

“They make wine that can be stored for centuries”
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They make wine that can be stored for centuries

In recent years, Riesling has become a bestseller. Now there are rumors about the 2010-vintage.

Text Merete Bø, Photo Sune Eriksen.
Rheingau, Germany

D2MAT

It was here the first sweet Riesling was. Winemaker Christian Witte points to a modest door facing a carefully orchestrated and courtyards on the farm Schloss Johannisberg in the Rheingau, a wine region located in southwestern Germany, and talks about what happened in 1775.

An ineffective messenger used for a long time to get approval for the harvest could begin. When he came back the grapes were ripe and the sugar level high. But they won anyway.

It was an unexpected success. "Never has such a wine passed my lips," the winemaker to have said when he got to taste the strange, sweet wine.

– After it was late harvested grapes pursued in each year, says Witte.

The young winemaker is responsible for the castle and vineyard all German wineries envy him. The most sought after wine at the moment, Schloss Johannisbergs Trockenbeerenauslese from 2010, is already sold out.

Last year's extreme weather and record-low yields have led to the rare combination of high acidity and high sugar content in grapes. It has given the wines of the German wine industry has never seen before:

– This is going to be able to sleep for 300 years, said Christian Witte.



OLD METHOD: The dividend went down by 60 percent in 2010, it worries Christian Witte of Schloss Johannisberg. - But the quality is second to none on the best wines, he believes. The Geisenheim-trained winemaker has gone back to ferment wine in old barrels rather than stainless steel. It has given them a quality boost. As a monument to the bygone era looms Schloss Johannisberg across the landscape of the Rheingau. The wines from here was once sold only to holders of blue blood in Europe.

Jomfruvin. Acid Tension, sweetness, full, fresh and complex.
Reviled, underestimated and misjudged. The road to recognition has been quarrelsome and long for Riesling.

But in recent years, the traditional and major manufacturers like Schloss Johannisberg, Kloster Eberbach and Prinz von Hessen have been through a quality renaissance. In addition, many of the small niche manufacturers have been easier to get their hands in. In Norway, Riesling is behind virtually all white wines that tops bestseller list on the pole.

Today Riesling among the lowest forward-looking purchases in vinverdenen: Young vintages as 2007, 2008 and 2010, almost bursting with storage capacity.



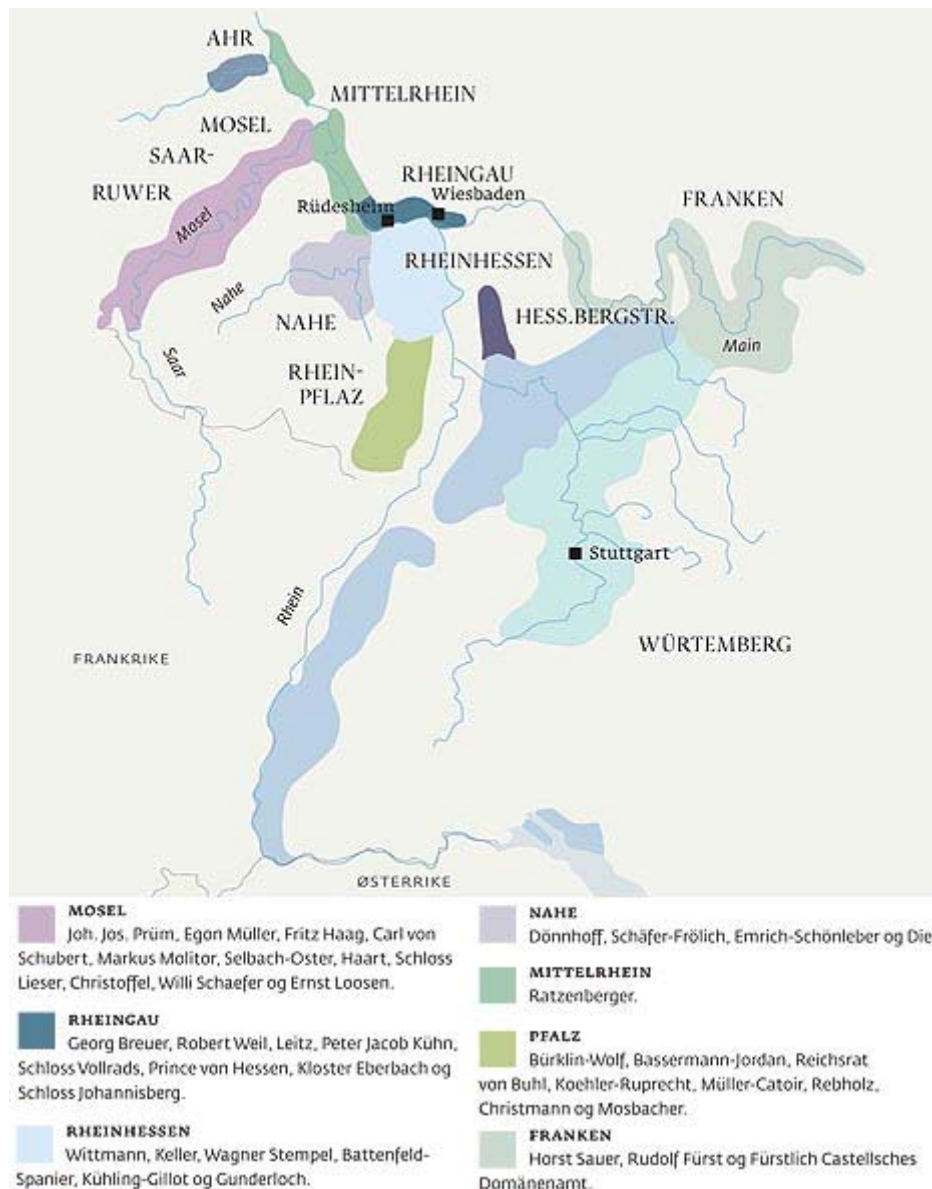
TREASURE CHAMBER: The wines in the library at Schloss Johannisberg is only sold at auctions and to very good and loyal customers, Christian Witte tell.

