

1988 Vintage Overview

After a relatively mild winter the 1988 vintage got off to a quick start. Buds sprouting by the third week in April and flowering by mid June put the vintage almost two weeks ahead of a normal vegetation cycle. My visit in July showed grape clusters in a state of ripeness not seen since 1976. All were precursors for a potentially great vintage. This promise was kept alive by a hot summer with enough rain to keep sufficient moisture in the soil. This favorable mix of sunshine and rain showers brought a good amount of botrytis by mid October. The Riesling harvest started on October 17 both in the Rheingau and Mosel-Saar-Ruwer. It was interrupted by several days of rain on 10/19, 10/21 and 10/28. After each rain the picking had to be stopped until the grape bunches were dry and the must weights were recouped. These stoppages ultimately did prevent the selection of BAs and TBA's that at the beginning of the harvest looked like sure bets. Because of the rains a preponderance of the grapes were picked by October 27. With the exception of J.J. Prüm and Egon Müller-Scharzhof, attempts to select BAs through mid November were not successful. A very cold night (-12° C) on November 22 produced a number of potentially great Eisweins. A conversation with Hanno Zilliken on 1/19/89 dispelled fears about possible negative effects of botrytis on the Eisweins. He feels the wine already shows promise and will be a great wine.

Tasting the wines in December left very positive impressions. The wines were very aromatic, with very fine fruit laced with botrytis and ripe and fruity acids. Fruit was expressed more as peaches and apricots versus the usual apples and grapefruit character. It will be an impact vintage that will be handicapped by a relatively weak dollar. However, when compared to other white wines of the world these 1988 German Rieslings will be top value. An overview of the 1988 vintage by grower follows:

Estates by Region

Mosel-Saar-Ruwer

MÖNCHHOF

Quantity was average, quality was very good. Must weights ranged from 70° to 90° Öchsle with must acids to 12.5 gm/l. 10% QbA, 30% Kabinett, 50% Spätlese and 10% Auslese. Tasted about 15 different Fuders from Kabinett to Auslese. Typical tropical "Eymael" fruit character marked by significant botrytis. For example Fuder #8, an Erdener Treppchen Auslese, showed excellent berry fruit, apricots very fine underlying anise touch, a wine of character with very good depth.

CHRISTOFFEL BERRES

Harvest was 35% below normal with a yield of 65 hl/ha. Very good quality. Must weights ranged to 90° Öchsle in the Prälät and Würzgarten Kranklay. Production was one Fuder Kabinett only, 8 Fuders Spätlese and 2 1/2 Fuders Auslese. Finished acids range to 9.5 gm/l acidity. Did not taste any wines.

J.J. PRÜM

Harvest yield was 75 hl/ha about 15% below normal. Very good to outstanding quality. No QbA, 25% Kabinett and 75% Spätlese and Auslese (over half of that Auslese). One BA was brought in at 129° Öchsle. Must acids from 8 to 11 gm/l. Quality in Graach almost up to that in Wehlen. Dr. Prüm compares the vintage to 1969. A 1988 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Auslese was very petillant; underneath very fine peaches and apricot fruit, good harmony, good structure.

DR. WEINS-PRÜM

Harvest was 20% below normal with very good quality. Three Fuders of Kabinett were declassified for the 1988 Estate Riesling. Harvest breakdown was 20% Kabinett, 30% Spätlese and 50% Auslese. Must weights reached 94° Öchsle, must acids 10 gm/l and final acids about 8.5 gm/l with high percentage of tartaric acid. Bert Selbach proprietor and winemaker thinks the vintage is unique because all wine is bunched in a very narrow but high quality range. He compares the wines to the 1975s from his estate. The 1988 Erdener Prälät Auslese was very fine with intense apricot fruit.

S.A. PRÜM

Yield was 58.5 hl/ha which is about 30% below normal. Quality looks to be very good. No QbA wines, 20% Kabinett and the rest half Spätlese and half Auslese. Must weights ranged from 76° to 93° Öchsle with must acids up to 11 gm/l. Tasted about 20 wines from barrel. A Wehlener Sonnenuhr Auslese Fuder #25 and a Graacher Himmelreich GKA both showed pronounced botrytis character with marvelous, ripe peaches and apricot fruit. Raimond Prüm likens the 1988 wines to his 1971s. The vintage he is quick to point out, however, lacked the great Spitzenwines i.e. BAs and TBAs, which vanished with the rains during the harvest.

