

## **Drosophila suzukii – a new pest in our vineyards**

Max Ferd. Richter 2014 Vintage Report

Vintage 2014 finished on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2014 – two weeks earlier than usual. In all German winegrowing areas vintners hurried to pick grapes as quick as possible: It was a “turbo harvest”.


The reason for harvest stress and hectic action was the wet and warm autumn season leading to quick rotting of grapes and giving a new, till than unknown insect in German vineyards, called “Drosophila suzukii” (Japanese cherry vinegar insect), perfect conditions to grow and spread in vineyards. The cherry vinegar insect ruined morello cherry plantings in Rheinhessen, jumped upon red grapes, such as Spätburgunder and Dornfelder, and ended up infecting the Riesling grape too. The species propagates rapidly in the berries and leaves back malodorous vinegar smelling skins.


Thanks to mild winter weather and a warm summerlike March vegetation started with an early bud break. Due to very small quantity in both recent vintages 2012 and 2013 fruit setting this season was perfect, a usual reaction and natural circle of the vines. Warm, sunny and dry spring weather and a hot June speeded up the growing of shoots and canopees and gave an early and perfect copybook flowering. At the time we were looking forward to an ample vintage, bringing juice into our cellars and producing lots of “bread-and-butter” wines.

Beginning July the tide did turn. Rain and downpours, far above average, guaranteed a continuous and necessary water supply for mineralisation but during the wet and cool August grapes had developed an overall thickness, that single berries got pressed amongst each other leading to a bursting of skins. The continuing wet-warm weather caused a premature rotting. Fungus disease and pest (drosophila suzukii) penetrated and ruined lots of grapes. We calculated a loss of nearly 20%.

As of September 23<sup>rd</sup> we started grape picking, using every dry moment to eliminate in a meticulous and irksome pre harvest all defected grapes. That kind of procedure needed to be repeated during main harvest as well up to the last picking day, October 26<sup>th</sup>. You can imagine that kind of difficulty in our steep vineyards. But as we are in need to pick by hand we have to judge upon every cluster anyway.

As expected we got the “bread-and-butter” wines, particularly the “Zeppelin-Riesling”, in sufficient quantity and a bunch of Prädikatwines up to Spät- and Auslese level on top. However noble sweet wines, such as Eiswein and Beerenauslese, were not made. To our utmost surprise the natural concentration is due to perfect mineralisation in summer extremely high and similar to 2013. Thus we will continue to offer wines with great acid balance and highest mineral density.

  
(Dr. Dirk Richter)

  
(Constantin Richter)

Mülheim a. d. Mosel, 5<sup>th</sup> November 2014