

1994 Vintage Overview

1994 marks the seventh vintage, starting with 1988, of successive very good to great vintages in Germany. Does 1994 mark the end of this amazing string of seven "fertile" years? The vintage produced some of the finest dessert wines in recent memory. Along with good ripeness the vintage is also marked by great acid structure.

1994 was a great vintage especially for the Middle Mosel. With the Saar and Ruwer possibly not quite up to the 93's but also with a great collection of dessert wines. August Eser, Franz Künstler, and Robert Weil again made superb wines in the Rheingau and Gunderloch in Rheinhessen produced the greatest dessert wines ever, surpassing both 1992 and 1993.

Table 1: Middle Mosel weather data for the months April to October.

Month	1994 / 1990			Long Term Average		
	Temp in °C	Hours of Sunshine	Rain in MM	Temp in °C	Hours of Sunshine	Rain in MM
April	9.6 / 8.9	140.6 / 149.4	43.3 / 40.1	9.3	149.1	51.2
May	14.1 / 15.5	162.3 / 287.7	66.3 / 19.3	13.8	198.6	60.6
June	18.6 / 16.4	252.8 / 138.6	41.5 / 103.4	16.8	202.4	67.8
July	23.4 / 19.0	267.9 / 270.3	45.0 / 30.1	18.5	210.5	72.1
August	19.1 / 20.1	184.3 / 199.0	85.2 / 102.9	17.7	183.4	76.0
September	14.6 / 13.2	95.1 / 97.8	62.0 / 55.0	14.7	134.9	54.7
October	10.0 / 11.9	126.8 / 114.5	49.3 / 64.3	10.0	86.6	56.6
Average Total	15.6 / 15.0	175.7 / 179.6	56.1 / 59.3	14.4	166.5	62.7

On the Mosel-Saar-Ruwer it was a year of great contrasts. Hail and Oidium caused great losses on one hand, whereas on the other hand there were many high quality wines in rarely found quantities, including GKA, LGKA, Beerenauslese and Trockenbeerenauslese.

Forgetting the record rainfall in December of '93, which led to severe floods in the Middle Mosel, the figures for early spring '94 were in keeping with the long term average. Water

was in plentiful supply in the vineyards at the start of the vintage. Moody April once again lived up to its reputation. The first two weeks had night frosts, rain and snow. The last two weeks brought dry, sunny days with temperatures up to 81° F which resulted in early budding - almost eight days ahead of normal. May was normal with slightly below normal sunshine hours. The first part of June was quite cool slowing the vegetation process. By mid-June, however, summer came on full-bore and the vines caught up quickly. Flowering occurred several days ahead of normal.

Table 2 : Phenological data for Riesling on the Middle Mosel

Vintage (Riesling)	1975	1990	1993	1994	Long Term Average
Bud Break	5/2	4/24	4/25	4/27	5/3
Flowering	6/26	6/15	6/7*	6/21	6/23
Start of Ripening	8/29	8/20	8/20	8/22	9/7
Start of Harvest	10/15	10/15	10/11	10/10	10/24

*Earliest Flowering of Record

Record temperatures through mid-August accelerated the vintage which by then was once again, as in the previous few vintages, two weeks ahead of normal.

The promise of another great vintage was dampened by miserable, early September weather. Rain from the fourth to the 20th of September resulted in early rot which affected much of the fruit. Acids, however, remained high and stable. At this stage many growers were gravely concerned about the harvest.

The dry period that followed, especially the picture perfect fall weather throughout the month of October resulted in quality of fruit way above normal. Very ripe Riesling with starting must weights of 80° Öchsle and much of it over 90° Öchsle was common. The early botrytis set resulted in many great dessert wines that surpassed everything in recent memory. It is interesting to note that October sunshine hours were the highest in this string of great vintages and over 40 hours above the norm. Average temperature, however, was almost 2° C lower than 1990 resulting from cooler nights. This explains why acid levels remained so high.

