

TOP 100 WINES OF AUSTRIA 2022

Tuesday, December 20, 2022

100 Tasting Notes



Our Wine of the Year for Austria is the Nigl Riesling Kremstal Hochäcker EL Privat 2021. (Photos by JamesSuckling.com)

Austria was blessed with a much better 2021 vintage than most places in Western Europe and that greatly influenced our new Top 100 Wines of Austria 2022, and it also gave us our Austrian Wine of the Year.

The dry Nigl Riesling Kremstal Hochäcker EL Privat 2021 is a masterpiece of elegance and delicacy, yet also rippling with peach and grapefruit aromas.

That makes it a career high point for Martin Nigl Sr., whose dry rieslings I first encountered 30 years ago. It is a literally brilliant answer to those voices claiming that climate change has made Austria's dry whites too rich and heavy.

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Left: Martin Nigl Sr and his son, Martin Nigl Jr, whose perfect Riesling Kremstal Ried Hochäcker Privat 2021 wowed us. | Right: The Ried Hochäcker vineyards of Weingut Nigl.

The same can be said about wine No. 3, the enormously energetic Rudi Pichler Riesling Wachau Ried Achleiten Smaragd 2021, which is brimming with white peach and lemon balm aromas; wine No. 4, the super-mineral F.X. Pichler Riesling Wachau Ried Steinertal 2021; and our No. 5, the staggeringly fresh Markus Huber Riesling Traisental Ried Berg EL 2021, with its eye-popping intensity of lime zest character.

For Markus Huber and for the small, little-known Traisental region, this placing is a major achievement, but given his relentless drive for quality we feel sure that it won't be the last.

These Austrian classics are all moderate in alcohol with a bright acidity, the key hallmarks of the great 2021 vintage for dry whites. They remind me of the great 1999s when they were young wines and should age every bit as well.

Sure, our No. 2 Austrian wine, the Emmerich Knoll Riesling Wachau Ried Loibenberg Smaragd 2021 is riper and more exotic, but that's totally typical for this famously warm site. Given this winery's track record, the breathtaking quality is also hardly surprising.

Johannes Hirsch made an astonishing range of rieslings in 2021, his best vintage to date, and the No. 6 Hirsch Riesling Kamptal Ried Gaisberg EL 2021 is the star among them. A cornucopia of stone fruit aromas is married to gigantic crushed stone character. You can't get more terroir character in a wine than this!

And we also found stacks of excellent 2021 dry gruner veltliners, but none of the wines from Austria's signature grape had quite the sheer charisma of this dry riesling sextet. If you are a gruner veltliner fan, then just scan a bit further down the list to find some peppery treasures.



Emmerich Knoll Jr made our No. 2 Austrian wine, the Emmerich Knoll Riesling Wachau Ried Loibenberg Smaragd 2021.



Monika and Armin Tement of the Tement winery in Styria made our No. 13 and No. 45 Austrian wines, both sauvignon blancs.

All of the above dry whites come from the Danube Valley and its tributaries, the source of the Austrian wines that traditionally have the highest international standing. With wine No. 7, the Lackner Tinnacher Sauvignon Blanc Südsteiermark Ried Flamberg GSTK 2020, we take a leap to Styria in the southeast of Austria, close to the border with Slovenia.

At No. 8 is the widescreen expansiveness of the Kollwentz Chardonnay Burgenland Gloria 2020 and the dazzling balancing act that it performs. This wine surprised even its makers, Andi and Heidi Kollwentz, because the weather pattern of the 2020 growing season in Austria was rather cool and wet.

And he may be an ex-casino croupier, but we weren't surprised that Roland Velich's Moric Blaufränkisch Burgenland Lutzmannsburg Alte Reben 2020, at No. 9, had stunningly fine tannins plus great liquorice and spicy complexity. It's what we've come to expect from Austria's leading producer of reds from the blaufränkisch grape.

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Some of the top terraced vineyards of the Wachau as seen from the upper story of the F.X. Pichler winery.

Although some other Austrian winemakers can produce remarkable dessert wines, nobody has the year-to-year consistency of Gerhard Kracher. A handful of his 2019 TBAs could have made this list, but the Kracher Welschriesling Burgenland Trockenbeerenauslese Nummer 6 2019 bested them all, rounding out our Top 10.



Markus Huber, at the Ried Berg vineyard site, produced our No. 5 Austrian wine, the staggeringly fresh Markus Huber Riesling Traisental Ried Berg EL 2021.

The good news is that next year plenty of late-release 2021s will come onto the market, so we will get a second helping of these beauties. In the meantime, enjoy the ones listed below...

- **Stuart Pigott, Senior Editor**

Note: You can sort the wines below by vintage, score and alphabetically by winery name. You can also search for specific wines in the search bar.

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