

T H E
W I N E R Y

31 Days Of German Riesling

02.07.13

July is the “31 Days Of German Riesling”, an initiative by Wines of Germany. As many of you know, we at The Winery are fairly strict observers of “365 Days Of German Riesling” and, as someone pointed out last week, 366 every Leap Year.

We are holding **three events** this month, instead of the usual one. Tonight’s tasting will be followed on **Wednesday 24th July** by a **Riesling Dinner** at Hardy’s Brasserie in Dorset Street, just off Baker Street. Tickets are £50.

On **Tuesday 30th July** we are holding one of our **Wine Course Modules on Riesling** in the back room of Kandoo, our friendly local Persian restaurant in Edgware Road. We will be joined by Gerrit Walter from Briedel on the Mosel. Tickets are £40.

Tonight’s tasting kicks off our celebrations of the glories of German Riesling. We were in Germany again a week ago with the van and are showcasing some of our bounty tonight.

SPARKLING

Zum Krug Riesling Sekt Brut 2011, Josef Laufer (Rheingau)

12.99

The Rhine takes a sharp turn west at Mainz before turning north again at Rudesheim. The Rheingau is the south-facing slope on the north bank between the two plus its two flanks (the northwestern flank around the corner as far as Lorch and the eastern flank at Hochheim and Wicker). Thick with castles, convents and vineyards, this is the classical home of Riesling with evocative names like Steinberg, Marcobrunn, Johannisberg, Hochheim.

Hotel Zum Krug in Hattenheim, is a magical place. The sort of place that may have existed in mediaeval Germany, atmospheric twists and turns in a wooden interior straight out of a fantasy grotto from ancient legend. Josef Laufer, owner and font of Rheingau knowledge, always gives us a warm welcome and we start with a glass of his brilliant dry Sekt made from top class Rheingau fruit just outside the village - a wake-up call to the senses in all its petrolly splendour.



WHITE

Rosengärtchen Riesling trocken 2011, Altmann (Mosel)

14.99

We were picking up from Schloss Schönborn in the Rheingau a couple of years ago and, once we had loaded our van, the woman in the Despatch Department said, “I make wine on the Mosel. Would you like to try it?” Sure. And we took two bottles with us. Fascinating labels – very clean and arty. Most fascinating was the GPS location of the exact parcel of vines. Nice touch. A new spin on terroir, redefined for Googlemaps and TomTom. On one of our next visits we phoned Hedda Nützmänn. She was surprised to hear from us. Yes, we liked the wines. Can we meet at Zum Krug, taste the whole range? Hedda has several jobs. She recently switched from Schloss Schönborn to help in the office at Chat Sauvage, she also works as a masseuse and, with her boyfriend (now husband), a well-known German theatre actor, now retired, called Michael Altmann, produces a meagre number of bottles from a few rows in Neefen Frauenberg - on the Mosel. Intriguing. The style hovers between lean and fleshy, infused with slatey minerals and sometimes with a wild yeasty nose. This is Rosengärtchen (*little rose garden*). Our colleague Dan helped with the 2011 harvest, so we can get the full scoop from him.

WHITE (cont)

Victoriaberg Riesling trocken 2012, Flick (Rheingau)

16.99

Full name: Königin Victoriaberg Riesling Kabinett trocken 2012

Back to the Rheingau, at whose eastern flank you find the pretty, historic town of Hochheim, where the River Main meets the Rhine and from whose slopes you can watch the planes on final approach to Frankfurt airport.

Reiner, his wife Kirsten and their family live in a renovated 13th Century mill in the village of Wicker, next to Hochheim. Although wine has been in the Flick family since 1775, it is only now, through the rising fortune of Reiner and his wife Kirsten, that Wicker is being put on the map. Reiner always seems to have a new project whenever we visit. We are really excited that from 2010 he managed to rent the vines in a small vineyard in Hochheim called Königin Victoriaberg (Queen Victoria's hill). This was Queen Victoria's favourite wine and where the name "Hock" comes from (the British struggled to pronounce Hochheim and eventually referred to all Rhine wine as Hock). Victoria was so taken with the wine that, on a visit to Germany, she asked to see where it came from. A visit was arranged. She observed it with Prince Albert from her carriage and, shortly after, the vineyard was named after her and a monument was built to commemorate the visit.

We adore this wine and adore the historic label. Reiner phoned us to ask our opinion on whether he should keep the original label. "Yes, definitely!" we replied.

In the glass, it is the epitome of classic Rheingau - opulent, perfumed and oily. A beautiful balance between floral and savoury, with almost herbal notes. This is our first batch of the 2012.

Diary Date: Reiner Flick will be joining us for our tasting on 18th September.

Riesling trocken 2011, Kirsten (Mosel)

15.99

Fresh to our shelves are some amazing, deeply textured dry Rieslings by Bernhard and Inge Kirsten from the magnificent amphitheatre-like Klüsserather Bruderschaft vineyard on the Mosel between Trier and Trittenheim.

