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Austria: 2021 – A Dream Vintage? A Spotlight on the 2021 Single-Vineyard Whites from the Danube, the 2020 Late Releases and a Few Excellent Red Wines

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After 2013, 2015 and 2019, 2021 is considered the next "historic" growing regions along the Danube, including Vienna and the Weinviertel. The 2021 season was relaxed, and it did not become hectic in plant protection and harvest, which fell in a sunny period, while the nights were pleasant. It was time to take one's time with everything without being sloppy, and it was time—perhaps too much at times. Many 2021 wines—here the focus is on Riesling and Grüner Veltliners from single vineyards—are ripe and full of their depth and density, they sometimes lack verve, finesse and acidity. At the same time, the acids were as high as seldom, especially in the Veltliner usually found in Riesling. I wonder if this scared a few winemakers.

Vintage	Wines	RP
2021	Grabenwerkstatt Riesling Ried Trenning	97
2021	FX Pichler Loibner Riesling Ried Loibenberg	96
2020	Bernhard Ott Ried Rosenberg 1ÖTW Feuersbrunn Grüner Veltliner	96
2021	Bernhard Ott Ried Spiegel 1ÖTW Grüner Veltliner	(95 - 97)
2020	Pichler-Krutzler Steiner Riesling Ried Pfaffenberg Alte Reben	96

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Just-ripe Gruner Veltliner berries in a box at FX Pichler

Again and again, I encountered lactic instead of spicy tones in the infrequently, the wines remained ponderous and clumsy on the sunny years, Gruner Veltliner tends here and there to be plump as a consequence of drought stress, too-high yields and a too-late harvest is a man-made problem for which the variety cannot be blamed. and dry, Veltliner berries store phenols for protection, while stress stops working and remains motionless until things around it relax.

I was almost never speechless with amazement at this year's tastings: Grabenwerktsatt, Alzinger, Hirsch, Ott and Prager der den Pichler examples—and my mood was rather in a minor key when I was faced with more than 300+ wines after a six-day tasting marathon in Grafenegg and then tasted another 100+ at wineries afterward. However, due to fewer wineries than usual; in general, this report covers fewer wineries when I spent several weeks in Austria, especially along the Danube. I will move on again after 12 days. Therefore, I could not taste the wine also in Carnuntum, the emerging red wine region south of the Danube. It remained unfulfilled. At least I was able to taste about 100 red wines (Leithaberg and Eisenberg), but these and other wines will come later, focusing on Blaufränkisch at the end of January.



Where the streets have no name but the vineyard

But back to 2021 and its course. The vintage took off late, actually with power. Budding and flowering were late, but the thunderstorm on July 24, one fell in the northern Weinviertel and caused devastating damage. On July 24, a hailstorm hit the Wachau villages of Rührsdorf and Rossatz. Dürnstein and Loiben vineyards as well as vineyards near Göttweil. The sunny month of July was followed by a dull, wet and cool August. On August 1, the magic came over the land: six weeks of non-stop sunshine and no rainy days. And then, from the middle of the month, came the cool days. For two weeks, temperatures rose steeply during the day and fell just as steeply at night. The grapes thanked us with fresh and concentrated fruit aromas. No Oidium, peronospora and undesirable botrytis nests had no chance. "In some areas, veteran grape growers and winegrowers had never seen such beautiful, perfectly healthy grapes at harvest," says AWMB's vintage report.

For the "extremists," the grape harvest actually began at the end dragged on until the end of October—at least in the cool Spitzer I would have liked to have met Martin Muthentaler, who had taken an opportunity to spend another vacation in southern Europe.



Wachau landscape

The winegrowers along the Danube can be satisfied not only with grapes but also with the harvest quantity: the 2021 vintage is in line with the average. Neighboring countries could only dream of this, especially since 2021 brought an absurdly small harvest.

As always, the vineyard work, especially also the defoliation, the timing of the harvest time play a decisive role in the subsequent quality of the grapes. The grapes had great acidity levels with all ripeness, possibly requiring

fermentation. The fact that the alcoholic fermentation was joined malolactic fermentation may have happened in some cases, while in others only bad thing is when you smell and taste it. Personally, I don't like it then also doesn't really get going, I can't rate it as well as the previous vintage" 2021 should actually lead one to expect, despite all its mistakes are not good if they are due to drought stress. The German (and Austrian) reduction has also taken hold in Austria. Thus, it is becoming increasingly difficult to discern the true character of a wine behind one that is all too firm and more, briskly sulfured, filled early and sealed under screw cap. Let's hope malolactic fermentation or pain through reduction: it is by no means the case with white wines from the Danube when ambition and firmness will drive out harmony out of the wine. Whether they are then actually as good as the wine creators prophesied remains to be seen. But I doubt it. There are many things being turned at the same time.



FX Pichler vines in Wachau terraces

Elsewhere, however, nothing is being turned at all, not even the case in the Wachau, for example, I am concerned with the paradox that can coexist from a single vineyard: the light, fresh Federspiel and the dark Smaragd. It is one thing that here and there a shot or three of Fe

help to give the latter more freshness and tension. However, the brought out of one site at all can only lead to the conclusion that decide which style best expresses the site. Or does one not want



FX Pichler Kellerberg

I personally adhere to the modular principle: The more parcels in Loibenberg, for example, that are cultivated by one producer, the possibilities for assemblage. In cool years, the piece at the edge of the vineyard may not ripen properly, then it deserves to be downgraded, to a lower category, for example. In warm years, however, the late-ripening piece can give the hot tub the necessary momentum or cool spice. In my opinion, the wines suffer from the fact that they are made from grapes that are too ripe. As long as the market in Austria likes to drink exactly these unexciting wines, this will hardly change. But success does not always come while everywhere in Europe people are struggling to express single

the sake of individuality and diversity, in the Wachau they are still that had been a correct response to the wine scandal in 1986. All however, the winegrowers are faced with completely different challenges. Can they longer be met with must weight classes if one wants to be progressive? Have they made themselves too comfortable in the good old parlor?

If other producers did the same, we would never have exciting examples of Pinot Noir from the Wagram or Kamptal or Blaufränkisch from the Wachau. What do we want?

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