel Städter at the winery. Verena comes from Tübingen in Baden-Württemberg, south of Stuttgart. Her grandparents had fruit orchards and made a little wine. She studied at Geisenheim, Germany's top Wine Uni (just down the hill from where she is now). She worked at wineries in Württemberg and the Pfalz before coming to Chat Sauvage.

The latest wines need time. In the meantime, she showed us some more mature bottles, including this single-vineyard Johannisberger Hölle. Deep, ripe fruit in the nose, plenty of density with a silky, stylish finish.

OLIVE OIL

Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Heredad Pangua Sodupe (Rioja/Spain) 500ml - 13.99

In addition to making Rioja in red and white, Roberto Pangua also bottles his own olive oil.

LUNAR CALENDAR OBSERVERS – today is a **Flower Day**.

Our following tasting at The Winery is scheduled for **Wednesday, 9th October**.

Join us for our **Monthly Tastings**
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