

THE WORLD OF FINE WINE



ISSUE 82 2023 / TERRY THEISE ADVOCATES A LITERATURE OF TASTING
2014-15 CHAMPAGNE / 2019 BORDEAUX / 2019 BURGUNDY / COLHEITA PORT

CONTENTS

Issue 82 2023



Tastings

156 ONE BOTTLE

**2022 FRANCK CHAVY BROUILLY:
A WINE OF CARNIVAL AND RIOT
FROM FRANCE'S JANUS REGION**

Andrew Jefford reflects on a single interesting bottle.

159 TASTINGS

The distinctive *World of Fine Wine* tasting philosophy and protocol for both blind and open tastings, as well as the members of the permanent panel.

162 SAVOR

**2014 AND 2015 CHAMPAGNE:
CHALK AND CHEESE?**

How do the wines of a vintage produced in "classic" conditions compare to those from a year more in keeping with Champagne's new, warmer normal? Essi Avellan MW is joined by Simon Field MW and Tom Hewson for a tasting that suggested the differences are more stylistic than qualitative.

172 DÉJÀ BU

**2019 BORDEAUX:
THE REDS REMAIN MAGNIFICENT**

Returning to the 2019 vintage, Michael Schuster adds a caveat to his effusive en primeur report, but after extensive in-bottle tastings shared with Andrew Jefford and Simon Field MW, his enthusiasm for the red wines is undiminished.

192 DÉJÀ BU

2019 BURGUNDY: SUNNY SIDE UP

Jasper Morris MW, Neil Beckett, Matthew Hemming MW, and Linden Wilkie were among the Burgfest tasters for the second in the 2018-2020 trio of dry, hot vintages, different from those either side, which produced healthy, ripe grapes and heady, sunny wines, with few negative telltale signs of the drought and heat.

210 SAVOR

**COLHEITA PORT 1896-2014:
SOME VERY GREAT WINES**

A style of wood-aged Port that has always been prized in Portugal is at last earning the respect it deserves in the rest of the world, says Richard Mayson, after a fine tasting shared with Simon Field MW and Andrew Jefford.

Austrian single-vineyard wines: The rise of the democratic elite

Simon Field MW reports from the ÖTW Summit, where he joined a tasting designed to inform the new official classification of Austria's best vineyards

Michael Moosbrugger is in high spirits, and not without reason. His "life's work" has taken a significant step forward with the formal, and therefore legal, recognition of a system of single-vineyard classification for Austria that will, in essence (and with apologies for the appalling mixed metaphor), put the icing on the top of a pyramid that he has patiently been constructing over the past three decades.

We meet upstream from Vienna, in the gardens of Grafenegg Castle, the former manicured and ordered, the latter a 19th-century Gothic folly, worthy of Ludwig II of Bavaria, but in fact the work of scions of the Metternich dynasty. And while the legal recognition may not quite have the significance of the Congress of Vienna, it is certainly an important landmark for the wines of Austria. Assembled international journalists, sommeliers, and the like enjoy a week's

"silent tasting" of the single-vineyard sites nominated for first growth (Erste Lagen) status by the various Austrian private wine associations, by far the most significant of them being the ÖTW (Österreichische Traditionsweingüter), which represents 95 of the wineries in the Danube Valley region. To relax, we assemble at the other eye-catching building on the estate (think Frank Gehry this time), a modern outdoors concert hall, where we are treated to an evening performance by the (full) Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, no less. They play Janáček, Enescu, and Rachmaninoff—grand cru composers from Mittel Europe and points east, in other words.

It has been an uphill struggle, *pace* Michael, but now "we have a clear and stringent principle of origin labeling in place." 2003 saw the recognition of 19 broad regions—DAC Kamptal and the like—then a decade later, the formal

listing of the 900 key regions, thereby securing the bottom layers of the pyramid. But what to do with the 5,000 or so individual vineyards (*Rieder*), hitherto a source of potential confusion for the consumer? The top sites have now been identified and have the green light to be put forward via Regional Wine Committees, with a view to a formal classification by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, designated and thereafter labeled as *Erste* or (eventually, perhaps) *Grosse Lagen*. A Burgundian model, therefore, and a development that Michael hails as the most significant in European wine since the early days of the French appellation system in the 1930s. More significant, by implication, than the similar work being carried out in the vineyards of Germany...

