



The International Wine Review

January 2011

Report # 25: The Wines of Austria

Introduction



Austrian Wine has arrived. Although Austria has been producing wine for centuries, its wines are only now attracting the keen interest of wine enthusiasts in international markets.

The reason is that Austrian wine producers are today crafting high quality wines that reflect the unique terroir and indigenous grape varieties of the country. Grüner Veltliner is the best known and by far the most popular, but Riesling and other white wines and red wines like Blaufränkisch and Zweigelt have captured the fancy of wine lovers everywhere. These wines compete with the best in the world as international blind tastings in London and Singapore have shown for Grüner Veltliner, Riesling, and Pinot Noir.

In this current report, the International Wine Review presents Austria and its wines to our readers through out the world. Our aim is to spread the word of the many wonderful wines to be found in Austria and to clarify some misunderstandings. In particular, Austria and Germany do not produce the same wines. Although both speak German and use some of the same terms to describe their wines, it is erroneous to assume Austria is then simply a vinous extension of Germany. To the contrary, Austria grows mainly indigenous varieties (e.g. Grüner Veltliner, Blaufränkisch) not widely grown in Germany; makes mainly dry table wines, not sweet ones; and produces wines of distinctly different character due to its more southerly location and Pannonian climate influence. And then, of course, there's Ruster Ausbruch, Spätrot-Rotgipfler, Gemischter Satz, and numerous other delicious wines unique to Austria.

Austria is a relatively small country with diverse climates and soils. It has several different growing regions, each with its own terroir, indigenous varieties, and unique wine culture. Austria is also a country of small producers; 23 thousand growers farm 46 thousand hectares of vines. And virtually all of Austria's fine wines are produced by small family wineries, many of which have existed for generations.

While skills and techniques for growing grapes and making wines were passed along over generations, a wine revolution occurred in the 1950s which ushered in new and important improvements. Pioneers like Josef Jamek and Willi Bründlmayer Sr. in the Lower Danube introduced new vineyard management, reduced yields, and modern winemaking with the aim of

In this Issue

Introduction	Cover
Acknowledgements	2
Terroir: Geography, Climate, Soils	3
The Regions and Appellations of Austria	4
Niederösterreich	4
Wien	6
Burgenland.....	7
Steiermark.....	7
A Brief History of Wine	7
Austrian Wine Labels	8
The Grapes and Wines of Austria	9
Grüner Veltliner.....	9
Riesling	10
Other White Wines	12
Blaufränkisch	14
Zweigelt	13
Other Red Wines	15
Ruster Ausbruch and TBA	17
The Food and Wine of Austria.....	18
Tasting Notes and Ratings.....	19
Annex I Austrian Vintages 2006 – 2010	56
Annex II Previous Wine Reports	57

producing wines that express Austria's unique terroir. And somewhat later, in Burgenland, producers on the shores of Lake Neusiedl and in Mittleburgenland began producing quality red wines from indigenous red grapes such as Blaufränkisch, St. Laurent, Zweigelt, and from Pinot Noir.

Today's winemakers are taking this revolution to exciting new heights. Talented winemakers trained at world class programs in Klosterneuburg, Krems, Silberberg and elsewhere are making their mark. Paul Achs, Gernot Heinrich, Hans Nittaus, Gerhard Pittnauer, Roland Velich and many others are gaining international recognition for the high quality and unique character of their wines.

Americans who love wine should know Austria's indigenous grapes and important producers. Hence, this report is

Continued on page 2

Introduction

Continued from page 1

organized around the main grapes of Austria. For the main varieties we present lists of the top producers and their wines, culled from the more than 500 wines tasted. While some of these wines may not yet be available locally, an unusually dedicated and enterprising group of U.S. importers will respond to the demands of informed consumers.

We are very positively impressed with the high quality of Austria's wines—white, red, sweet and sparkling. In our travels we learned that Austria makes wonderful wines from some little known indigenous varieties like Rotgipfler, Zierfandler, Gelber Muskateller, and others. And the top producers make white wines that age superbly. Red wines are fast improving, especially Blaufränkisch; dessert wines are extraordinary; and sparkling wines, although limited in number, are as good as those produced anywhere in the world.

Austria produces just 1 percent of global wine production and exports only 25 percent of that. With limited production, loyal consumers at home, and a strong European export market, Austria needs American consumers less than American consumers need Austrian wine. The best wines, like good wines everywhere, aren't cheap, but they are unique and quite unlike what one can find elsewhere in the world. And superb wines and good values can still be found thanks to a small group of importers who are passionate about Austrian wines.

