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New wave Germans

14 Jul 2009 by Jancis Robinson



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Last Thursday evening I tasted this range of German wines from The Winery in Maida Vale, London, David Motion's store that is so dedicated to new-wave dry German wines - many of them from obscure but up-and-coming growers, such as Eva Fricke pictured here. Apparently during the recent heatwave dry German wines constituted by far the dominant category of wines sold at The Winery.

The following evening we had some friends round for dinner and served, with asparagus, fried duck egg with grated bottarga and some sour cream and broad bean puree, a delicious Wittmann Riesling trocken 'S' 2004 Rheinhessen that was still beautifully minerally and refreshing. (There is a school of thought that Riesling and asparagus clash but there was none with our sautéed green spears.)

My feeling after tasting the wines below, in which there was no single dud, left me very excited that in the first 13 wines just one grape variety, one wine style and one valley can produce so many different flavours. The village of origin is given in brackets after the name of the grower.

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RIESLING TROCKEN

MOSEL

Melsheimer (Reil), Riesling trocken 2007 Mosel 16 Drink 2009-12

Real whack of ripe fruit on the nose. Classic cut crystal and a little chalky texture on the finish. The nose is the star feature. Perhaps a slight lack of flesh. Lemony finish. 11.5%
The Winery £11.99

Bastgen (Monzel), Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Kabinett trocken 2007 Mosel 16.5 Drink 2009-12

Screwcap. Rich, smoky currant nose. Elderflower scent and lightly spritzig. Tastes bone dry. Quite an electric impact. 11.5%
The Winery £12.99

Schmitges (Erden), Erdener Treppchen Riesling Kabinett trocken 2008 Mosel 16 Drink 2009-11

Synthetic cork. Something vaguely glue-like about the nose of this one. In an invigorating way. Bone dry. 11.5%
The Winery £12.50

Lubentiusshof (Niederfell), Burg von der Layen Riesling trocken 2007 Mosel 17 Drink 2009-12

Nutty nose. Real crunchy texture and middle to this. Lots of substance. The von Orthegraven winemaker's own estate. 12%
The Winery £14.99

Martin Müllen (Traben-Trarbach), Kröver Paradies Riesling Kabinett trocken 2003 Mosel 16.5 Drink 2008-11

Quite a lot of evolution on the nose and no lack of acidity. Blossomy. Grating texture. No sign of a heatwave in this wine. 11%
The Winery £10.99

Beate Knebel (Winningen), Von den Terrassen Riesling trocken 2007 Mosel 16.5 Drink 2008-10

Quite deep gold. Quite a ripe nose with some funkiness. Real fruity impact on the palate. Very broad. Masses of impact from a neighbour of Heymann-Löwenstein but without any oiliness. I'd drink this sooner rather than later. 13%
The Winery £13.99

Ansgar Clüsserath (Trittenheim), Steinreich Riesling trocken 2007 Mosel 16.5 Drink 2009-12

Made by Ansgar's daughter Eva, Phillip Wittmann's wife. Big and bold on the nose and chock full of flavour and refreshment. Slightly mineral sucky-stone effect on the finish though this may be autosuggestion from the name and stone-adorned label. Neat finish. 12%

The Winery £17.99

Clemens Busch (Pünderich), Riesling Spätlese trocken 2007 Mosel** 17.5 Drink 2008-12

From 2008 they will label this Pündericher Marienberg. Quite intense and very juicy. Dense. He does quite a bit of pre-fermentation partial must-oxidation. An early adopter of organic practices. Very clean finish. Long. 13%

The Winery £16.99

Wegeler (Bernkastel-Kues), Bernkasteler Doctor Riesling Erste Lage trocken 2007 17++ Drink 2010-16

They've been making a dry wine from the Doctor vineyard since the early 2000s. Such a different nose from the rest - pungent and a hint of traditional Mosel. David Motion says he keeps meaning to taste this alongside Clos Ste Hune. (He doesn't sell much Alsace.) Very rich and intense and smoky. Seems very concentrated and if anything a bit heavy. Chewy finish. But I went back to look at this again at the end of the tasting and it had grown considerably in the glass. Should age well. 12.5%

The Winery £44.99

SAAR

Lauer (Ayl), Fass 25 Riesling trocken 2007 Saar 16.5 Drink 2009-13

Ayl hotelier with good holdings in Ayler Kupp. Smells of smoked sausage! Quite chewy and sinewy. Not as delicate as many Saars but certainly confident and assertive. Intriguing. 11.5%

