



Learning to love riesling

A month-long promotion shines spotlight on an underrated variety

Far too few wine drinkers think of what is arguably the world's finest white wine grape when choosing summer bottles. Even fewer, probably, consider the country where it shows its purest expression. But people in the know are trying to change all that.

We're in the middle of 31 Days of German Riesling, a promotion by Wines of Germany which runs throughout July involving independent wine shops and restaurants doing all they can to raise the profile of wine which, in the late 19th century, was more sought-after and higher-priced than the smartest products of Bordeaux chateaux.

Plenty of the places involved are within Ham&Highland or close by, and the full list – plus the chance to win a weekend at Dresden's wine festival – is on www.31daysofgermanriesling.co.uk. But the one which most matters for any wine lover in this part of London is The Winery, in Clifton Road, Maida Vale. David Motion's compact, floor-to-ceiling-bottle-filled shop is nirvana for anyone who has been won over by the delectable and complex charms of dry German riesling.

More than simply stocking what is quite likely the best selection of German dry rieslings in the UK, David and his enthusiastic staff know them very well indeed and can lead newcomers to those which will best match individual tastes and pockets. And, of course, The Winery has adopted the 31 Days promotion with typical verve. Though, as David says: "We are fairly strict observers of 365 Days of German Riesling, and 366 every leap year."

They launched the July-specific celebration with a tasting of four



■ Acclaimed grower Clemens Busch in his Pünderich vineyard

fine dry delights, topped and tailed by a sparkling riesling, a fruity style and a schwarzesling (the German name for pinot meunier). That evening was a one-off, but download the list (www.thewineryuk.com), pop into the shop and do it yourself – at £9 to £19 a bottle, prices are reasonable indeed, given the quality and the fact that production quantities are often miniscule.

Rising star

There are two more events to come, and a few tickets should still be available. Next Wednesday, there's a three-course riesling dinner at Hardy's Brasserie in Marylebone. "We're firm believers that riesling works with everything – you can put us to the test!" Then the following Tuesday, at Kandoo restaurant in Edgware Road, Gerrit Walter, a young winemaker who David considers one of the Mosel's rising stars, joins the team for a module of The Winery's wine course. After a short introduction to wine-tasting technique, Gerrit's wines will be joined by others from the Rheingau, Rheinhessen and the Nahe, exploring why riesling is the ultimate "terroir" grape. The

tasters will, David predicts, "come away as bonkers about German Riesling as we are".

Email info@thewineryuk.com or phone 020 7286 6475 to book tickets – the dinner is £50, the wine course module £40.

Chain wine shops can't match that sort of individuality, but the new Wine Rack shops which have emerged from the ashes of the massive Thresher's empire are offering a decent choice at sound prices. There's one opening in Haverstock Hill, Belsize Park (the shop where Nicolas used to trade) on Friday next week, and for the first three days (July 26, 27, 28) there will be free tastings all day, with regular weekend tastings after that.

Manager Marcin Kryzysczyk and his colleagues have special offers to tempt early shoppers, including celebratory fizz: Laurent-Perrier rosé £43 instead of £55, Bollinger NV £30 (normally £40) and Veuve Clicquot Yellow Label NV £30 (normally £39). There's also a red Bordeaux bargain, La Vieille Cour de Seguin 2010 red, £6 rather than the usual £9. Wine apart, the spirit choice is huge: more than 200 lines. See www.winerack.co.uk.