

2013 – a difficult vintage

Vintage Report 2013 of Max Ferd. Richter Estate

Our expectations were totally different from those of previous vintages. Right into October we still counted on a satisfying 2013 vintage. The grapes looked so good, really healthy and shiny on the vines!

Instead of an easy start to the grape harvest, the winegrowers were confronted with summer high temperatures, and almost daily downpours, causing the grapes to start rotting rapidly, like the 2006 vintage. Our original plan was to start grape picking on 21st October, and that was cancelled. From 14th October we rushed into the vineyards to pick as quickly as possible, trying to avoid further quantity losses by evaporation. The rain had burst the skins of the ripe and mature berries, juice ran out and berries started to shrivel, acquiring noble rot (botrytis).

The sugar level (Oechsle) of harvested grapes rose from one day to the next, and reached high Prädikat wine levels, whereas the quantity loss was reciprocal. Acidity levels kept on a high and well balanced level, far better than in 2006, but less dramatic than in 2010. Obviously climatic change does influence the final ripening period today that is much stronger than in the past. We have not found or developed yet a strategy to fight such weather turbulences in the final growing season, from mid September to mid October. It was too late for a final spraying with chemical agents, and ecological agents don't help either – they are just too weak to stop such an outburst of rot. The hailstorm damages in Mülheim and Veldenz from the 20th June made the tiniest harvest since 1980. Just 30 hl/ha.

The 2013 quality however will be exceptional and we can really expect top growths. Cellar procedures were a huge challenge for the wine making crew. 2013 certainly will honour those who learned to do their job in a proper way. Due to low harvesting concentration of juice was really tight, blessed with lots of natural sugar content and with good firm acidity to balance such opulent richness. There is no shortage of top end wines, such as Spätlese and Auslese, including a Beerenauslese in the “Brauneberger Juffer”, but there is shortage of the so called “bread and butter” wines, Qualitätswein and Kabinett.

The vegetation season, March, April and May, were very difficult months and they missed anything like spring. It was wet and cold. Vegetation changed rapidly in mid-June, with highest summer temperatures from one day to the next. The reverse side of that positive growing push was the previously mentioned hailstorm catastrophe in our area. But flowering was terminated quickly and July, with a maximum of sunshine (40% above average), seemed to catch up with the growing process. August was another warm and sunny summer month, and until the second week of September everything looked fine. You know the rest.....

The harvest result is particularly sad, as demand for German wines in general and Mosel Riesling specifically is growing steadily. There is no reason to complain. But it is not satisfying being unable to supply customers according to their growing demand. We still dispose of good stock of Prädikat wines from 2007 up to 2012, but we will have to allocate our most popular and successful “Mülheimer Sonnenlay Riesling Zeppelin” label on this business year's level.

Wishing you and your families a merry Christmas and a happy New Year 2014!

Yours, Constantin and Dirk Richter

30th November 2013

