

Wachau now a DAC region

Austria's family of protected and designated origins has grown

A change long in development has now become official: the Wachau is Austria's newest (and fifteenth) DAC winegrowing region. On the three levels Gebietswein (regional wine), Ortswein ("villages" wine) and Riedenwein (single-vineyard wine), regionally typical wines will now bear the protected designation of origin "Wachau DAC". The Vinea Wachau's categories Steinfeder, Federspiel and Smaragd will remain in use.

After thorough deliberation and consensus-building within the region, the Wachau submitted the draft of a DAC regulation to the Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism, which has now been signed into law by federal minister Elisabeth Köstinger. The protected designation of origin "Wachau DAC" is now the fifteenth of its kind in Austria.

"With the Wachau, we can now welcome another important member to Austria's DAC family", says Chris Yorke, Managing Director of the Austrian Wine Marketing Board (AWMB). "In doing this, Austria's wine industry has taken a further step on the path of origin-based marketing. This has proven itself effective for seventeen years now, and has also become recognised internationally".

A keen focus on origins

Wachau DAC wines are classified on three levels: Gebietswein, Ortswein and Riedenwein. One particular feature: the winegrowers have committed themselves to hand harvesting on all three levels.

In the **Gebietswein** category, the traditional array of grape varieties is preserved, where seventeen white and red varieties ranging from Grüner Veltliner and Riesling to Muskateller and Sauvignon Blanc to Pinot Noir and Sankt Laurent are permitted. Gemischter Satz and cuvées are also allowed. These wines will bear the name of the region coupled with "DAC" on the label. The grapes can come from anywhere in the entire winegrowing region Wachau.

Ortswein is becoming increasingly important in Austria's landscape of origins, and the Wachau also provides for twenty-two designated municipalities, protected in its DAC regulation. The number of approved grape varieties is concentrated here to nine: Grüner Veltliner, Riesling, Weissburgunder, Grauburgunder, Chardonnay, Neuburger, Muskateller, Sauvignon Blanc and Traminer. These must be vinified as monovarietal wines.

The top level on the pyramid of origins is **Riedenwein**. The most famous Wachau grape varieties Grüner Veltliner and Riesling are permitted here, harvested from 157 precisely defined vineyard sites (Rieden). Wachau DAC wines bearing the indication of a Ried on the label must not be enriched or chaptalised in any way and – like Ortswein – must exhibit hardly any noticeable cask tone, or none at all.

Thanks to this seamless concept of origins, consumers will benefit from the greater transparency and specificity of provenance. Anton Bodenstein, chairman of the Wachau Regional Wine Committee comments: “This brings origins to the forefront. Wachau DAC provides geographical protection of origin down to the most detailed entity: the individual vineyard.”

Steinfeder, Federspiel and Smaragd remain in the picture

Back in the 1980s, the regional protection association Vinea Wachau established the levels Steinfeder, Federspiel and Smaragd, differentiated according to the natural alcohol content of the white – and in rare cases rosé – wines produced by its members. This well-known and valuable classification will be retained within the new DAC system.

What does DAC mean?

Districtus Austriae Controllatus (DAC) is a legal designation of origin for regionally typical Qualitätswein (quality wine) from Austria. So, if the name of a winegrowing region is coupled with the letters DAC on a wine label, the consumer can be sure of receiving a Qualitätswein typical of the region, vinified from grapes harvested exclusively in that region. A DAC wine may only be produced from the grape varieties specified for this DAC region and must comply with all the requirements of the regulation laid down by the respective region. There are currently fifteen DAC winegrowing regions in Austria. Wines that do not meet the DAC requirements will bear the name of the respective federal state as indication of origin, and are part of the wide diversity of Austrian wine at that level of origins.

FACTS: WACHAU DAC

Levels & permitted grape varieties:

- **Gebietswein:** Grüner Veltliner, Riesling, Weissburgunder, Grauburgunder, Chardonnay, Neuburger, Muskateller, Sauvignon Blanc, Traminer, Frühroter Veltliner, Müller-Thurgau, Muskat Ottonel, Roter Veltliner, Gemischter Satz, Pinot Noir, Sankt Laurent, Zweigelt, or cuvées blended from them
- **Ortswein:** Grüner Veltliner, Riesling, Weissburgunder, Grauburgunder, Chardonnay, Neuburger, Muskateller, Sauvignon Blanc or Traminer
- **Riedenwein:** Grüner Veltliner, Riesling

The categories Steinfeder, Federspiel and Smaragd remain in use.

Production & flavour profile:

- Harvesting by hand mandatory on all levels
- Ortswein: little or no perceptible cask tone
- Riedenwein: chaptalisation forbidden; little or no perceptible cask tone

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