



Wine Advocate #161 – October 2005

Germany 2004: Classic Virtues (Part I: The Rhine Regions)

The word "classic" is so commonly abused that the Germans recently created a misbegotten category of dry wine with that (English) name. I was thus, even before tasting my first 2004 wine, thoroughly fed up with hearing about the "return [after 2003] to classic virtues" that this vintage was said to represent. Then I tasted - and discussed with their growers - over a thousand 2004 Rieslings. And you know what? They had a point. The best 2004 Rieslings display pure, unblemished fruit. There wasn't much noble rot, but the trade off, in the best wines, is a transparency to nuance and a sheer crunchiness to go along with sappy palate saturation. The best 2004 Rieslings are unabashed in their expression of acidity. And for those who got it right, this is an in-your-face yet lusciously, grapefruitedly citric, juicy, spicy, ripe acidity that invigorates your palate and leaves you panting for the next sip, rather than feeling like you just did penance. The best 2004 Rieslings are adamantly yet intricately mineral. If you're ideologically offended by the "M" word, say what you like: "salts," "ores," "wet stones," "crushed rock," "quarry dust" ... "fairy dust." Even agnostics about terroir will get off on "this stuff." Fruit, acid, minerals; wines ripe, occasionally (and then at times memorably) super-ripe but never grotesquely ripe like many 2003s: that's 2004. I am prepared to admit: these are the classic German Riesling virtues, and in the best 2004s, they reach an exalted level indeed.

This is a vintage that shares many characteristics with 2002 and 1998, and for a considerable number of growers is even more successful. Can it stand comparison with 1990 or 2001? In many cases, yes. 2001 was an extraordinary year for the Middle Mosel, but less uniformly excellent in many other regions, starting conspicuously with the Mosel's tributaries Saar and Ruwer. As for 1990, for all of that exciting vintage's virtues (which after a dozen and more years in cellars seem to be returning to their full - albeit subtly altered - glory) the intervening years have witnessed huge changes of practice. Standards of clonal and mass selection, creative canopy and crop management, yield control, rigorous selectivity of fruit at harvest and in the press house, ambient yeast fermentation, lees-enriched maturation, and bottling are all more sophisticated and stringent today. Over and above all else, standards of acceptable risk prevail today among Germany's elite growers that few of them considered thinkable, much less practiced in 1990.

"Everything clicked." is how Tim Fröhlich of the Nahe put it. "There was just enough precipitation at the right times, and a long growing season, but you had to harvest late to achieve harmony in your wines. Must weights were not the problem, but rather achieving ripe, harmonious acids and physiological ripeness. Sure, there was some rain in late October, but the fruit remained healthy and in November the weather was relatively stable, and you just had to take the risk. Even when berries began to shrivel, high acidity remained. In my view, most growers harvested too soon. The alcohol conversion was relatively inefficient this year, but the wines have

enormous extract, and that makes for a good combination." The potential for wines of moderate alcohol and body yet with riveting flavor intensity indeed makes for real excitement in many of the best 2004s. "Psychologically speaking, it seemed like, at best, a mediocre summer," explained Helmut Dönnhoff. "Yet in retrospect one realized that there had been above average warmth. When it got to the point where I measured must weights, I was amazed at how much ripeness we had. Still, you had to wait eternally long – into November - because of the cool nights, while the acids at first stayed high and green. Real ripeness came very, very late, but luckily the foliage hadn't frosted and remained green, otherwise we'd have had a repeat of 1994 with a certain hardness buried in all of the wines."

Lest we get carried away, 2004 is no magic number. This vintage has its share of disappointing wines, their weaknesses consistent with the protracted flowering, irregular summer weather, stubborn autumn acid retention, and intermittently annoying rainfall that characterized the growing season. Vines have a tendency to react to low yields and adverse conditions such as those of 2003 by setting a large crop the year following, so high yields were another source of potential problems. A slightly early but spun-out flowering made for relatively loose clusters and lots of tiny "shot" berries ("*millerandage*," "*Verrieselung*"). "The flowering was not exactly perfect." Dönnhoff explained, "... which is exactly what you want. That was the way in every great vintage, including 1971." Still, poor flowering was not in itself sufficient to offset the effects of a potentially large crop. Severe pruning plus green harvesting were essential for quality. The critical issue of crop levels was only exacerbated by an unusually cool August that kept acids stubbornly high and flavor maturation retarded. September and early October brought picture perfect warmth and sun, but too late for those who had imprudently failed to react to nature's quantitative inclinations. Then came mid- to late-October rain and fog – fortunately, without the heat that would have encouraged rot – so strategy and selectivity were keys to harvest success. "The weather was never entirely stable," opines Helmut Dönnhoff, "but also never really bad. It was two days lovely, then one day rainy, not too rainy, but still rainy. So you had to wait half a day or an entire day until it dried out and then you were back where you started two days before. It was that way the whole time – a game. So you couldn't say as in some years 'there was a really great week and then came a bad week and anything harvested after that was lousy.' No, the weather was never really bad. But under no circumstances was it an Auslese year. This was a Spätlese year. You never really could get much dry botrytis. I can tell you I had pains in my stomach contemplating this harvest, but after we got into it I relaxed." From Johannisberg in the Rheingau, Johannes Eser perceived the harvest rather differently. "It was really an unproblematic autumn for us," said Eser. "There were a few rainy days but we could pretty much harvest in a relaxed fashion from mid-October to mid-November. Just at the end, we noticed the berries turning overripe and brown and we had to react quickly." In the night of the 20th to 21st of December, a frost caught nearly all of those German vintners who had left grapes hanging, and the resultant Eisweine – although there were, as always in this risky business, many disappointments - include some of the finest I have ever tasted.

