



BOB TYRER ON THE BOTTLE

Something I've never understood is how amphorae — those pointy things in which the ancients kept their wine — didn't fall over. Now I know. In the winery behind Peter-Jakob Kühn's house in the German Rheingau are two enormous amphorae safely upright in crates of dirt. An even more exciting discovery is that he makes wine in them. The result is amazing. I sat in his courtyard, transfixed by a glass of Amphore 2005, scribbling in my notebook: "Brick, cream, lemons, tannin, dry, very deep, nervy, olive groves, sunshine, baked dark fruit, oranges, marmalade..."

Peter spends much of his time communing with his vines and thinking up new ways of tweaking even more depth and finesse from them. His wife, Angela, is the talkative one, a slight but vibrant redhead in her early fifties. They have run the family wine business since they married three decades ago, and they have lately made it biodynamic, producing ever more thrilling flavours and smells. This is German riesling as you have never known it.

It's also expensive. The amphora-raised wine costs nearly £50, and even the cheapest Kühn bottles start at more than £10. That's bold, considering the British still expect German wines to be sweet and watery. In reality, sugary liebfraumilch vanished long ago down the same sluice as Watneys Red Barrel (remember that?) and other toxic beverages. The Kühns, and others like them, make their wines with a passionate attention to nuance that would bowl over even the most fervent real-ale zealot.

Not that you'd realise it on arrival in the Rheingau, a south-facing stretch of Rhineside slopes fronted by a schmaltzy, liebfraumilchy tourist strip. Behind this, however, new ideas are at play in a 20-mile patchwork of vineyards that families have worked for generations. The same is true in other German wine regions, and in Austria's. Try Bründlmayer's Zöbinger Heiligenstein 2002 riesling (£20 from The Wine Society) for an Austrian take on this revelatory wine-making. Or visit the London Wine Show (wineshow.co.uk), which has its final day today. As I write, Peter and Angela are planning to bring some bottles to it for tasting.

LIQUID HUNCHES

★ **Peter-Jakob Kühn Quarzit Riesling Trocken 2008** (£17.99) Vibrant, minerally and dry with a plum-like bite (thewineryuk.com)

★ **Rabl Riesling Schenkenbichl 2007** (£18.04) Austrian essence of nectarines and flowers (Waitrose)

★ **Leitz Rudesheimer Rosengarten Riesling Kabinett 2007** (£9.49) Lemony, peachy, less intense — but much cheaper (Waitrose)