The Winery £14.99

von Othegraven (Kanzem), Altenberg Grosses Gewächs Erste Lage Riesling trocken 2007 Saar 17.5 Drink 2008-10

Intense, coconut nose. Very attention-grabbing. Real concentration and cold cream sleekness. Lovely now. Already quite developed aromatically. I'm not sure it's worth waiting for anything more? Very polished. 13%

The Winery £28.99

von Othegraven (Kanzem), Altenberg Alte Reben Riesling trocken 2005 Saar 17 Drink 2006-08

We tasted this older vintage to try to judge what is likely to happen over time in bottle. A bit funkier on the nose, and definitely sweeter than the 2007. Even verging on syrupy. I'd never guess this was a Saar wine. But perhaps it will improve again...? 13%

The Winery £28.99

FRANKEN

Graf von Schönborn (Volkach), Hallburger Schlossberg Riesling Kabinett trocken 2007 Franken 17 Drink 2009-12

Screwcap. Real lift and excitement on the nose. Zesty. A little funky on the front palate. Sleek and bone dry - super cool. Good intensity. 12.5%

The Winery £13.99

NAHE

Jakob Schneider Niederhäusern), Melaphyr Riesling trocken 2007 Nahe 16 Drink 2008-10

Lively and positive and focused. Quite tense, dry and positive. A bit short. 12.5%

The Winery £12.99

Schäfer-Fröhlich (Bockenau), Monzinger Frühlingsplätzchen Riesling trocken 2007 Nahe 17 Drink 2008-12

This wine was what was labelled Spätlese trocken in previous vintages. Very exciting and intense on the nose. Racy and lively with a hint of lime. Spritzy. Real structure to this wine. 13%

The Winery £23.99

RHEINGAU

Peter-Jakob Kühn (Oestrich), Rheingau Riesling trocken 2007 Rheingau 16.5 Drink 2009-12

Screwcap. Funky nose and relatively lightweight - very funky! Light and dry and a definite philosophy. Bone dry and very light. 11%

The Winery £11.99

Flick (Wicker), Wickerer Stein Riesling Kabinett trocken 2008 Rheingau 16 Drink 2009-12

Screwcap. Lightly stinky and rich. Lemon sherbet and spritzig. Racy and light and very refreshing. Diabetic wine! 11.5%

The Winery £11.99

Fred Prinz (Hallgarten), Hallgartener Schönhell Riesling Kabinett trocken 2007 Rheingau 16.5+ Drink 2009-13

Screwcap. Very light nose, slightly spritzig. Racy and pure. Very disciplined. Only just escapes being austere. With potential for development. 12%

The Winery £14.99

Eva Fricke (Kiedrich), Lorcher Riesling trocken 2007 Rheingau 17.5 Drink 2008-12

From the personal estate of the Leitz winemaker, who was born in Bremen, a long way north of wine country. It's literally made in a garage apparently. Lots of intensity on the nose. Just expanded to 0.8 ha. Really intense and finely chiselled. SO complete! Some red slate. Fresh. Very exciting. 12.5%

The Winery £16.99

FRUITY RIESLING

Becker (Walluf), Rauenthaler Steinmächer Riesling Spätlese 1976 Rheingau 16

Drink 1990-2020

Golden. A little bit of decay and heaviness on the palate. Seems just slightly oily. Of course it seems a little flabby after all the much younger wines. White currants.

The Winery £25.99

REDS

Shelter (Kenzingen) Spätburgunder 2007 Baden 16.5 Drink 2009-11

Screwcap. Pale, slightly rusty red. Just NE of Kaiserstuhl. One ex Rex Hill, Oregon, winemaker. Their top wine is called Pinot Noir. This is their second, diffusion wine. Fresh and lively and exciting. Good dry coffee fruit. Long and convincing. Dry finish. Just a little tough on the end but not too sweet and the fruit seems healthy. 13%

The Winery £15.99

Chat Sauvage (Johannisberg) Pinot Noir 2006 Rheingau 17 Drink 2010-14

Strange name... Healthier colour than Shelter's. Though very pale. Recommended by the son of Zum Krug hotel-restaurant in Hattenheim. A DRC-obsessed industrialist has bought vineyards and installed Michel Stetter ex Schloss Johannisberg as winemaker. Unfiltered. US and Slovenian oak. Odd! Very scented. Exotic. Lively. Very flattering without being too sweet. Good structure. Very serious. 13%

The Winery £24.99

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