

Sip a Jubilee treat, the 2011 Hochheimer Königin Victoria Berg Trocken Rheingau Riesling from a vineyard visited by Queen Victoria in 1845 with its delicious, spicy, floral, grapefruit zest-spiked pizzazz (The Winery, 020-7286 6475, £16.99).

Jane MacQuitty

Riesling
– ripe for
a revival



Blink and you'll miss German riesling month: a pity as this unsung yet hugely diverse and versatile wine needs all the help it can get. In grey, gloomy summers like this one, I find myself reaching for a fancy German riesling more than any other white wine, be it the steely, lime zest-streaked minerality of the Mosel, the fatter spiced peach style of the Rhine or all those luscious, honeyed, botrytis-affected late-harvest wines. German riesling's comforting dash of energy-boosting sugar is also precisely what's wanted to lift the spirits on another dismal day when bone-dry white wines fail to hit the spot. And I cannot be the only summer drinker who appreciates their low alcohol content, often 8 per cent and less, even in very ripe years like the magnificent 2011 vintage.

Yet, given the indifference that even the wine world shows to the riesling grape, with only 18 retailers and 22 restaurants bothering to sign up to July's "31 days of German Riesling", it's no wonder that the much touted "riesling resurgence in the UK" is so slow in coming.

Nor am I much enthused by the "massive growth in the £5-£6 category" of German wines, up some 62 per cent from last year. At best it's sticky German dross like the 2010 Black Tower Silvaner Pinot Grigio, or non-vintage Blue Nun Medium that hog this strangely booming price point. Steer clear if you want to avoid dentures and XXL clothing. Still, at least £3 liebfraumilch and its nasty, low-life, non-vintage imitators, Hock and Bereich Nierstein are on the way out. Any of you beguiled by the refreshing thought of a summer glass of gossamer-fine German rieslings are going to have to splash out at least £7-£8 for even the simplest, easy-swiggling edition, save Dr L below.

German riesling's stumbling block is that drinkers continue to believe it all to be sweet and nasty. It's not helped, either, by Germany's daft wine law, impossible gothic script labels and confusing nomenclature.

Hopefully, the new era of food-friendly, drier, characterful trocken rieslings will encourage drinkers to experiment. The first trockens to wash up here were skinny, soulless offerings stripped of flavour but after the "31 days of German Riesling" trocken tasting, it's clear that has changed. Sip a Jubilee treat, the 2011 Hochheimer Königin Victoria Berg Trocken Rheingau Riesling from a vineyard visited by Queen Victoria in 1845 with its delicious, spicy, floral, grapefruit zest-spiked pizzazz (The Winery, 020-7286 6475, £16.99). Or spend half that on another racy, grapey riesling: the smashing 2009 Prinz von Hessen Riesling Kabinett Trocken (Majestic, £10.99, or two for £9.99 each). Last year is a must-buy, so scoop up Waitrose's delicious, but this time off-dry, spritzy, leafy 2011 Leitz Rudesheimer Rosengarten Riesling Kabinett with a distinguished spicy finish, £12.99. More medium dry is Ernst Loosen's keenly priced 2011 Dr L Riesling (Asda £5.78, Tesco £5.79) with its pleasing ripe, grapey, floral, aniseed-spiked taste.