

1987 Vintage Overview

The outlook for the 1987 vintage as little as a month before the harvest looked grim. The doomsday prophets appeared to be winning. The now sensational pronouncement of von Kesselstatt proprietor Guenther Reh indicating that his 1987 vintage was only good for the production of sparkling wine, was in the end caught with foot in mouth. His likeness was burned in effigy by frustrated and angry Mosel growers. It was a vintage for Yogi Berra's famous axiom - the 1987 vintage simply was not over until it was over!

After a long, hard winter with temperatures as low as -20° C (-4° F) an eagerly awaited spring arrived in late March. Clean up and cutting in the vineyards was not completed until early April. Buds appeared late in the Ruwer and Saar areas but on schedule everywhere else. Foliage came into view in early May and a speedy flowering in late June, early July allowed for a good set. However, a sudden heat wave near mid July caused a lot of the fruit buds to shed. This poor flowering propensity of Riesling, the Germans call *verrieseln* or *durchrieseln*, results in significantly reduced yields. Most of the summer was cool and rainy. Sunshine was 150 hours below the norm and rainfall was significantly above average. Vigilance and careful watch were required since this type of vegetation cycle stimulates sickness and pests in the vineyards. By mid September only the Riesling could still profit from a sunny fall and indeed it did! A late, golden October boosted sugar levels significantly. The sun combining with light, dry winds brought an unexpected late upsurge in the quality of the vintage. For example, at Hans Wirsching in Franconia, one week increased sugars by 11 Öchsle (almost 3 Brix).

The harvest started in the last week of October and was completed by mid November. Eisweins were produced by a number of estates on the 9th and 10th of December. Yield varied anywhere from 50 to 80 hl/hectars and was often 30-35 percent below normal resulting from the problems (*verrieseln*) in the post flowering period already discussed. Must weights reached over 85 Öchsle in the Mosel-Saar-Ruwer region and rose above 90 Öchsle in the Rheinpfalz, Franconia and Baden. Acids in the must ranged from 1.1 to 1.6 gm/liter with the tartaric acid constituent over 50 percent. The must also had very high extract a result of low yield and high mineral content, especially potassium. The latter moderates the loss of acidity during fermentation. The vintage easily surpasses 1978, 1980 and 1984 in quality. The structure of the wines reminds of the 1985s without the ripeness. Expect superb QbA's and Kabinett wines that have very good aging potential. What follows is a preliminary vintage assessment for the estates in our offering: (Note: All must weight expressed in Öchsle; 4 Öchsle equal approx. 1 Brix)

Estates by Region

Mosel-Saar-Ruwer

MÖNCHHOF

Quantity was 30% below normal. Must weights varied from 65 to 85 Öchsle, sugar free extracts were significantly above normal as were acid levels ranging from 1.15 to 1.45 gm/liter. Only 30% QbA, 60% Kabinett and 10% Spätlese. Tasted a fantastic 1987 QbA (3% RS and 1.1 gm/liter acidity), loaded with fruit, several 1987 Kabinetts showed excellent fruit (red currants, to tropical fruit), the 1987 Spätleses were sappy, rich, surely some of the best wines of the vintage.

CHRISTOFFEL-BERRES

Quantity was 35 percent below normal. Must weights reached 86 Öchsle in the Erdener Praälät; very high acids and extracts; 75% predicate wines. Tasted four different 1987 Kabinetts that were packed with fruit with very aggressive acids; four 1987 Spätleses from a very lively Ürziger to a very fine, elegant Prälat. Amongst the best wines of the vintage.

J.J. PRÜM

Yield was below normal at 70 hl/ha. Must weights from 60 to 79 Öchsle. Acid levels 1.1 to 1.5 gm/liter with 50% tartaric acid. 45% QbA and 55% Kabinett with possible Spätleses in the Wehlener and Zeltinger Sonnenuhr. No wines available for tasting.

DR. F. WEINS-PRÜM

Yield was 60% of normal. Must weights ranged from 75 Öchsle in the Graacher Himmelreich, to 77 Öchsle in the Wehlener Sonnenuhr, to 78 Öchsle in Ürziger Wuürzgarten and 83 Öchsle in the Erdener Prälat. Acid levels extended from 1.3 gm/liter to 1.5 gm/liter with up to 2/3 tartaric. 60% QbA and 40% Kabinett and 600 liter Erdener Praälät Spätlese. The 1987 Dr. F. Weins-Prüm Riesling will make a nice addition to our growing list of estate QbA's. 1987 Kabinett wines show good potential and the 1987 Erdener Prälat Spätlese shows ripe apple fruit with very good ripe acids providing for lots of life on the palate.

