

Germany, Mosel: Waiting for Another Great Vintage

By STEPHAN REINHARDT - Oct 31, 2023

Harvest has finished in the Mosel. 2023 was a stressful vintage, especially in the Middle Mosel where rainfalls during the harvest forced producers to strict selections that reduced yields significantly: minus 30% to 40% is reported.

Weather extremes and diseases—2023 left virtually nothing out. The vines had started the growing season with a fairly good water supply, with infections with downy mildew (*Peronospora*) occurring in some places even before flowering in the warm, humid month of May, as reported by the Ecovin association. With extensive rainfall starting at the end of July, powdery mildew (*oidium*) and gray mold (*botrytis*) increasingly became a challenge. In some red wine regions, *drosophila sozukii* also caused high losses starting at the end of August. Nevertheless, the Moselle was spared the heavy hailstorms experienced in Baden, Franconia and Rhinehessen.

The main grape harvest began at the **beginning of September and lasted until about mid-October**, with plenty of sunshine. Although the must weights (Oechsle values) benefited greatly from sunny September, at the same time vinegar rot and botrytis spread rapidly. **Careful selection**—i.e. cutting out diseased grapes—was mandatory at all wineries. Often, harvesting had to be done at night or in the early morning hours in order to be able to process the grapes as cool as possible and to preserve the aromas.

Characteristics of the 2023 wine year on the Moselle were the "weather changes from long periods of rain to dry phases and back again," Ecovin reports. A wet spring was followed by an extremely dry summer, which in part again, as in 2022, led to drought stress symptoms in the vines. Completely unexpectedly, despite dry weather, the second week of June saw severe peronospora infections that caused "more or less" damage. Then, at the end of June, came the long-awaited rain with massive rainfall over a longer period of time. The foliage of the vines was partially damaged by peronospora.

However, we'll report about 2023 in a year. Here are more wines from the problematic 2022 vintage as well as some late-released 2021s. Essentially, this small report refers to a selection of dry Riesling from the 2022 vintage, about which I already reported earlier in the year. Most of the wines succeed as Grosses Gewächs (GG) of the Prädikatsweingüter (VDP), thus raising the highest standards. Unfortunately, very few wines can meet these demands. The steep and stony sites exposed to the sun and with little humus layer were not the very best conditions for a **hot and dry vintage such as 2022**. Many wines of the Moselle (as well as the Nahe) show phenolics of drought stress. These do not become softer with bottle age, and the fruit doesn't become finer. **The warmth of the vintage** is noticeable everywhere and expressed in ripe yet less focused wines with washed fruit, unexciting acidities and these annoying bitter phenols. **2022 is definitely not a great vintage for dry wines.** Due to the drought, minerals were not available, and as a consequence, fermentations went longer than usual, sometimes including malolactic. Although alcohol levels are as moderate as in 2021, the 2022 Rieslings are different and less thrilling. Many also won't age that well, I assume, maybe not even 10 years.

I still have to travel the Mosel for deeper studies, but from what the VDP members offered in the annual Wiesbaden Grosses Gewächs tasting in late August, we have very good reasons to stay reserved and **wonder when the next great vintage after 2019/2020 will appear.**