Is he right? Is all this necessary, or does it merely add extra layers to what is an already complex taxonomy? Michael's

reply is especially interesting: "This is a democratic and social way of selling wine [...]. We are creating an elite in order to work for the greater good." A democratic elite? *How so?* I ask, intrigued by the paradox. "What is it that we are classifying?" he asks, rhetorically. "Not merely the quality, the potential, and the significance of a vineyard. All of these, for sure, but also its history, its culture, and its place in both the market and in the perception of its public. Quality is not innate and predefined—it is a by-product of cognition, and it certainly goes beyond labeling by variety or by sugar level." Here, clearly, the democratic element kicks in: because supply and demand, and the power of the market, and the price of the product are all taken into consideration. Michael, while acknowledging the chimera of market perfection, is adamant that market forces cannot be ignored. We may well not end up paying the same for each of the wines from the region's most famous *Ried*, Heiligenstein, just as the wines of Clos Vougeot are not all priced at the same level, but the history and notoriety of both is a significant factor in their "elevation." It has to be.

Momentum, rigor, and recognition

More democratic, maybe, is the fact that the collective scores of the assembled professional tasters (at least 500 wines are tasted over the week) are collated and added to the mechanic of securing a final qualitative assessment. If, for example, the average score for a putative Erste Lage *Ried* Hohenberg in Wagram (to take an entirely random example) were to be lower than anticipated, this would be taken into consideration before the submission of the vineyard to the Regional Wine Committee for its final vote of approval. This is the first time that I have been involved, even as a minute cog, in the process of formal vineyard classification. It certainly seems democratic to me—unprecedented, maybe. Michael describes the tasting judges as "the advocates of the consumer."

The structure is now in place and greater recognition will follow. Moosbrugger is "very proud" at the "rigor" of the process, underlined by

Left: The attendees in front of Grafenegg Castle. Above: Michael Moosbrugger (left), Thomas Schuster, and Michael Malat at the ÖTW tasting.

TASTING



ÖTW Summit, Grafenegg, Austria; September 2023

This is a personal selection of some of the more interesting wines tasted over the first three days of the festival. (I sadly missed tasting the wines from Wachau or Südburgenland.) They are current releases, mostly from 2022 and 2021, the former enjoying a warm and generous early season and a few more challenges, including the threat of rot, as one got closer to the harvest. The latter year was almost the complete reverse, with a glorious hinter season framing the quality of the wines. Village names are in italics.

THERMENREGION

Weingut Alphart Ried Rodauner Rotgipfler Top Selektion 2022
Traiskirchen (13% ABV)

Green apples and citrus fruit—a lively and expressive example of this gently exuberant variety from the village of Traiskirchen. Rich cambisol soils over shell limestone. Complexity thus ensured, especially from these, the best barrels. Peach skin and a whisper of chamomile. Medium weight but composed and with good persistence. **88**

VIENNA

Weingut Mayer am Pfarrplatz Ried Preussen Gemischter Satz 2022
Wiener Gemischter Satz DAC Nussberg (13.5% ABV)

Limes and aniseed; fennel and a hint of Victoria plum. A powerful and evocative aromatic, child of a warm vintage yet with reassuringly firm acidity. Excellent balance and a purity of fruit, fully worthy of the calcareous slopes of this great site. **91**

Weingut Edlmoser Ried Sätzen Riesling Kalkstein 2021
Wein Maurerberg (13% ABV)

An impressive organic property farming a complex, stony, and mineral-laden site. A gregarious and generous wine, with Riesling kerosene and slate to the fore; behind that, crushed limes and grapefruit, spring flowers and a faint hint of gingerbread. Powerful, linear, and focused. **92**

TRAISENTAL

Weingut Markus Huber Ried Berg Grüner Veltliner 2022
Getzersdorf (13.5% ABV)

An assertive Grüner from an impressive crop of '22s in the Traisental. Calcareous conglomerate soils underpin the Berg vineyard. Hints of nutmeg, sherbet even, then jasmine and dried apricot. Salinity and a pithy texture; ripeness in no way compromised and alcohol worn lightly. A lively coda. **91**

WAGRAM

Weingut Josef Ehmoser Ried Georgenberg Grüner Veltliner 2021
Grossweikersdorf (14% ABV)

