

1989 Vintage Overview

"In good company": 1949 - 1959 - 1969 - 1979 - 1989 - An interesting series of vintages that spanned the last half century. An attempt to put numbers on or to compare 1989 might be a little premature but early tastings suggest a superb Riesling vintage that will detract little from the above company and will surely surpass both 1969 and 1979.

After a mild winter, the new year began with a warm spring. Warm and sunny March had buds sprouting by 4/11 almost three weeks ahead of normal. April was cool and with double the normal rainfall delayed greening of the vineyards. After a hot May (50% above normal sunshine) flowering went smoothly in mid-June. By 8/20 the grapes started the ripening process. A hailstorm, in early September caused severe damage not only in Kinheim and Ürzig on the Mosel but also in Kallstadt and Ungstein in the Pfalz. September was cool and dry. The beginning of October brought the long awaited rainfall which gave the vegetation a big boost and greatly assisted botrytis formation. In the remaining warm and sunny days of October the harvest finished smoothly. It should be noted that the 1989 harvest was extremely labor intensive with a number of estates exceeding 500 hrs/ha (60% to 70% above normal) harvesting time. Not only did 1989 offer the best opportunity of the 80s to make BAs and TBAs, the last weekend in November in addition produced numerous Eisweins to top off the vintage.

1989 offers the broadest range of quality levels from QbA to TBA including Eiswein which is rare for any vintage. By contrast in 1988 the quality was pretty much centered around Spätlese and Auslese. The best wines in 1989 were made on the Saar, Ruwer and all the Rhein regions even though the middle Mosel can answer with some superb BAs and TBAs. 1989 for most areas, Graach and Wehlen on the Mosel excepted, is the best vintage of the 80s. A review of the vintage by grower follows:

Estates by Region

Mosel-Saar-Ruwer

MÖNCHHOF

Harvest was about 20% above normal with acid levels ranging from 8gm/l to 11gm/l. Quality breakdown is 25% QbA, 30% Kabinett, 40% Spätlese, 500 l of a superb Auslese (Erdener Treppchen) and 350 l BA Ürziger Wuürzgarten - it may surpass the great 1976 BA - almost 150 Öchsle at 9.2gm/l acidity).

CHRISTOFFEL-BERRES

Yield was 100hl/ha in Erden and 75 hl/ha in Ürzig (there was some hail damage). The finished wines still have 8.5gm/l of mostly tartaric acid. Mr. Christoffel compares the vintage favorably to his 1975s. He likes the Spätleses better than the 1988s but prefers the 1988 Ausleses.

J.J. PRÜM

Yield was 75hl/ha for an average harvest. Dr. Manfred Prüm rates the vintage a 8.5 /10. Quality breakdown is 70% QbA and Kabinett, where most of the QbAs are small declassified Kabinetts, 30% Spätlese with small amounts of very high quality Auslese, GKA and LGKA. There is also a BA and a TBA (only one in the 80s) in the Wehlener Sonnenuhr.

DR. F. WEINS-PRÜM

Harvest about 30% above normal. Wines with very good acid structure with Spätleses at over 9gm/l acidity in finished wines. The Waldracher wines are especially fine - better than even 88. First vintage in Graacher Domprobst since the replanting brought a superb GKA (300 l, at 105 Öchsle and 8.4 gm/l acidity).

S.A. PRÜM

Yield was 88hl/ha or about 30% above normal. The Estate Riesling is declassified Kabinett. At this early stage we prefer 89 over 88 at S.A. Prüm which is not normally the case in Wehlen. Some very fine Ausleses, GKA and BA (137 Öchsle - could have more acidity - wait and see). The Graacher Kabinetts have superb acid structure.

Wwe. DR. H. THANISCH

At 90 hl/ha yield was a little higher than in '88. It was mostly a Kabinett and Spätlese vintage with over 9gm/l acidity in the finished wines. There were also some QbA, Ausleses and to top off the vintage a BA and TBA both in the Bernkasteler Doctor. Thanisch continues on the comeback trail and the '89 will only solidify its positions as one of the better estates on the middle Mosel.

FRITZ HAAG

Yield was above average at 80 hl/ha. Wilhelm Haag rates the vintage 9/10 and compares the young wines to his 1975s and 1953s. High praise indeed. I personally rate the vintage 9.5/10 and found the young wines exceptionally balanced, explosive fruit on the palate with 9.5 to 9.8 gm/l acidity in the finished wines. Production was 20% QbA (declassified Kabinett and Spätlese), 40% Kabinett, 25% Spätlese and 15% Auslese, GKA, LGKA and the crowning achievement, a TBA at over 200 Öchsle.

MILZ - LAURENTIUSHOF

At 75hl/ha this was an average harvest for quantity but a near great harvest for quality. Best wines of the 80s. There was good ripeness with superb acid structure with approximately 15% Estate Riesling (mostly declassified Kabinett), 15% Kabinett, 35% Spätlese and 32% Auslese. Rest is 600 liter BA (Leiterchen at 140 Öchsle with 10.5gm/l acidity), 250 l TBA (Apotheke at 178 Öchsle) and 400 l BA quality Eiswein at 140 Öchsle with 14 gm/l acidity.

