

## ROYAL BAG-IN-BOX

### **A German Prince has realised that the wine he produces must be wrapped in cardboard in order to be of interest to Norwegians.**

Germany has not been a monarchy since 1918, but German Prince Donatus von Hessen is still a real prince. He belongs to one of the oldest aristocratic families in Germany. He is a close friend of Prince Ernst August of Hannover. He is related to both Caroline of Monaco and Elizabeth II of Great Britain, and has tea with the last mentioned a few times a year.

He has also been an accomplished horseman, excelling in the very royal sport of dressage. He has a true royal aura, in spite of the fact that during a dinner in Oslo he is casually dressed in a shirt and a sweater.

#### **‘YOUR HIGHNESS’**

- *What would be the correct way of addressing you?*

- You may say ‘Hello’ the Prince says smiling. Most people call me prince Donatus, but the more formal ones say ‘Your Highness’.

So here I am at the dinner table, next to this ‘highness’, and I am trying to eat my lobster as elegantly as possible.

- *How can one be a prince in a republic?*

- There are still a few princes around with various degrees of importance, the prince replies.

- *And which degree do you have?*

- **First degree.**

If Germany had been a monarchy, prince Donatus would have been number three in the line of the succession to the throne.

#### **LAUNCHING A BAG-IN-BOX**

Prince Donatus is not in Norway to talk about how a prince lives in a republic, but to introduce the wine from his vineyard Prinz von Hessen in Johannisberg in Rheingau. This is one of the largest Riesling areas in the world, and this is also the grape on which the prince concentrates. He owns 34 hectares of vineyards, whereof 70 percent is Grand Cru. 91 percent of the annual production of 250.000 bottles is Riesling.

In May, the Prince launched a new vintage of his Prinz von Hessen Riesling in Norway, and at the same time the 2 litre bag-in-box was introduced.

- *Wine in a Bag-in-box from a Prince?*

- **Yes, it is perhaps a bit funny, but we realise that this is the right strategy for the Norwegian market, the Prince says, slightly embarrassed.**

(Splash! I spill mayonnaise on the table cloth, and try to hide it with the napkin).

- We are, by the way, the only VDP supplier in Germany who delivers wine in Bag-in-Box, the Prince continues. VDP (Verband Deutscher Prädikatsweingüter) is a co-operation of about 200 of Germany’s finest wine producers.

The importer, Interbrands has already purchased 8.000 litres of the wine.

– When you import 8.000 litres of a wine which is not in the basic listing of the monopoly, it means that you believe in the product. I expect volume to increase to 20-30.000 litres next year, says Øyvind Berg, managing director of Interbrands Norway. He also wants to import other varieties of the Prince's wines in due time.

### **TOUGH TIMES**

When Germany became a republic in 1918, the prince's family lost all its special rights. In order to hold on to the property the family established a foundation in 1928 which today consists of forest, farmland, a stud farm, the vineyard, two golf courses, and 90 protected buildings of which four are palaces.

– It costs enormous amounts of money to keep it up. All our income goes to reparations and up-keep the prince says with a slight shrug. **We had some difficult years in the 90ies, and had to decide whether to keep the vineyard or to sell it. We chose to reduce from 45 to 34 hectares and to invest heavily in the wine cellar. Our aim is to be among the 10 best wine producers in Germany, he says.**

*-Do you make money on your wine production now?*

– Our aim is to make money, but the last few years have been years of investment. As also 2010 and 2011 will be.

### **DROPPED THE EISWINE**

*-Are you involved in the wine production?*

- No, no! I have no time for that! I need to look after gardening fairs, the stud farm, the hotels (Schlosshotel Kronberg og Hotel Hessischer Hof), and the rest of the properties. There's always one roof or another that caves in, he sighs.

In addition to Prinz von Hessen H, we get the possibility to taste some of the prince's top wines, among them the fantastic Prinz von Hessen Riesling Dachsfilet 2007, and an eiswine (a type of sweet wine made of grapes that froze on the vines) from 1980.

- 1980 was a difficult year, but we are happy with this wine. It remains only 87 bottles says the prince. **Production of eiswine is a risky business. One is dependent on lots of luck, and on cold climate. We have therefore stopped making it, he continues.**

Prince Donatus two sisters live in Italy, while his brother works as a photographer in Germany.

*-Did the prince ever consider to do something else than to run the family business?*

- No absolutely not, says Prince Donatus rather dismayed.