

Austrian Vintage 2019: fruit-forward & fantastic!

After last year's earliest harvest in recorded history, picking this year commenced at the customary time. And the good weather that greeted the harvesters was particularly gratifying, since all the grapes could be brought in according to plan without any element of stress. The warm vegetation cycle with its dry spells brought excellent ripeness to the clusters, along with average volume, while the cool autumn nights imparted excellent fruit and good acid backbone to the grape material.

The weather in 2019

The months of January, February and March were much milder than the average, as well as being very dry, with no periods of extreme cold like in the previous year. Among the early-ripening varieties, buds began to swell already at the end of March thanks to the temperate conditions. In the widely variable but basically warm April (1.5°C above the long-term average), it was only the Steiermark that received adequate precipitation, while the coldest month of May since 1991 retarded the vines' development. This delayed blossoming until about ten days later than the previous year – viewed over the long term, once more back to normal. Blossoming was completed relatively swiftly by the middle of June in all winegrowing regions. The warmest, sunniest and driest June of all time (4.7°C above average, since measurements began in 1767) was a month for the meteorological history books; July and August as well were supernormally warm. The summer months were characterised by several heat waves with occasionally severe thunderstorms and torrential downpours – although fortunately there was no major hail damage to contend with this year.

The harvest took shape quite pleasantly thanks to the mild September and warm October: no surprises, everything right on schedule.

Our winegrowers were spared any bad weather, so that there was no need for hasty pre-harvesting or interruptions in the proceedings once picking was underway. Beneficial cooling during the nights promoted vivid fruit and aromaticity, along with preserving the acidic structure.

Niederösterreich (Lower Austria)

After the surplus of the previous vintage, this year saw a somewhat lower volume of grape material because of the heat coupled with only modest rainfall, but the clusters were fully mature and very healthy; outstanding quality is expected. Work in the vineyards this year followed normal patterns – there were no special measures that needed to be taken to preserve the quality of the grapes. The consistently favourable weather at harvest allowed for good planning and selective gathering to meet daily targets, and the harvest drew to a close toward mid-October. Work in the cellars proceeded without difficulty, and tastings of the young wines allow the eager anticipation of a great vintage to grow.

The wines of 2019 all show a pleasant flow across the palate along with particularly expressive varietal typicity. The substantial character of the wines is supported by moderate alcohol content, while good acidity enhances the primary fruit.

Burgenland

From the north of the region all the way down to southern Burgenland, growers are ecstatic over the extraordinary quality of the grapes. After the above-average harvest of 2018, volume this year amounted to some thirty per cent less. The output of juice was rather modest, thanks to the high temperatures during the summer, but because of this the grapes were much more intensely flavoured. Burgenland as well experienced consistently agreeable weather during harvest time, so the grapes could be picked without stress. When clusters were allowed to hang longer, in order to attain greater ripeness, winegrowers in some locales were obliged to cope with unwelcome freelance avian harvesters – starlings – and take measures to deal with the thieves.

The young wines distinguish themselves with abundant aromaticity and very good acidic framework, evaluated as superior to 2018. These wines' potential for maturing is also extremely promising, so that 2019 will provide outstanding drinking pleasure for a longer period of time.

Steiermark (Styria)

It was the coldest May followed by the hottest June, which made for very brief blossoming before embarking on a rather arid summer. Just enough rain arrived to mitigate effects of drought in the soil, while cold nights retarded the growth of the vines. In contrast to the other winegrowing regions, rainfall in the Steiermark led, according to current estimates, to a somewhat greater harvest volume than 2018.

The harvest began in mid-September with optimal weather and lasted – without any of the feared downpours materialising – into October. Healthy grapes, which ripened this year in a somewhat later and thus cooler space of time, lead us to anticipate very harmonious, nicely balanced and particularly fruit-forward wines. A classic vintage for the Steiermark, with refreshing acidity and moderate levels of alcohol, awaits wine connoisseurs.

The “Steirischer Junker” (the Styrian young wine) is characterised by intense aromas of freshly-harvested pomaceous fruit, but with notes of citrus which developed thanks to the cool nighttime temperatures during the ripening period – this is a very good herald of the 2019 vintage.

Wien (Vienna)

Austria's capital city as well was able to harvest extraordinary quality, though also in slightly smaller volume than last year. The weather during the vegetation cycle played out almost identically to that in the other winegrowing regions, and Vienna's vineyards were spared any significant inclement events. And likewise, the lovely weather during

harvest led to brisk work without interruption, and the harvest in Vienna was done by the middle of October.

The “Junge Wiener” (the Viennese young wines) are already giving a good foretaste of the wines one can expect from 2019: fine, varietally typical, with exceptional flow across the palate and good, nicely integrated acidity.

Facts

The weather in 2019

- Beginning of the year exceptionally mild and very dry
- Start of blossoming at a customary time due to cool May
- Historically hot and dry summer, some heavy thunderstorms but no bigger hail damage
- Mild September/October with cool nights:
 - Promotion of vivid fruit and aromaticity, preservation of the acidic structure
 - Very good harvest conditions
- Harvest: fantastic grape quality, average quantity

Niederösterreich

- Grape material fully matured and very healthy
- Wines with pleasant flow across the palate along with particularly expressive varietal typicity, substantial character supported by moderate alcohol content, good acidity and primary fruit

Burgenland

- Outstanding grape quality
- Modest output of juice, but intense grape flavour
- Very aromatic wines with very good acidic structure and maturing potential

Steiermark

- Very healthy grape material, later ripening
- Very harmonious, well balanced and fruit-forward wines

Wien

- Grapes in excellent quality
- Fine, varietally typical wines with nicely integrated acidity

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