

Max Ferd. Richter 2017 Vintage Report
The Earliest and Quickest Harvest Ever

On October, 13th, our 2017 grape harvest came to an end, the earliest finish in history. Twenty years ago mid-October was the start of harvest, finishing a month later in mid-November. No doubt, global warming is accelerating.

Vegetation in our vineyards started right on time, at the end of March. Four weeks later the young shoots had reached a length of 5–10 cm. At the end of April, a severe frost damaged those young shoots, destroying our expectations for a normal sized harvest. The icy, cold air mass had less effect on the warmer soils at lower altitudes allowing those vineyards to survive. Vineyards at higher altitude, where growing was much more advanced, were heavily effected. Sadly, these parcels happened to be the best vineyards. This sudden cold snap caused a major catastrophe in all western European wine regions. 2017 will definitely be the smallest vintage worldwide over the past 50 years.

Luckily the side buds of the Riesling vines are fertile and strong. The vegetation that survived was enhanced by warm and sunny dry weeks, following through May and June. Whereas apple and cherry orchards suffered total destruction, the grapevines that survived were healthy and strong.

Flowering in hot and sunny June was completed rapidly though the lack of rain caused some drought problems for new plantings. We were able to irrigate those parcels, keeping the young vines alive. Among those was Constantin's new planting of "Gemischter Satz", an exciting project with re-cultivated ancient vines grown in the Rhine and Mosel valleys during medieval times. As we are a wine estate with more than 300 years of history we are eager to recreate the kind of wines that were cultivated and consumed by our ancestors. We will report in four years when harvest the first grapes.


July was blessed with lots of badly needed rain. That humid season continued to last throughout August as well, so that grapes ripened much quicker. In the Mosel this led to an historically early start to the harvest, by the third week of September. The surplus of water in the terroir led to the growth of much thicker berries, causing skins to burst, opening the widespread possibility of fungus diseases, bugs and insects, along with a high risk of rot. Thank God, our vineyards are covered by grass and weeds, unusual for vineyards grown on steep slate stone. The abundant humidity didn't reach down to the roots of our vines and we were fortunate to be able to avoid those problems. September turned warm and mostly sunny, creating the conditions for the early grape picking.

In summation have harvested a small but very high quality vintage with ample high end wines, including noble sweet BA and TBA, backed by ripe and refreshing built-in fruit acid. Due to the small quantity – 50 % of the normal crop – we are short of our "bread-and-butter" wines, such as Qualitätswein and Kabinett. Because 2016 provided us with significant quantities of these wines we will be able to continue to supply them to offset the shortage of 2017. Constantin received many high accolades from the wine press for his great success with the 2016 wines. The Wine Guide Vinum said: "2016 is the best vintage we have tasted from Weingut Max Ferd. Richter and continues the great performance seen in 2015."

Best wishes for a merry Christmas and a happy, prosperous New Year,



(Dr. Dirk Richter)



(Constantin Richter)

30th November 2017