Typical Wagram loess power from this organic property, located on old Danube terrace gravels. Vines have been grown on the "hillside of St George" since the 14th century, and the 2021 vintage does not in any way dishonor the heritage. Rich and mealy, with hints of honeydew melon and beeswax. Powerful and with the typical complexity of a 2021; not lacking a liminal elegance and definition on the finish. **91**

KREMSTAL

Weingut Familie Proidl Ried Ehrenfels Grüner Veltliner 2022
Senftenberg (13% ABV)

Located on steep vineyards beneath the ruins of the Senftenberg Castel, Ried Ehrenfels rejoices in a complex soil structure; a thin topsoil of humus, beneath which can be identified crystalline rocks, mica slate, gneiss, marble, and who knows what else. The complexity leeches into the wine, its warm microclimate investing notes of mandarin and kumquat in addition to pithy lime and plum. There is a beguiling smokiness here, too, white tobacco maybe... Typical of the vineyard. **92**

Weingut Petra Unger Ried Gaisberg Riesling 2022
Stein (13% ABV)

Located in the village of Stein near Krems, Ried Gaisberg covers 6ha (15 acres) of old stone terraces with a southeasterly aspect and good aeration, especially important in the humid months of 2022. Petra has managed to coax both ripeness (mango and quince) and a gentle floral elegance from her Riesling. An impressive weave, therefore, of apparent contradiction. The finish is satisfying, too. **93**

Weingut Stift Göttweig Ried Gottschelle Grüner Veltliner 2022
Furth (13% ABV)

An intense aromatic of slate, lanolin, quince, and dried apricot—signature Grüner, in other words, from a warm year. The palate maintains the intrigue, adding layers of leafy dexterity and a saline grip at the back. Loess soils and senior vines underwrite the complexity here. **94**



Weingut Nigl Ried Pellingen Grüner Veltliner Privat 2022 Senftenberg (13% ABV)

Another excellent example from the village of Senftenberg, this time in the Ried Pellingen, which sounds as if it may well have a monastic heritage, or similar. A more discreet ripeness this time, but ripeness all the same. Lifted aromatic; camphor, plums, graphite, and chalk all come to mind. Refined and elegant in the mid-palate but thereafter real depth and a tingling finish. Highly accomplished. **93**

KAMPTAL

Weingut Birgit Eichinger Ried Gaisberg Grüner Veltliner 2022 Strass im Strassertale (13% ABV)

Flowers, yellow fruit, spice; a pleasing mid-palate elegance. A lively tension underwrites the ensemble; the vines are located at up to 1,100ft (335m) on a steep south-facing slope. A zesty citric attack concedes a gentle herbal cadenza. **92**

Schloss Gobelsburg Ried Heiligenstein Riesling 2021 Zöbing (13.5% ABV)

One of the largest single vineyards at 35ha (85 acres), and probably the most prestigious, the tapestry of soils and subsoils is inordinately complex. Gobelsburg returns the compliment with this magisterial Riesling: a rich, burnished gold; generous aromatic of plum, truffle, flowers, and petrichor. The wine has magnificent intensity and length, grip and generosity—powerful and assertive yet without losing its linear grace. **95**

Weingut Bründlmayer Ried Käferberg Grüner Veltliner 2021 Langenlois (13% ABV)

This is another large vineyard, covering 30.6ha (76 acres), its south-facing Grüner vines shared across five wineries. The Bründlmayer 2021 is particularly impressive, farmed organically and with great precision and attention to detail. Despite the warmth of the site, one is seduced by a filigree of allusive elegance, a dance of flavors; citric at first, then a touch firmer in the mid-palate, and finally shrouded by figs and a wisp of white tobacco. **93**

Weingut Steininger Ried Kittmannsberg Grüner Veltliner 2022 Langenlois (13.5% ABV)

Kittmannsberg is steeply terraced and dominated by extensive layers of loess. It is located to the west of the town of Langenlois. The 2022 GV has a nose of slate and plum; citrus fruit thereafter, with hints of guava and cashew. This has a lovely, silky texture but impressive power on the finish. **92**

Schloss Gobelsburg Ried Lamm Grüner Veltliner 2021 Kammern (13.5% ABV)

Ried Lamm is located on the eastern slope of the Heiligenstein mountain; the terroir is dominated by loess and Permian limestone. A rich and generous profile: almost chocolate on the mid-palate; orchard fruit, quince, maybe the faintest

touch of botrytis. A resolved and reassuring home key, for all that. **93**

Weingut Ludwig Ehn Ried Spiegel Grüner Veltliner 2022 Langenlois (13.5% ABV)