Estates by Region

Mosel-Saar-Ruwer

Schloss Lieser

A repeat of the '93 vintage, only better. Again only 30 hl/ha was harvested. In '94 the lowest must weight was 86 Öchsle and again only good enough for the med-dry Estate Rieslings. Two of the Niederberg Helden Ausleses are legitimate BA's. A BA at 169 Öchsle and a TBA near 200 Öchsle were also produced. Thomas Haag is proving that both the 1868 classification by the Royal Prussian Land Registry and the 1908 vineyard classification, which rated the core of the Niederberg Helden only one class from the very top, is a property to be reckoned with. '94 is another great vintage.

Mönchhof

We have decided to continue with the Mönchhof Estate. The '94 vintage was very good here. Harvest just shy of 60 hl/ha. Acids in the finished wine 9.00 - 10.00 gm/l. Residual sugar in the Spätleses 55 to 60 gm/l. Lowest must weight was 85 Öchsle (Auslese must weight) and will be bottled as Kabinett. All other wines are in excess of 90 Öchsle. There is also a TBA in the Ürziger Würzgarten at 200 Öchsle.

Dr. Loosen

Harvest yielded 55 hl/ha. Must weights for QbA ranged from 74 to 80 Öchsle. Ausleses start at 94 Öchsle. There are GKA's from the Ürziger Würzgarten, Erdener Treppchen and Erdener Prälät. There is also a Prälät LGKA and an Erdener Treppchen TBA at over 200 Öchsle. Erni feels the vintage is close to the quality of the '93's, however, without the quantity of high end wines.

J.J. Prüm

Harvested about 60 hl/ha. Must weights to TBA level. There will be no Wehlener Kabinett; only an Estate Kabinett and Graacher Kabinett. The Wehlener Sonnenuhr yielded Spätlese, Auslese, GKA, LGKA, BA, and TBA. There were also Ausleses in the Bernkasteler Badstube, Lay, and Zeltinger Sonnenuhr. Manfred feels the quality of his '94's will be equal to his '90's.

Dr. F. Weins-Prüm

Yield of 60 hl/ha with must weights starting at 81 Öchsle to 143 Öchsle, the latter a superb BA from the Wehlener Sonnenuhr. Acids and extracts are quite high. For example, a Graacher Himmelreich Kabinett has 10gm/l acidity along with 29.1 gm/l sugar free extract. Starting with 1994, we are going to offer only two Kabinett's, a Dr. F. Weins-Prüm Estate Riesling Kabinett and the Wehlener Sonnenuhr Kabinett. This consolidates three or four Kabinetts into one Estate Kabinett. Vintage exceeds the 90's by a small margin.

Wwe. Dr. H. Thanisch

Yield of about 60 hl/ha. The harvest was mostly Auslese with average must weight at about 92 Öchsle. There will be declassified Kabinett and Spätlese in the Doctor and Lay vineyards. There are small quantities of BA and TBA in the Doctor. The Lay Kabinett showed very ripe fruit with a hint of cassis, bracing acidity with good depth and length; the Lay Spätlese (92 Öchsle) showed more intensity; again strong nuance of cassis, very fine and ripe, bright and long.

Fritz Haag

Potentially great vintage. A small sampling of 94's points to some of the finest wines we have ever tasted at Haag. Lowest must weight was 86 Öchsle. Almost all the harvest is Auslese. A good portion of Auslese musts will be declassified to 10% QbA, 30% Kabinett, 30% Spätlese. There will be 30% Auslese, and a array of GKA, LGKA, BA, and TBA.

Reinhold Haart

Yield was 51 hl/ha. Another superb collection of Piesporter wines with must weights ranging from 79 Öchsle to 170 Öchsle. Acid levels and sugar free extracts are high. Our initial tasting notes of the Goldtröpfchen wines showed classic peaches fruit with nuances of cassis. Theo Haart compares the vintage favorably with 1990 and 1993.

Milz-Laurentiushof

With a yield of 57 hl/ha all the harvest was predicate level. Must weights ranged from 78 to over 200 Öchsle, with high acids and sugar free extracts. Harvested as 10% Kabinett, 30% Spätlese, (both declassified Spätlese and Auslese), and 50% Auslese. The rest are higher quality Ausleses, a BA, and TBA in each of the Leiterchen and Felsenkopf vineyards. All wines were made by arresting fermentation. Some of the best Milz wines we have tasted in recent years. Wonderful bright, sappy wines.