Improving ability. In about 2000 years, the green grape lime German palates. But it is the Romans who should have the honor of the first vineyards in the country: vines should not really be grown as far north, but they needed something to drink during the invasions, and planted grapes in the sunny and steep overhangs the river to meet the Legionnaire's daily rations. Little did they know that one day there would be some of the world's finest wine storage.

No grape can offer higher quality for the money, or separated with the same apparent affinity, nerve and soul. Nor give a better picture of the story. The unprecedented ability to improve in bottle for centuries, is unparalleled.

When it was born, no one knows, but that Schloss Johannisberg – Set of 50 latitude north – is one of the best places to grow Riesling in the world, there is much about.

German manufacturers of storage friendly Riesling



Charles the Great's legacy. One early spring day at the end of the 700-number find Charlemagne a slope where the snow melts faster than on the hills around. He is hungry and knows he is far north of Europe, but decides that this must be the best place for grape cultivation. This was perhaps the most coveted vineyards in Germany filed.

No one knows if it was Riesling was planted, but the probability is high, since the grape is more hardy than other grapes.

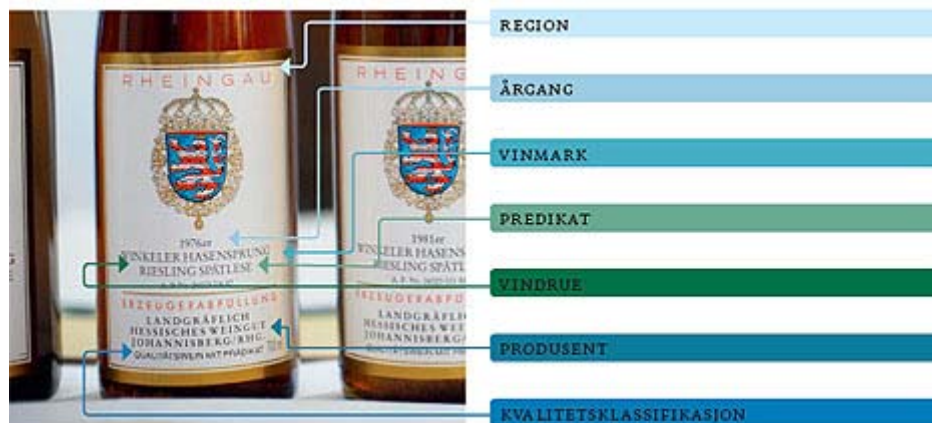
– There were Benedictine monks from Burgundy, who founded the monastery here around the year 1100, says Christian Witte.

– They called the monastery after John the Baptist, and built on top of Charlemagne vineyard with views of the entire region.

The basement is like a cathedral, hewed out of stone, eight feet below ground. In the muggbelagte stairs leading down to the holy of holies, the generations of monks working for their precious drops.

The low oxygen content makes you throw your breath. The air is thick, the humidity high. There are bottles from 1748. Only the best wines in each vintage lies here. Once a year, some also auctioned off.

– Sometimes we keep a few wines in less good years to look at the storage capability. Nothing suggests that a bottle of the bad year 1970 could be stored for 40 years, but it tastes fantastic, says Witte.



HOW TO READ A GERMAN WINE LABEL: See fact box to the right.

Golden age. London 1961. Golden, glittering droplets hit the bottom of the glass. The wine, which is stored in barrels from 1540, and was bottled in the mid 1700's, is perhaps the oldest wine ever drunk.