KARTHÄUSERHOF

Possibly the finest vintage since 1959. Not only did the wines get very ripe but there are terrific acids to go with the fruit. Yield was significantly above normal. There was a broad spectrum of quality levels from QbA, Kabinett, Spätlese, Auslese, including GKA, to 600 l BA (128 Öchsle) and 150 l TBA (180 + Öchsle) and Eiswein.

PIEDMONT

With 110 hl/ha the yield was over 50% above normal with superb acid structure in the must, almost 90% tartaric. Klaus Piedmont who is now in charge, after this father passed away in '89, considers '89 to be the best vintage since 1976. Extremely labor intensive harvest. Spent 510 hours/ha versus a normal harvest time of 320 hrs/ha. Quality breakdown is 15% QbA (again declassified Kabinett), 35% Kabinett, 35% Spätlese, the rest Auslese (with two Fuders at 110 Öchsle) and BA (600 l that also includes the only TBA harvested in the 80s).

von HÖVEL

Yield was 76 hl/ha which is slightly above normal. Eberhard von Kunow rates the vintage slightly above '75 (with more botrytis) but not as good as '71. Very good acid structure; up to 80% tartaric acid. Quality breakdown is 0% QbA, 30% Kabinett, 60% Spätlese and 10% Auslese, BA (Hütte at 135 Öchsle) and Eiswein (Hütte).

EGON MÜLLER-SCHARZHOF / LE GALLAIS

70 hl/ha yield with 100% predicate wines. Small quantities of Kabinett may be declassified for Estate Riesling, 30% Kabinett, 60% Spätlese and 10% Auslese and up. There are BAs and TBAs at both Scharzhof and Le Gallais and Eisweins at the Scharzhof only. Again superb acids with up to 80% tartaric. By far the best vintage of the 80s. similar to 1971 and 1975.

DR. FISCHER

110 hl/ha or almost 40% above normal. At the beginning of the harvest the must acids were 12 to 13 gm/l and towards the end were still 10 gm/l. Mr. Fischer likens the vintage to his 1975s. Quality breakdown is 20% QbA, 30% Kabinett and 49% Spätlese. There are two Fuders of GKA, 800 liters BA with 9.5 gm/l acidity and 1000 l Eiswein (126 to 176 Öchsle at 18 gm/l acidity).

ZILLIKEN

Even with a way above average yield, 100 hl/ha, the quality will be very good. The dry period in the summer caused significant dry damage and the harvest was very labor intensive. There is only 8% QbA with the rest predicate wines. There are some superb Ausleses including a LGKA (BA quality) and two Eisweins - lethal weapons '89. Hanno Zilliken compares the vintage to 1975.

SCHLOSS SAARSTEIN

Yield was 90 hl/ha with quality like 1971. With the '89 vintage Christian Ebert is starting a program where half the vintage is offered as Estate Riesling which in '89 will all be declassified Kabinett. There are also 30 Fuders of Kabinett, 3 Fuders Spätlese plus Auslese, GKA and LGKA. 300 l BA (135 Öchsle), 150 l TBA (170 to 190 Öchsle at 12 gm/l acidity) and 150 l Eiswein (170 to 190 Öchsle at 18 gm/l acidity).

BERT SIMON

Bert Simon calls '89 the best vintage since he's acquired the von Schorlemer properties in '68. Yield was only 76 hl/ha because Simon only tied one bow on the vine instead of the usual two. This was exactly the right thing to do in '89. The wines break down to 28% Kabinett, 30% Spätlese, 40% Auslese and 2% BA and TBA! Not only do the wines have very ripe, botrytised fruit but also terrific acids for this ripeness. A vintage of the century for this estate!

Rheingau

LANGWERTH VON SIMMERN

At 95 hl/ha the harvest was 20% above normal. Best vintage of the eighties. Over 80% predicate wines with 25% Spätleses and 3% Auseses, BAs and TBAs. Ausleses were produced in the Eltviller Sonnenberg, Hattenheimer Mannberg and Nussbrunnen. BAs in the Eltviller Sonnenberg, Rauenthaler Baiken, Hattenheimer Mannberg and Nussbrunnen and TBA's in the Hattenheimer Mannberg and Nussbrunnen and the Erbacher Marcobrunn (190 Öchsle and 16.5 gm./l acidity).

GEORG BREUER

Best vintage since 1971. The harvest was very labor intensive. It began 9/14 and was complete 10/22. Yield was 64 hl/ha. All wine below 78 Öchsle will be offered as QbA. All wines through Spätlese will be offered in the dry style only. The Ausleses, BA (Bischofsberg at 133 Öchsle and 8.8 gm/l acidity) and TBA (Berg Rottland at 183 Öchsle and 11 gm/l) will be offered in the fruity style.