Karthäuserhof

With 48 hl/ha the whole harvest was at predicate level. Must weights from 80 to 140 Öchsle. Good ripe acids, along with high extracts. Quality breakdown is 30% QbA (declassified Kabinett and Spätlese), 40% Spätlese (some of which will be declassified to Kabinett) and the remainder Auslese, GKA, LGKA, and BA. Quality probably close to the 1990 vintage.

Piedmont

Yields of 74 hl/ha with a narrow must weight range from 74 to 86 Öchsle. Very little fertilizer was used in the vineyards slowing the formation of botrytis. The grapes were harvested ripe and healthy, resulting in bright filigreed wines. Acids in the finished wines range from 9 to 9.5 gm/l; pH values are near 2.9. The vintage offers Kabinett and Spätlese. Comparable to 1990.

von Hövel

Yield was 55 hl/ha all of Auslese quality or higher. Must weights from 86 to 115 Öchsle with high acidity and sugar free extract. There was little botrytis and the wines are very bright flavored fruity Rieslings with a very strong acid backbone. Eberhard rates the vintage even higher than 1993.

Egon Mueller Scharzhof / Le Gallais

Egon Jr. thinks this to be another great vintage for both estates. Yield was below average with must weights ranging from QbA all the way up to TBA. The wines should compare very favorably to the wonderful 1993's. Acids and sugar free extracts both above average.

Dr. Fischer

Yield was 50 hl/ha with must weights from QbA to Beerenauslese. Acids and sugar free extracts were above average. Tartaric acid as a part of total acidity was high. Hennes judges the vintage equal in quality to the 1993 vintage.

Zilliken

Yield was slightly below average, with must weights from 77 Öchsle all the way up to 175 Öchsle. Spätlese will make up about 80% of the harvest much of which will be declassified to QbA and Kabinett. Ausleses were not in as great a supply as in 1993, however, the TBA must weight was highest since 1976. There was no Eiswein. Total acidity, tartaric acid, and pH values were all high. The young wines are bright, exhibiting fine fruit. Close in quality to the 1993's.

Schloss Saarstein

Yield was slightly over 50 hl/ha with must weights from 80 Öchsle to over 200 Öchsle. Acids were high even in the BA and TBA musts. The vintage offered only the fourth TBA produced in the past 40 years. QbA and Kabinett are declassified Spätlese. There are significant quantities of dessert wines. Great wines that will live for many years.

Bert Simon

Harvested 58 hl/ha with an average must weight of 82 Öchsle. The primary offering will be Kabinett and Spätlese along with one Auslese, one BA and small amounts of TBA. Acids and pH values are high. Quality of the vintage is comparable to the 1988 vintage.

Rheingau**Robert Weil**

The harvest with a yield of 55 hl/ha, lasted almost 12 weeks. Selection at Robert Weil always goes to great extremes and achieved again the highest must weight in the Rheingau - 263 Öchsle. Eiswein in the Gräfenberg was harvested in early January 1995. Another vintage of great quality with wines that exhibit bright peaches fruit with great acid backbone. Dry wines are especially fine. In terms of aging potential Wilhelm Weil feels that the

'94's will surpass both the 1992 and 1993 vintage. This is the sixth year in succession that both TBA and TBA quality Eiswein were produced at the estate.

Franz Künstler

Red wine harvest (Pinot Noir) started 9/27 yielding 50 hl/ha. The Reichstal harvested at 99 Öchsle and will be sold as a Spätlese dry. The Hölle Pinot Noir, harvested at 88 Öchsle, was chaptalized to 12.5% alcohol, and will be offered as a QbA dry. White wine harvest started 10/4 and yielded 70 hl/ha. There will be a repeat of the wonderful Herrnberg Kabinett. Stielweg at 96 Öchsle, as always, will be offered as a dry Spätlese. There will again be a fruity Spätlese from the Herrnberg. From the Hölle there was a BA, TBA, and Eiswein (harvested on 1/5/95). Gunter thinks 1994 compares favorably with both 1990 and 1993.

von Simmern

Yield was 15% below average. Breakdown of the vintage brings 8% QbA, 64% Kabinett, 26% Spätlese, and 2% from Auslese to TBA. First impressions suggest racy, bright, spicy, Rheingau Rieslings. Preliminary evaluation points to a very good vintage.