S.A. PRÜM

Yield below normal at 56 hl/ha. Must weight to 77 Öchsle in the Wehlener Sonnenuhr. Acid levels 1.3 to 1.6 gm/liter. About 45% QbA and 55% Kabinett with possibly 500 liter of Spätlese. The 1987 estate Riesling tasted very fresh, crisp and intense, a good food wine. The 1987 Kabinett wines show very aggressive acid hiding fruit and finesse. The 1987 Spätlese will probably be offered as Kabinett. 67% of the wines will be trocken.

STUDERT-PRÜM

Yield below normal with must weights to 78 Öchsle. Acid levels to 1.5 gm/liter with over 50% tartaric. Most QbA was sold, but three Fuders were kept. In addition there were 20 Fuders Kabinett and four Fuders Spätlese. The 1987 Wehlener Spätlese showed good underlying fruit with very good acidity.

Wwe. DR. THANISCH Erben

Yield here was average with 80 hl/ha. Must weights ranged to 80 Öchsle in the Doctor vineyard. Acid levels varied from 1.1 to 1.7 gm/liter and over 50% tartaric. 60% QbA and 40% Kabinett in the Bernkasteler Doctor and Badstube and the Brauneberger Juffer Sonnenuhr. The 1987 Bernkasteler Badstube QbA showed nice apple fruit; the 1987 Bernkasteler Doctor Kabinett good fruit, spicy, slate background, balance.

WILLI HAAG

Yield was average at 80 hl/ha. Must weight to 79 Öchsle and acids to 1.3 gm/liter with 60% tartaric. 2/3 QbA and 1/3 Predicate wines with possibly two Fuders Spätlese. 1987 Juffer QbA intense honeysuckle fruit; the 1987 Juffer Sonnenuhr Kabinett rich, ripe, peach fruit, very fine.

FRITZ HAAG

Yield below normal at 60 hl/ha. Must weight to 90 Öchsle for a diligently selected Spätlese. Acids to 1.6 gm/liter with over 60% tartaric. 52 % QbA and 48% Predicate wines. Painstaking selection is a hallmark at Fritz Haag. The 1987 Mandelgraben Kabinett, for example, was selected from the sunny side of the vines only and is 100% Kerner; it has wonderful gooseberry, melon fruit and excellent balance. The 1987 F. Haag Riesling is again superb. The 1987 Juffer Sonnenuhr Spätlese has botrytis and a richness not found anywhere in this vintage. The very top of the vintage.

MILZ-LAURENTIUSHOF

Average harvest approximately 80 hl/ha. Must weight to 75 Öchsle with acid levels from 1.3 to 1.5 gm/liter with over 50% tartaric acid constituent. 80% QbA and 20% Kabinett from the Trittenheimer Leiterchen, Felsenkopf and the Piesporter Hofberg. Tasted the 1987 Milz Riesling, very clean apple fruit, crisp a terrific food wine (1.5 RS, .96% acid). The three Kabinetts were sprightly with pippin apple fruit, with stuffing and acids.

VEREINIGTE HOSPITIEN

Quantity was slightly below normal. Must weights to the mid seventies. 90.5% QbA and 9.5% Predicate wines. Vintage was much better than originally expected. No wines available for tasting.

PIEDMONT

Harvest was normal at 80 hl/ha. Must weights to 70 Öchsle, acid levels from 1.2 to 1.6 gm/liter with over 50% tartaric. Only Piedmont Riesling will be offered in 1987, however, it will be of excellent quality.

von HÖVEL

Yield was 30% below normal. Only must between 65 to 72 Öchsle was kept; the rest was sold in bulk. The must contained 1.5 gm/liter acidity with over 50% tartaric. Only 1987 von Hövel Riesling will be offered. It showed a nice fruity nose, tart, apple fruit on the palate. The high acidity was well buffered by the high extract.

von OTHEGRAVEN

Harvest was 75% of normal. Must weights to 74 Öchsle. Again 1.5 gm/liter acidity with 50% of it tartaric. 40% QbA and 60% Kabinett. The Kanzemer Berg showed in 1987 what a truly great vineyard it is with the highest must weights in the northern Saar area. Wines were not available for tasting.