Pfalz

PFEFFINGEN

Because of severe hail damage yield was barely half of normal. Only predicate wines were made. because of a dire need for Kabinett wines the harvest was started early and nothing higher than Auslese was picked. The acid structure in these wines is superb. For example, finished Kabinetts have 9.5 gm/l acidity. Please reserve your Kabinetts early for they will surely be sold out before year end 1990.

Franken

WIRSCHING

Yield was 20% above normal with very ripe fruit and good acid structure (lots of tartaric acid). Riesling from 84 to 87 Öchsle in the Julius Echter Berg and Kronsberg will all be offered as Kabinett wines. For the Riesling variety 1988 was the better vintage. Silvaner will be 85% QbA and 15% Kabinett. Scheurebe brought QbA, Kabinett and Spätlese. Traminer was harvested as an Auslese only at 108 Öchsle. Pinot Gris started at Auslese; there was also a BA and TBA (176 Öchsle at over 9 gm/l acidity). Müller -Thurgau: QbA and Kabinett only.

Nahe

CRUSIUS

Yield was 10% above normal, with mustweights ranging from 74 to 114 Öchsle. Peter and his father did not attempt to make BA's or TBA's. It simply is not their style. They prefer good Ausleses to the really sweet wines. All must below 79 Öchsle was chaptalized to 90-92 and becomes QbA. Botrytis is very noticeable in the Ausleses but also in some Spätleses. Must acids ranged from 8 gm/l to 1.3gm/l. The harvest was complete on 10/27/89. Best vintage of the '80s decade.

SCHLOSSGUT DIEL

Even with 20% above normal yield the 1989 wines will be superb. Quality breakdown is 17% QbA (Pinot Gris and Pinot Blanc), 25% Kabinett, 25% Spätlese and 33% Auslese. Harvest from 9/25 to 10/13. Rieslings have acid levels of 10 gm/l, even the Pinot Gris (the finest I've ever tasted at Diel) has 9.2 gm/l acidity. The acids are very ripe i.e. lots of tartaric acid. In 1989, Schlossgut Diel will offer a fruity style wine, an Auslese from the Dorsheimer Goldloch (108 Öchsle, 10.8 gm/l acidity and 88 gm/l residual sugar).

Baden

SALWEY

Yield was 10% above normal. One of the best vintages of the eighties. Riesling - 2/3 Kabinett and 1/3 Spätlese. Pinot Gris from Kabinett to TBA (160 + Öchsle at 9.5 gm/l acidity). Muskateller Spätlese, will probably sell as Kabinett. Silvaner, Pinot Blanc and Gewürztraminer: Kabinett and Spätlese, Müller-Thurgau: Kabinett and Spätlese but will sell as Kabinett only. Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) from QbA to Spätlese and the Pinot Noir Blanc to Auslese. Harvest was complete 10/23/89.

DR. HEGER

Yield was 70 hl/ha or about 30% above normal. Joachim judges the vintage a 9.5/10. He compares the whites to the 1975s and the red wines possibly the best ever!! Silvaner mostly Kabinett but 10% Spätlese from a plot of over 40 year old vines. Scheurebe: 1000 l Auslese, 1000 l BA (145 Öchsle) and 280 l TBA (200 + Öchsle at 16.6 gm/l acidity fabulous wine)! Traminer: 1000 l Auslese (119 Öchsle), Gewürztraminer: 520 l BA (140 Öchsle) Müller-Thurgau all Kabinett. Riesling: 600 l of fabulous Spätlese from the Winklerberg. Pinot Gris and Pinot Blanc Kabinett and Spätlese. Exceptional Muskateller, Spätlese only. Pinot Noir and Pinot Noir Blanc great!

Württemberg

GRAF ADELMANN

Yield was 15% above normal, very good acid structure and high pH with the red wines. Harvest began 9/20 and was complete by the last week in October. Riesling yield was 60 hl/ha and brought 1/3 Kabinett (85 Öchsle), 1/3 Spätlese (91 Öchsle) and 1/3 Auslese (102 Öchsle). Traminer came in at 90 Öchsle with 70 hl /ha. Could be offered as Kabinett or Spätlese. Muskateller - only 30 hl/ha at 1/2 Kabinett and 1/2 Spätlese. Kerner - only Spätlese at 95 Öchsle. Lemberger - only Spätlese. Samtrot only Spätlese at 90+ Öchsle. Clevner QbA through Auslese at 100+ Öchsle. Trollinger QbA only. One of the best vintages in the last 15 years.

Rheinhessen

GUNDERLOCH

Because of the unusually smaller than normal yields the 1989 harvest at 64 hl/ha was almost 40% above normal. Breakdown of quality levels is 27.2% QbA, 17.5% Kabinett, 41.6% Spätlese and 13.7% Auslese with 150 l TBA at 160+ Öchsle - first Clever Riesling TBA produced at Gunderloch. Acid levels for Riesling from 8.9 to 10.3 gm/l, for Silvaner 7.7 to 8.8 gm/l and Müller-Thurgau 7.5 to 9.0 gm/l. Best vintage of the '80s.