This is an allusive, gilted Spiegel, its glory revealing and in no way reflected. Grapefruit, quince, and ripe lime, then hints of herbs and fennel; cheese rind, almost. A linear profile, with a hint of salinity and impressive length. **92**

CARNUNTUM

Weingut Oppelmayer Ried Haidacker Zweigelt 2021 Göttlesbrunn (14% ABV)

Gravel and loess dominate the soils of Ried Haidacker (and the village of Göttlesbrunn in general), both well suited to Zweigelt. A nose of black tea, cassis, and crushed raspberry. The palate is brooding, powerful, and uncompromising; full-bodied and yet reassuringly elegant. **92**

Weinbau Dietrich Ried Spitzerberg-Obere Spitzer Blaufränkisch 2020 Prellenkirchen (14% ABV)

Ruby red. Cherry nose, with hints of pine and eucalypt. Plums and Black Forest spices; a lovely, pure, black-pepper attack, plenty of black fruit behind, and very elegant, pinpoint tannins. Black tea and incense; tar and roses. Fine acidity and an impressive, lifted back-palate. **92**

STK

1STK = Erste Lage; GSTK = Grosse Lage

Weingut Neumeister Ried Moarfeitl Sauvignon Blanc GSTK 2021 Straden (13% ABV)

Earthy, bright, clearly defined fruit; a hint of smoke, almond essence. Impressive linearity; this particular line carries chalk and citric fruit. A teasing sweetness on the end. This wears its potency well. Almost resinous. Intense yet pure at the same time. **91**

Weingut Erwin Sabathi Ried Pössnitzberg Alte Reben Sauvignon Blanc GSTK 2021 Leutschach (13% ABV)

Chalky marl dominates the terroir in and around the village of Leutschach, with Ried Pössnitzberg a worthy exemplar. Less aromatic than some, but it does not lack for precision or complexity. The house style manages to combine the intensity born of an extra year of aging with a deft lightness of touch. **93**

Winkler-Hermaden Ried Schlosskogel Grauburgunder 1STK 2020 Kapfenstein (13% ABV)

A fascinating wine; the terroir here is made up of volcanic tufa and what are described as “lake sediments.” The wine is grippy, with hints of marzipan and almond essence, poached pear, and fig. Herbs, too, and even a hint of red fruit. An unusual structure: it is slightly foursquare but strong on the finish. **90**

the fact that the very top tier, the *Grosse Lage*, is not due to be finalized for five or so years. Michael anticipates that by then, somewhere between 10 and 15 percent of the sites will be designated as *Erste Lagen*, and 3–5 percent as *Grosse Lagen*. The Grafenegg tasting has grown significantly over the past decade and now has a status that can fairly be described as all inclusive. The ÖTW, which represents the Danube Valley, has been the pioneer and leader (Kamptal, Wien, Carnuntum, Kremstal, Wagram, Thermenregion, and Traisental are represented) but has been joined by 12 STK estates from Steiermark, the prestigious standalone DACs of Eisenberg, Leithaberg in Südburgenland, and also Weinviertel. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the great sites of Wachau, including Achleiten and the rest, are represented for the first time this year, flying the colors of the Vinea Wachau Nobilis Districtus. So, the major regions of Austria are finally united, and the process has picked up significant momentum—so much so, that the Grafenegg tasting in September has, accordingly, become a key date for wine professionals from around the world.

There are, of course, a multiplicity of rules and entrance criteria to qualify for classification. This “promise of quality” focuses on an organic or biodynamic approach, without herbicides or pesticides, on vineyard size, harvesting and pruning methodology, yields, maturation methodology, and release dates. It was ever thus, and these rules—potential barriers to entry, some may say—are fundamental when it comes to framing the qualitative criteria and maintaining it thereafter. The process, as one would expect, is rigorous. Equally important to Michael—more important, in a sense—is the fact that the “philosophical structure is now also in place, complete with essential legislative endorsement.” Somehow or other, this quiet and charming man has become a phenomenally successful lobbyist. He has managed to marry the monastic values that reverberate around the cloistered cellars at Gobelsburg with, on the one hand, the rigor of an unforgiving marketplace and, on the other, the collective appreciation and endorsement of all of those who are charged henceforth to tell the story. This story. Quite an achievement. ■