August Eser

Yield was a touch below normal. The '94 harvest breaks down to 20% QbA, 60% Kabinett, 20% Spätlese. There is also one Auslese and an Eiswein harvested 1/5/95. Acids and sugar free extracts for the '94 vintage are high. Joachim Eser thinks that the '94's will evolve into elegant, racy Rheingau Rieslings. He compares the vintage with '93 and '90.

Pfalz

Pfeffingen

The 1994 harvest yielded 65 hl/ha. The Rieslings are superb, bright, and vibrant with must weights ranging from 82 to 132 Öchsle. Acid levels in these wines are unusually high for the Pfalz. A great Scheurebe vintage with a Spätlese at 103 Öchsle and 10gm/l acid, an Auslese at 118 Öchsle with 9.5 gm/l acid, a BA at 149 Öchsle and 12.5 gm/l acid and the jewel in the crown a Scheurebe TBA at 220 Öchsle with 18 gm/l acid. There is also a superb Silvaner at 107 Öchsle and 12 gm/l and an Gewürztraminer Spätlese at 109 Öchsle with 6 gm/l acid. A great vintage.

Franken

Wirsching

Another superb vintage with over 90% of the wines at predicate level and 50% Spätlese and Auslese; there were also BA's and TBA's. Most of the grapes were harvested during the dry, sunshiny, weather in October. Yield was 58 hl/ha and fruit had above average acids and sugar free extracts. Tartaric acid content was high. Fruity, racy wines with depth that compare favorably to the superb '79 vintage.

Nahe

Schlossgut Diel

The harvest yielded 53 hl/ha. The normal harvest had must weights from 70 to 95 Öchsle. Good quantities of Kabinett and Spätlese with some Auslese but not in the quantities of '92 and '93. There is a Riesling BA at 140 Öchsle and several Eisweins ranging from 160 to 200 Öchsle. Acids are quite high along with sugar free extracts; pH values ranged from 2.6 to 2.9. Bright and spicy wines. Especially strong are Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc and Cuvée Victor. Armin compares the vintage to '88 and '90.

Rheinhessen

Gunderloch

Another superb vintage at Gunderloch. A harvest of 52 hl/ha with 27% Kabinett, 57% Spätlese and 16% to Auslese, GKA, BA, and TBA. Some Kabinett and Spätlese will be declassified for the Estate Riesling, and some Spätlese for Kabinett. Agnes Hasselbach, who supervises the harvest noted that yellow-gold grapes barely achieved Kabinett level must weights, whereas green grapes on the shady side of the vine had very high must weights. Extracts and acid are very high. Very vibrant, steely Rieslings with peaches and mandarin fruit. The crown jewel in the harvest is a very great TBA with over 270 Öchsle and 18.5 gm/l acidity.

Baden

Salwey

Below average yield. Some highlights are a Silvaner Auslese at 109 Öchsle, a Pinot Blanc Auslese at 109 Öchsle, and a Pinot Gris Auslese at 123 Öchsle. There is also some very good Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir). The vintage is comparable to '92 and '93.

Dr. Heger - Weinhaus Heger

Another superb vintage for Heger. During the rainy September the harvest brought primarily Kabinett wines from Mueller Thurgau, Silvaner, Pinot Gris, and Pinot Blanc. The dry October weather brought Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc and Riesling Spätleses. At Dr. Heger there were also Ausleses from Silvaner, Gewürztraminer, Riesling, BA's from Scheurebe, and Pinot Gris. TBA's from Gewürztraminer, Pinot Gris, and Scheurebe (211 Öchsle). Pinot Noir is superior to the '92's and '91's and close to the wonderful '93's.

Württemberg

Graf Adelman

Harvest just shy of 60 hl/ha with 67% QbA, 15% Kabinett, 14% Spätlese and 4% Auslese including 180 liters of Riesling BA. The winners were Riesling, Traminer, Pinot varietals, and Lemberger. The acids are relatively high and ripe. As in many other regions the beautiful October weather saved the vintage. Vintage is close in quality to the '90's and '93 vintage.