The lucky few who attend will have the opportunity to enjoy two short sips of a Riesling from the vineyard Stein in Würzburg, in Franconia, before it turns to vinegar in the glass.

– Never before has it been demonstrated so clearly to me that wine is a living organism, says British

Hugh Johnson, one of the world's most influential commentators, the tasting of 1540 wines.

– It was still alive, even though it had been a distinct Madeira feel about it.

This year, offered an extraordinary vintage. It is said that the Rhine River dried out, and that one could go dry shod over. Wine was cheaper than water and it should have been so hot that you could do two harvests. The result was much sweet wine with an acidity level high NOK to be able to survive for 400 years. German wine was now in its golden age, and grape Riesling was applauded throughout Europe.



Crowded: There were about 500 monks who lived in Kloster Eberbach in its heyday, and the whole of 1500 workers who did the dirty work in the vineyard, says Dieter Greiner. - In addition, controlled the monastery around 250 small Vineria who were within a radius of 200 kilometers. They produce everything from beer to wine. The monastery has recently been used as film backdrop, among other things, the film was "Name of the Rose" was recorded in the old wine cellars here.

Tears before bedtime. Tall, ancient trees will be passed at a snail's pace. The road is narrow and winding. Tucked deep in a lush valley in the Rheingau in Germany is one of Europe's best preserved monasteries: Kloster Eberbach.

After being brought by Cistercienser monks from Burgundy in 1136, it has been in the German state-owned since World War II. In the basement is one of the world's largest and oldest collections of Riesling.

– Legend has it that you had to build extra high walls here, so not jealous neighbors would steal the grapes, says Dieter Greiner, manager of Vineria.

The hot and humid air when out in the courtyard. Behind a wide door opening a candle creates a dim light. The ceiling is supported by Corinthian columns. It was in this basement that the term Cabinet was first used, when spelled with a "c". The oldest bottle is from 1706.

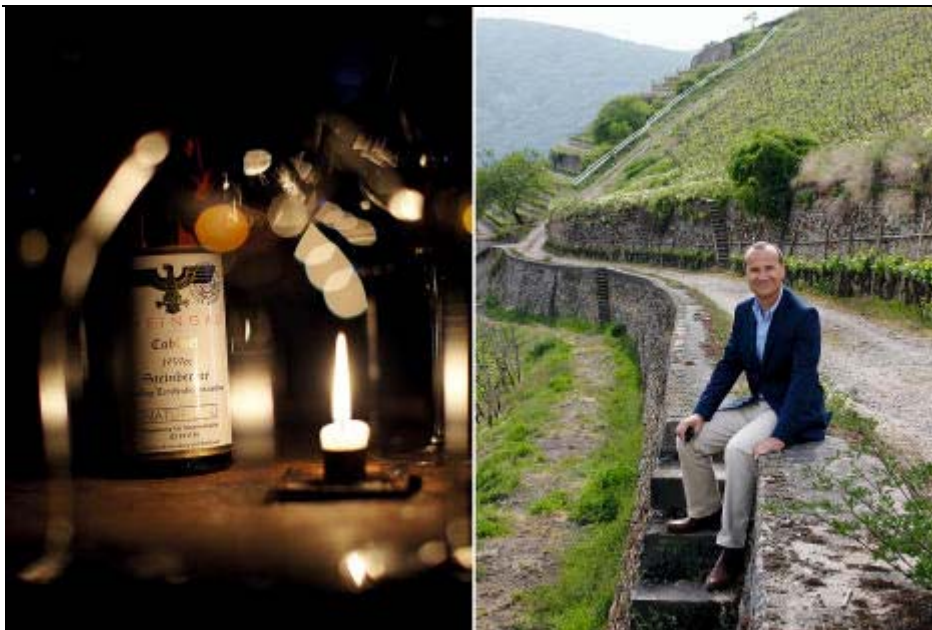
– The bottles that had the inscription "cabinett" was the best. They predicted a great future and was

in the closet or "cabin kit" for further storage, says Greiner, while he also golden, plump drops of wine in a glass.

The scent is clear, seductive and generous, with a grade of honey, dried apricots, tobacco and citrus fruits - it feels very young.

– This is my favorite vintage, says Greiner.

– If it were up to me I had only had 1959, but it is very expensive in the long run. This bottle with Trockenbeerenauslese – the sweetest of dessert wines – from the vineyard in the Rheingau Steinberg costs 30,000 dollars on auction, but it can also be located in at least a hundred years.



100 POINTS: A wine that offers palpitations, chills and teary experiences are included in the rare category of memorable wine experiences. Dieter Greiner at Kloster Eberbach reigns over one of Germany's national treasures. With 220 hectares of vineyard and a cellar full of wine history, the responsibility is great. Most of the wines in the cellar is from their own fields, but some come from France and derived from the German occupation during World War II.

