

Jamie Goode

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The wines of Prinz von Hessen

Royal Rheingau producer, Germany



The Prinz' Hasensprung vineyard, Rheingau

Website: www.prinz-von-hessen.de

Over a relaxed dinner in London, I met with Donatus Prinz von Hessen and Lenz Moser. We had a wide-ranging discussion and tried The prince's wines. Although he is genuinely royal (and 436th in line to the British throne), he's a very engaging, down-to-earth guy. And his wines are great.

This family estate was going through a slightly difficult phase in 2005 when Donatus took charge. 'I'd worked on it before with little success,' he recalls. 'The family had to decide whether to get rid of the property or turn it around. We decided to change everything. I substituted the whole team and got rid of 30% of the vineyards.' Now the estate is down to 35 hectares, with 70% of these first-growth sites (Erstes Gewächs).



Donatus Prinz von Hessen

The focus is now on mainly dry-styled wines from the Riesling variety. There's a single vineyard, representing 2% of production, made in a fruity style, but the rest is dry. There's a special emphasis on Kabinett. 'Honest Kabinett encompasses the style of the Rheingau,' says Donatus.

Lenz' role is to look after sales and marketing globally. Winemaking at the estate is in the hands of Clemens Keifer, with Herman Mengler, the state enologist in Franken helping out in the vineyards and winemaking.

Prinz von Hessen Riesling Kabinett Trocken 2008 Rheingau

11.5% alcohol. Very fresh and bright with lovely lemon and lime fruit. Crisp with some fresh minerality with precision and good acidity. Linear and pure. 89/100

Prinz von Hessen Johannisberger Klaus Riesling Kabinett Trocken 2008 Rheingau

11.5% alcohol. Amazingly fresh, complex, minerally and tight with precise lemony fruit and high acidity. Lovely focus here: no clumsiness at all. 91/100

Prinz von Hessen Dachsfilet Riesling 2008 Rheingau

12% alcohol. From the Badgers' mountain, Dachsberg, this is made like a red wine, with fermentation of skins until 40% of the sugar has been used, and then pressing. Wonderfully textured with a hint of sweetness to the intense, minerally, spicy limey fruit. There are some richer, tropical notes, too. Brilliant precision and nice tension between the richness and minerality. 93/100

Prinz von Hessen Winkeler Jesuitengarten Riesling Erstes Gewächs 2005 Rheingau

12.5% alcohol. This is from a warm year, and the winemaking style has also changed a bit since then. It's quite rich and lemony with some honeyed richness and some creaminess. The palate is nicely textured with generous honeyed, lemony fruit as well as some melon notes. 90/100

Prinz von Hessen Winkeler Jesuitengarten Riesling Erstes Gewächs 2007 Rheingau

13.5% alcohol. Quite rich and intense with lovely bright focused lemony fruit and some melon richness. The palate has good intensity, richness and spiciness. Fresher than the 2005. 92/100

Prinz von Hessen Winkeler Jesuitengarten Riesling Erstes Gewächs 2008 Rheingau

13% alcohol. Very fresh, bright and lemony with a lovely mineral character. Very bright with lemon fruit and a hint of melony richness. Real precision and focus. 92/100

Prinz von Hessen Johannisberger Klaus Riesling Erstes Gewächs 2008 Rheingau

Wonderfully precise focused minerality on the nose with some lemony fruit. The palate is dry and precise with grapefruit and lemon character as well as a hint of richness and some lovely minerality. Brilliant effort. 91/100

Prinz von Hessen Winkeler Hasensprung Riesling Erstes Gewächs 2008 Rheingau

Really lovely lemony fruit on the nose. Quite broad with some herby depth to the lemony fruit. Some sweetness and depth. Fresh and rich at the same time. 91/100

Prinz von Hessen Winkeler Hasensprung Riesling Auslese 1992 Rheingau

11% alcohol. Lemon, apricot and herb nose: quite rich but with some freshness. The palate has a tangy, pithy edge to the sweet fruit. Some waxy, lanolin notes, too. 89/100

Prinz von Hessen Winkeler Hasensprung Riesling Beerenauslese 2006 Rheingau

7.5% alcohol. Pure lime cordial nose with a subtle honey note. The palate has a sweet syrupy honeyed character and pure peach fruit notes. 91/100

Prinz von Hessen Johannisberger Klaus Riesling Beerenauslese 1994 Rheingau

Rich apricot, honey and barley sugar nose. The palate is concentrated and intense with lovely richness. Thick textured, sweet and spicy with marmalade and bright fruity notes. 91/100