Wwe. Dr. THANISCH Erben

66 hl/ha were harvested, about 20% below normal. There were no QbAs, two Fuders Kabinett, 7 Fuders Spätlese and 20 Fuders Auslese. Must weights reached 94° Öchsle (in the Doctor vineyard), must acids to 10 gm/l with the finished acids settling in at 8.5 gm/l. Tasted several wines including two Doctor Ausleses. Preliminary judgment suggests the best wines made at this estate in the 80s. Cellarmaster Mr. Breit and Mrs. Spier compare the vintage to 1975 and 1969.

FRITZ HAAG

At 62 l/ha the yield was 30% below normal but of very high quality. Must weights to over 100° Öchsle with finished acids at over 10gm/l. 15% QbA (from declassified Kabinett) will be bottled as Estate Riesling, 35% Kabinett, 30% Spätlese and 20% Auslese round out the

selections. Several wines tasted from barrel showed great promise - fruit bursting on the palate, the characteristic firm structure. In the top wines there is significant and very fine botrytis. The 1988 Mandelgraben Kabinett is of almost Auslese quality (average mustweight is 82.9° Öchsle). Fritz Haag compares his 1988s to his 1969 wines.

MILZ-LAURENTIUSHOF

Normal harvest yielded 90 hl/ha of very high quality musts. Mustweights to 102° Öchsle and must acids to 11 gm/l. 8% QbA (declassified Kabinett), 15% Kabinett (mostly Spätlese), 50% Spätlese and 27% Auslese. An Eiswein attempt was unsuccessful. Tasted over 15 wines from barrel; the better Ausleses such as Fuder #34 (Trittenheimer Felsenkopf) and Fuders #49, #50 (Trittenheimer Leiterchen) showed very ripe apricot fruit, marked botrytis and firm acid backbone. Mr. Milz likens the wines to his 1975s.

KARTHÄUSERHOF

Harvest was complete by 10/27/88; a lot of botrytis affected fruit was damaged late in the vintage due to a hail storm. Must weights ranged from 72° Öchsle to 83° Öchsle and must acids to 14 gm/l with 80% of it tartaric. There were 10 Fuders QbA (declassified Kabinett), 46 Fuders Kabinett and 24 Fuders Spätlese. Of twenty different wines tasted from barrel and tanks the fruit was very ripe ranging from apples, grapefruit, strawberries, cassis to ripe peaches and apricots with botrytis especially in the late harvested Spätleses.

PIEDMONT

Harvest yield was 50 hl/ha - significantly below normal. There was no QbA, 3 Fuders Kabinett, 22 Fuders Spätlese and 4 Fuders Auslese. Must weights ranged from 75° Öchsle to 91° Öchsle and must acids with values from 11 gm/l to 14 gm/l; there was some botrytis. Tasted three of the four Ausleses and all showed excellent potential. Fuder #9 was very fine, touch of botrytis, apricots even tropical fruit, nervy!

von HÖVEL

Just below normal harvest of very good quality. Breakdown is 10% QbA, 20% Kabinett (Scharzhofberger only), 65% Spätlese and 5% Auslese. Two Oberemmeler Hütte Eisweins were produced; 100 l at 140° Öchsle and 50 l at 208° Öchsle (a record for the estate). There is also one Fuder of long Goldcapsule Auslese from the Huütte site. Tasted the Hütte Spätlese; it had a nice botrytis touch, pears and apricots good depth, very fine, balanced.

VON OTHEGRAVEN

Because of substantial replanting the Kanzemer Berg yielded only 18 Fuders which is well below 50% of normal. Only Kabinett and Spätleses were produced. Did not taste.

EGON MÜLLER SCHARZHOF / LE GALLAIS

Slightly below normal harvest. No QbA, good quantities of Kabinett, with some Spätlese and Auslese. There was also a BA and a great TBA quality Eiswein from the Scharzhofberg. According to Herr Mueller there is marked botrytis in the best Ausleses and up. Did not taste any wines.

DR. FISCHER

Harvest just a shade below normal. Small quantities of QbA; mostly Kabinett and Spätlese. An Auslese was produced in the Wawerner Herrenberg. Did not taste.

ZILLIKEN

Harvest amount was way below normal. Three localized hail storms were primarily responsible for this. The rain from 10/19/88 to 10/21/88 and 10/28/88 ruined any chances for a BA. Must weights ranged to 85° Öchsle and must acids to 12 gm/l. Only 10% QbA, 60% Kabinett and 30% Spätlese. On 11/22/88, 110 l of Saarburger Rausch Eiswein at 180° Öchsle was produced. Tasted several Spätleses. Yeasty, very fine botrytised fruit character, very tight, good, ripe acids to balance.