Norway friends. Although German Riesling has had difficult years after World War II, wine drinking Norwegians have always preferred fair and indiscriminate mixture of sweet and acid fresh wine.

Vinmonopolet price list from 1927 says that German wines were the best you could buy. A Riesling from Schloss Johannisberg cost 13 crowns, while a Chambertin from Burgundy was priced at seven million. Bordeaux wines Lafite and Latour cost the tidy sum of ten million. Today, the price difference between a Riesling from Schloss Johannisberg and Lafite is around 4000-5000 dollars – in the latter's favor.

– The German wine industry messed up for themselves in the 50th century, said Christian Witte at Schloss Johannisberg.

The need for to meet an ever thirstier market got the Germans to plant vines in the lowlands around the river, where the soil has more nutrients. As a result, production increased, while quality and good

reputation vanished. German wine was associated with sweet, sticky and alcoholic beverages, reserved for the inexperienced.

– The number of vineyards has doubled since then, but all are planted where it was previously farmland. There are soils that cannot be used for grape growing, says Witte determined.



Riesling Knights: It is with awe the trained palates seduced by tilårskomne golden drops. Although all the glasses are tasted with a critical eye, the excitement is difficult to hide.

White wine. On what was formerly the German Queen Victoria's castle in Kronberg, Germany, the mood is solemn. Dress-clad representatives of Europe's wine make little is gathered around the table to taste a selection of old Riesling. All 47 different bottles are picked up from the vineyard to HRH Prince Moritz Landgraf of Hesse and his son Donatus in Rheingard – one of the old vineyards that have received a boost in recent years.

Dust is brushed away. With gentle movements are the bottles opened and checked for any defects before they are taken around the table.

The oldest wines have been trapped in the bottles for over 50 years. Not all fragrances charming at first. But superlatives loose. Layer upon layer of impressions to be described and analyzed. Vintages as 1959, 1971 and 1976 are impressive – even the simplest versions of these good years have remained youthfully healthy.

And when it comes to the future is wine connoisseurs agree: It's just a matter of time before German Riesling is on the entire world's lips again.

Winemaker Dr. Clemens Kiefer, who has made wine to Prinz von Hessen in the last six years, believes that this is the beginning of a new golden age for German Riesling.

– Never before have our wines received more attention, said Dr. Clemens Kiefer proudly.

– I think most connoisseurs agree with me that this is the world's best green grape.

Five good Riesling purchases

5694601 Scharzhofberger Riesling Auslese 2007

Egon Müller, Mosel, Germany

95 points | 1512.80 NOK | Order | Vininor

Somewhat closed on the scent with hints of lime, minerals, green apples and honey. Delicious sweet and crystal clear fruit taste with a tight and intense acid structure. Incredibly concentrated flavor with a long finish. A wine that is too young to be enjoyed now but is ready in a few years. Drink it from 2015 to 2045. The wine is made from one of the undisputed best producers in Germany. A wine that is made for a long kjellerliv.

9202301 Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Auslese ** 1994

Jos. Christoffel jr., Mosel, Germany

94 points | 262.50 NOK | Order | Vininor

A 17-year-old Riesling that shows what time do a good version. Mineral and complex aroma with hints of spices and mushrooms. Tighten the acid taste with a very huge concentration, lovely balance and ripe fruit. Superb wine that gives a lot of money. Drink now to 2025.

5326101 Kiedricher Gräfenberg Riesling Estes Gewächs 2009

Robert Weil, Rheingau, Germany

93 points | 399 NOK | Order | Moestue Grape Selections

Somewhat closed on the scent with hints of minerals and rhubarb. Lovely acidity and concentration. Complex and long finish. A dry Riesling that never fails to impress, regardless of vintage. Drink from 2014 to 2026.

4714501 Brauneberger Riesling Cabinet Feinharb 2010

Fritz Haag, Mosel, Germany

88 points | 196.90 NOK | Booking | Best Buys Natural Wines

Delicious and aromatic scent with hints of roses and nectarine. Fresh and springy acid flavor with fresh fruit and almost kamoufl pea sweetness. A fl ott claret that has just that little residual sweetness to it. Drink now to 2025.

5641401 Bettenfeld Spain Riesling Estate 2010

Battenfeld-Spain, Rheinhessen, Germany

87 points | 134.90 NOK | Basic Category 2 | Nos Dos

The best Riesling acquisition in Polets basic range. Lovely floral scent with hints of lime and minerals. Fruity flavor with tight acidity and a nice, dry length. Drink now to 2020.

Read more reviews of Riesling on [DN.no/vinguiden](https://dn.no/vinguiden)