Information on Subscriptions to the International Wine Review [IWR]

The IWR is published by the International Wine Review, LLC. Our office is located at 6625 Old Chesterbrook Road, McLean, Virginia 22101.

Our email is: info@i-winereview.com.

Rates for one-year subscriptions are \$50 for the online edition and \$60 for the print edition. Combined online and print subscriptions are \$80 for 1 year. Subscriptions include exclusive access to all online resources of i-winereview.com.

Special group rates are available to wine clubs and wine schools. Contact us about eligibility and rates. Subscriptions may be purchased online at www.i-winereview.com.

Reproduction of the material contained herein, including copying, without written permission is prohibited by law.

Media, wine importers, distributors and retailers may use brief portions of this material in its original form if attributed to the International Wine Review.

Acknowledgements. Many individuals and organizations contributed to our report on Austrian wine. First and foremost, we would like to thank Willi Klinger, Managing Director, Austrian Wine Marketing Board (OEWM). Willi made this report possible. In addition, we would like to thank the staff of the OEWM for their help in organizing our trip to Austria and for providing up-to-date information on Austrian wine via their website www.austrianwine.com and various publications, most notably Austrian Wine in Depth.

We also wish to acknowledge with deep appreciation the numerous winemakers from Kamptal to Styria and throughout Austria who received us during our visit. These individuals, too numerous to list here, generously organized in-depth tastings of their wines and helped us learn about the fine points of Austrian wine. We are most grateful to them and hope that our report helps them gain greater recognition internationally for the excellence of their winemaking.

To the importers and distributors of Austrian wines in the United States we wish to give a special thanks for their collaboration and knowledge sharing. These are true champions of Austrian wines: Terry Thiese, Klaus Wittauer, Daniel Hubbard, Sariya Jarasviroj Brown, Carlo Huber, Erin Grace, Jodi Stern, Stephan Schindler, Molly Kennedy, Bill Mayer, Monika Caha, Dino Tantawi, and Manfred Bauer. In this connection, we would also like to thank Peter Schleimer, Chief Editor, Vinaria, for helping organize and guide our tastings in Rust.

We also received gracious and enthusiastic support of two magnanimous officials of the Austrian Embassy in Washington: Hans Kordik, Attaché for Agricultural and Environmental Affairs, and Gernot Wiedner, Consul General. When Hans and Gernot learned we were preparing this report on Austria, they organized a series of dinners and wine tastings to acquaint us with the best food and wine of Austria. We are now best of friends.

Finally, we wish to thank Joel Butler MW, a member of our Tasting Panel and Editorial Board. Joel kindly served as Technical Editor for this report and made invaluable contributions at every stage. We are deeply indebted to him for the time, energy and intelligence he devoted to this task. Last, but not least, we thank our Austrian associate, Jörg Lädstätter, for his research on the history and institutions of Austrian wine.

Mike Potashnik Don Winkler
Publisher Editor

Annex II: Previous Wine Reports



Issue 1	California Petite Sirah (September 2005)
Issue 2	Red Table Wines of Portugal (January 2006)
Issue 3	Grenache Wines (May 2006)
Issue 4	Syrah (September 2006)
Issue 5	Malbec: Argentina's Magnificent Malbec (December 2006)
Issue 6	The Wines of Southern Italy: From Quantity to Quality (March 2007)
Special Report	Portugal: The Douro Boys and Barca Velha (June 2007)
Issue 7	New Zealand's Exciting Pinot Noirs (July 2007)
Issue 8	The Wines of Ribera del Duero (September 2007)
Issue 9	Champagne (December 2007)
Issue 10	Unoaked Chardonnay: It's More Than Wood (February 2008)
Issue 11	2005 Bordeaux Crus Bourgeois (April 2008)
Issue 12	California Petite Sirah - Syrah Update (June 2008)
Issue 13	The Wines of Rioja: Classical and New Wave (August 2008)
Special Report	Introduction to Sherry (November 2008)
Issue 14	The World of Sparkling Wines and Champagne (December 2008)
Issue 15	The Wines of Chianti Classico (February 2009)
Issue 16	Oregon Pinot Noir (April 2009)
Issue 17	Sauvignon of the Loire (June 2009)
Issue 18	Wines of Navarra (August 2009)
Issue 19	Wines of Greece: Assyrtiko and Santorini (October 2009)
Issue 20	The Santa Lucia Highlands (November 2009)
Issue 21	The Chilean Wine Revolution (February 2010)
Issue 22	Grapes and Wines of the Western Loire (June 2010)
Issue 23	Ribera del Duero Revisited (August 2010)
Issue 24 Double Issue	The New Wines of Portugal (October 2010)
Issue 25	The Wines of Austria (January 2011)

These reports are available online at www.i-winereview.com