SCHLOSS SAARSTEIN

Yield was a very low 44 hl/ha. Must weights to 90° Öchsle and must acids to 12 gm/l. There were 8 Fuders QbA, 15 Fuders Kabinett, 12 Fuders Spätlese and 4 Fuders Auslese. In addition there was 500 l of GKA harvested at 100° Öchsle and 100 l of Eiswein at 190° Öchsle with 19 gm/l acidity. Tasted several wines from the new vintage. The top Auslese had very fine fruit flavors, apricots and cassis marked by botrytis, very good acids need to tone down a bit.

BERT SIMON

55 hl/ha were harvested, about 30% below normal. Must weights to 100° Öchsle with very good, ripe acids. Breakdown is 30% QbA, 30% Kabinett, 30% Spätlese and 10% Auslese. Several Auslese harvested at over 100° Öchsle showed significant botrytis with rich apricot flavors.

Rheingau

von SIMMERN

The harvest was completed by 11/4/1988. It yielded 60 hl/ha with 18% QbA, 45% Kabinett, 35% Spätlese, 2% Ausleses. Must weights to 100° Öchsle with must acids to 13 gm/l with a high percentage of tartaric. A Hattenheimer Mannberg Eiswein was picked at 180° Öchsle on November 22nd. It will be part of several anniversary bottlings to celebrate 525 years of the Langwerth von Simmern estate. Did not taste any wines.

Pfalz

PFEFFINGEN

Normal harvest at 70 hl/ha with 30% Kabinett, 60% Spätlese (20% declassified Auslese) and 10 % Auslese from both Riesling and Scheurebe. Must weights to 185° Öchsle and finished acids of 8.5 gm/l for Riesling and 7.5 gm/l for Scheurebe. Several splendid wines were produced from the Scheurebe, 600L of GKA at 115° Öchsle, 300 l of BA at 140° Öchsle and 300 l of TBA at 185° Öchsle, the latter with finished acids of over 10 gm/l. Lots of apricots and botrytis in the top wines.

Franken

WIRSCHING

Average harvest of about 80 hl/ha of very good quality. Must weights to 95° Öchsle and must acids to 10.5 gm/l. Mueller Thurgau was 70% Kabinett, 30% QbA; Silvaner 60% Kabinett, 40% QbA; Riesling 100% Kabinett, Kerner 100% Kabinett and Scheurebe 90% Kabinett, 10% QbA. Dr. Wirsching feels that the late ripening varieties such as Riesling and Silvaner will be especially fine. Did not taste any wines.

Nahe

CRUSIUS

A 10% below normal harvest at 58 hl/ha. It breaks down to 40% QbA (mostly declassified Kabinett), 15% Kabinett, 45% Spätlese. 600 l Auslese was selected at 104° Öchsle in Schloss Böckelheim. Must acids averaged 12 gm/l. The wines have very good, ripe acids and in the best Spätleses one can taste peaches, apricots and some botrytis. Peter Crusius judges the vintage to be a compromise between the 1983 and 1985 vintage with the added bonus of some botrytis.

Baden

SALWAY

60 hl/ha, an average harvest of very good quality. A breakdown of the 1988 wines by varietal is as follows: The Rulaender brought 50% Kabinett, 50% Spätlese with must weights to 97° Öchsle. The Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc) was 100% Kabinett. The Spätburgunder and Späätburgunder Weissherbst (Pinot Noir Blanc) harvest consists of 50% QbA, 30% Kabinett and 15% Spätlese. Acid levels ranged from 6.5 gm/l to 10.5 gm/l. The Rulaender and Weissherbst wines are spectacular; fleshy wines with ripe strawberry and melon fruit.

DR. HEGER

55 hl/ha, an average harvest of very good quality. Acid levels ranged from 7 gm/l to 9.5 gm/l. With the varieties of interest the Silvaner brought 100% Kabinett; Grauburgunder 40% Kabinett and 60% Spätlese; Weissburgunder 60% Kabinett and 40% Spätlese; Spätburgunder Weissherbst 80% Kabinett and 20% Spätlese; Spätburgunder and Riesling were 100% QbA and 100% Kabinett respectively. Tasted about 20 of the new wines. The Weissherbst showed intense strawberry fruit, the Riesling melons, gooseberries (Joachim Heger has a special affinity for Riesling), the Rulaender, Weissburgunder and Silvaners were elegant with melon fruit. Crowning achievement of the harvest is 80l of Silvaner TBA harvested at 201° Öchsle with 18 gm/l acidity.