HUBERT SCHMITZ

20% below normal harvest. Must weights to 72 Öchsle. High acidity and good percentage of tartaric acid. Look for 95% QbA and possibly 5% Kabinett. The latter may also be sold as QbA. The 1987 estate Riesling has fabulous fruit, very lively, clean, pure.

EGON MÜLLER SCHARZHOF

Slightly below normal yield. Must weights to 74 Öchsle with very good acidity (1.5 g m/liter). 90% QbA and 10% Kabinett. On both 12/9/87 and 12/10/87 Eiswein was produced. No 1987 wines were tasted.

ZILLIKEN

Below normal yield with must weight to 73 Öchsle in the Saarburger Rausch. Good acids with good amount of tartaric acid constituent, high extract. 90% QbA and 10% Kabinett. Eiswein attempt on December 9 resulted in 330 liters of top Auslese in the Saarburger Rausch.

SCHLOSS SAARSTEIN

Yield was average. The grapes at harvest were healthy and ripe (remind a little of '85). Must weights to 73 Öchsle. Diligently selected musts to 80 Öchsle were added to the Kabinett wines. Acid levels 1.1 to 1.4 gm/liter. 91.5% QbA with over 700 cases of excellent 1987 Kabinett that is clean, steely with pippin apple fruit. On December 10th a Riesling Eiswein was produced.

BERT SIMON

Quantity slightly below average. Must weights to 82 Öchsle. The new Saar Canal put a sluice gate right below the Herrenberg and Würtzberg vineyards. My prognosis for higher must weights due to this additional body of water came true in the first year. They were in fact 46 Öchsle higher than anywhere along the Saar. 80% QbA and 20% Predicate wines. On December 9th and 10th several Eisweins were produced: 300 liter Serriger Herrenberg (170 Öchsle), 500 liter Serriger Herrenberg (140 Öchsle) and 900 liter Eitelsbacher Marienholz at 115 (Öchsle).

Rheingau

VON SIMMERN

Harvest was 20% below normal. Very high acids and extract. Must weight to 84 Öchsle. 65% QbA and 35% Kabinett wines as shown in the offering of 1987 wines. Wines were not available for tasting but Mr. Kranich vouches for powerful Kabinetts that have great aging potential.

SCHLOSS GROENESTEYN

Quantity below average. Must weights to 85 Öchsle. Acid levels from 1.0 to 1.4 gm/liter and half tartaric. The musts had high sugar free extract and mineral content (potassium). 80% QbA and 20% Kabinett in Ruedesheim. Too early to taste the 1987wines. On 12/9/87 150 liter Eiswein in the Ruedesheimer Bischofsberg was harvested at 187 Öchsle.

Franken

WIRSCHING

Slightly below normal harvest with must weights to 91 Öchsle. Acid levels to 1.1 gm/liter with 70% tartaric. 60% QbA (Silvaner is all QbA) and 40% Kabinett, possibly a few isolated Spätleses. Fruit at harvest was very healthy and ripe. An attempt to make Ehrenfelser Eiswein probably succeeded on 12/9/87.

Pfalz

PFEFFINGEN

Harvest slightly above average at 80 hl/ha with very good quality. Must weights to 92 Öchsle with good extracts. Acid levels to 1.1 gm/liter and 2/3 tartaric acid. 20% QbA, 60% Kabinett and 20% Spätlese. The 1987 Riesling Kabinett wines had very ripe, peach fruit very lively, the 1987 Gewürztraminer Kabinett was rich, fat, perfume. The two 1987 Spätleses showed great depth with the Honigsöckel very elegant well structured and the Weilberg very lively, racy, nervy, intense peach fruit.

Nahe

CRUSIUS

Average harvest at 60 hl/ha. Must weights reached 84 Öchsle in the Bastei. Acid levels from 1.1 to 1.6 gm./liter and 50% tartaric. 70% QbA, 28% Kabinett and 2% Spätlese in the Bastei. All the 1987 wines tasted at this time were completely dry. The wines have good Nahe Riesling fruit; melons, very clean, pure with very good soil character, the Bastei was typically pungent and earthy, but ripe fruit that will come up with time.

Baden

SALWAY

Quality was better than 1986, however quantity was 30% below normal. Maximum must weights for the various varieties ranged from 87 Öchsle for Riesling, to 94 Öchsle for Ruländer and to 91 Öchsle for Späätburgunder. Acid varied from 0.65 to 0.9 gm/liter after the fermentation. The acid was 70% tartaric. 30% QbA and 70% Kabinett and Spätleses. Did not taste the 1987 wines but plan to in June 1988.