Bernhard Kirsten is from the Mosel; Inge from Hamburg. They met in 1987 in New York while she was working in the travel business and he was passing through, visiting his sister, between Germany and California where he had internships at Domaine Napa, Pine Ridge and Mondavi in Oakville. After a couple of years learning about Cabernet Sauvignon, he came home to take over the family winery and concentrate on Riesling. Wind forward 26 years and the winery has grown to 15 hectares and, for the past 5 years, has been fully organic. Well-known domestically for their sekt and locally for their trestler (marc/grappa), the core of their output is dry Riesling. Most of their vines are in the magnificent, sweeping loop of Klüsserather Bruderschaft, many in the Herzstück (the heart piece) – the best part. The wines are impressive, packed with surging minerals, deep, textured and multi-layered.



Schiefer Riesling Spätlese trocken 2011, van Elkan (Ruwer)

18.99

We have frequently searched along the Ruwer, the small tributary that joins the Mosel just east of Trier, where the wines have remarkable delicacy and race. A tip from Marco Winterberg, a teacher and part-time wine importer in Holland brought us to Marco van Elkan's door. He works full-time in a social research project at Trier University, so our appointment had to be early. Very early – we were tasting dry Riesling at a bracing 8.30h in the morning.

He bought a miniscule parcel of abandoned vines in the Kaseler Nies'chen vineyard in 2001 and nursed the 70 year-old vines back to life. First vintage was 2003. The vines were grateful and, with some guidance from Peter Geiben (of Karlsruhle) and Ludwig Breiling (former wine-maker at Karthäuserhof), the results are pure Ruwer. Clear, herbal and fresh, like a fast-running mountain stream. In 2008, he and his wife built a striking new house that includes holiday apartments and his cellar. Marco now has four parcels of vines totalling half a hectare (still tiny) which produce a meagre 3,000-4,000 bottles a year, which means we bought 4% of his entire 2011 production!

W I N E R Y

FRUITY

Victoriaberg Riesling Kabinett 2012, Flick (Rheingau)

16.99

If you are a German winemaker producing Riesling, there are choices about how you vinify the wine. If you allow the yeasts to convert all (or almost all) of the sugar in the grapes into alcohol, you end up with a dry wine (Flick's trocken, earlier in the line-up). If you decide to stop the fermentation earlier, before all the sugar has turned into alcohol, you end up with a wine like this. Sweet and with lower alcohol. This was a style widely sought-after in the 1960s and 1970s, a style which some British wine writers consider to be classic German Riesling. Without doubt these wines age beautifully – witness the 1976 and 1989 Spätlese on our shelves from JB Becker, also from the Rheingau.

It is wonderful to taste two contrasting styles of wines made from the same grapes from the same vineyard from the same grower in the same year.

RED

You may be surprised to see a red wine in the line-up. Don't be alarmed – Pinot Meunier is called Schwarzriesling in Germany. Black Riesling.

Schwarzriesling (Pinot Meunier) 2005, von Racknitz (Nahe/Germany)

7.99

Top Mosel growers Clemens and Rita Busch had asked two times running "have you tasted at von Racknitz recently?" No, not recently. "You have to go there, the wines are getting really good!" So we looped through the Nahe to check them out. Formerly belonging to a historic cloister, the estate has a long history traceable back to Hildegard of Bingen (the Saint, Composer and Mystic) back in the 1100s. There have been ups and downs through the centuries to the point where the winery was on the brink of collapse in 2002. Enter Matthias Adams, former CFO of Tech company Infineon Germany. Then in his late 30s he decided he wanted a career change, jacked-in his high-powered job and spent a year walking around the Black Forest. A friend at a large consultancy firm phoned him up and said, "there's a job come in, it's too small for us. Can you take a look at this winery, see if there's anything you can salvage?" What no-one could have foreseen was that Matthias and Luise von Racknitz would fall in love and that together they would turn the estate's fortunes around. Matthias and Luise's dry Rieslings are delicious - packed with intense minerality and texture, and a fresh, dry finish.

While Matthias Adam was showing us the old cellar with gleaming new stainless steel tanks, we spotted a row of big old fuders, the classic old oak barrels that you see in Germany. What's in those? Er, it's an old red wine of my father-in-law's. It's Schwarzriesling (Black Riesling) – Pinot Meunier. Intriguing. Pinot Meunier is used in France as one of the main three grapes in Champagne. You don't often find it bottled separately and, even more rarely, as a still red wine. Would you like to taste it? Yes please. Fascinating to find Pinot Meunier in the Nahe, also to find a very mature, very drinkable stash. After a bit of to-ing and fro-ing Matthias and Luise agreed to bottle a fuder for us and let us choose the labels. Mature Pinot Meunier from the Nahe? Oh yes.



OLIVE OIL

Il Mercante di Delizie Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Paladin (Veneto/Italy)

1 litre - 17.99

Extra Virgin Olive Oil from the Paladin family north of Venice.

LUNAR CALENDAR OBSERVERS – today is a Fruit Day.

As mentioned earlier, we have **two more events in July** celebrating the **31 Days Of German Riesling**. On **Wednesday 24th July** we are holding a **Riesling Dinner** at Hardy's Brasserie in Dorset St, W1. Tickets are £50.

On **Tuesday 30th July** we will be holding one of our **Wine Course Modules on Riesling** in the recently expanded back room at Kandoo, the friendly Persian Restaurant around the corner from us in Edgware Road. We are delighted that Gerrit Walter, young winemaker and rising star, will be joining us from the Mosel. Tickets are £40.

Join us for our Monthly Tastings
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