Time and again I was reminded by growers how slowly the fermentation of many young 2004s proceeded, as well as the unusual degree to which they morphed over a short period of time. "I found it inordinately difficult in many instances," relates Steffi Weegmüller of the Pfalz, "to determine when to bottle. These 2004s behaved like chameleons." In the face of countless similar anecdotes, any readers, importers, or, of course, any among us wine critics who entirely ignore that volatile aspect of

2004 evolution in judging the personality or quality of these wines during their first year of life, are only fooling themselves.

A Glance Back: Is 2003 Gaining on Us?

Opinions about the freakishly hot, dry 2003 vintage are still – and apt to remain – the subject of discussions much more lively than are the wines themselves. There is no question that many giants roam among the 2003s, and good evidence by analogy with 1959 for believing that these best wines will age with the speed and awesome visage of a glacier. When it comes, however, to picking out just which wines are those giants, matters quickly become controversial. One certainly cannot separate the likely ageworthy successes from the rest on the basis of must weight. This year, several growers, in what struck me as slightly defensive tones, told me they were locking away this or that 2003 so it could demonstrate in 20 or 30 years just how great a wine it was. An undeniable fact, though, is that there are plenty of 2003 wines which, while they taste almost shockingly soft and broad, are nevertheless a delicious treat to drink right now, for those whose tastes are catholic or who are willing to adjust their receptors to accommodate a unique vintage. The above having been said, I am bound to report that problems with balance continue to plague many other 2003s, notably too much bitterness or alcoholic heat in dry wines and too much overt sweetness in the others. Due to the mega-must weights of this vintage, many dry wines as well as many T.B.A.s were not through fermenting, much less bottled, when I visited the estates in August, 2004. Consequently, I have published in this year's tasting reports tasting notes on a few of these (certainly including some of the aforementioned giants) as well as on a few other 2003s from estates that I was unable to visit in 2004. The potential for very ripe, concentrated German Pinot Noir from 2003 ought not to be underestimated, and so I have included notes on a few of the best of those as well.

The Market

As I had occasion to note (in [issue #160](#)) in connection with Austrian wines, a number of wineries have frozen or lowered their prices in response to Germany's continued economic recession. So, to the extent that foresighted importers bought favorable Euro contracts with which to pay for their Fall arrivals, consumers may enjoy some price moderation. A few estates have simply decided that they will make ad hoc price concessions in order to retain or grow their American market share and these labels will appear conspicuous by the absence of proportionality between their U.S. retail prices with those prevailing in Europe. A part of the big picture from which consumers can shield themselves only at the risk of self-deception is this: Many of Germany's traditional family wineries are going slowly broke farming inhospitably steep, stony slopes with the care and crop levels requisite for gustatory excellence. If something has to give – or be given up – better unsustainably low prices than the family farm, or the precipitous, precious slopes themselves.

My Tasting Notes

The notes cover the Mittelrhein, Nahe, Rheingau, Rheinhessen and Pfalz growing regions. My notes on the wines of Mosel, Saar, and Ruwer will appear in either Issue #162 or #163. All of the wines covered below – with the exception of a few collections sent to me as samples – were tasted in the course of my August visits to 76 estates. Following standard Wine Advocate conventions, wines

tasted prior to bottling are given a parenthetic point spread rather than a specific score. Those seeking guidance on how these scores relate to my former, digit-less rating practices, are urged to consult the introduction to my Austrian report in Issue 160. Those who have little stomach for legal and conceptual minutiae should skip the paragraphs immediately following and will have a more pleasant experience for it. If, however, you wonder what on earth is up with German wine labels of late, or find yourself scratching your head over some of the descriptions in my text, you may seek assistance, if not comfort, in consulting the two unappetizingly pithy paragraphs below.

Labeling and Nomenclature

I have adopted wherever possible the standard German conventions for naming: village+vineyard+grape+"Prädikat"+any additional qualifiers. But both the Wine Law and common practice conspire to create difficulties. An increasing number of growers, in labeling their dry wines, hide the designations of Prädikat (Kabinett, Spätlese, Auslese) in small print and/or on a back label, or have abolished them entirely. This is particularly true of those dry wines from top sites that the members of the V.D.P. growers' association have approved as "*Erstes Gewächs*" or "*Grosses Gewächs*" ("First" or "Great Growths"). The use of those words on a label has not yet been legally approved, but such wines are now labeled and/or their bottles embossed with a large "1" and a grape cluster. Some of these wines are officially (in small print) "*Spätlese*" (since the maximum permissible residual sugar for *Grosses Gewächs* exceeds by a few grams the limit set for "*trocken*"), some "*Spätlese trocken*," some merely "*Qualitätswein*." If the grower has secured approval from the V.D.P. to offer a wine as "*Erstes Gewächs*" or "*Grosses Gewächs*," I have designated it as such even though those words do not appear on the label. And if, in addition, a designation of *Prädikat* does appear on the label of such a wine (even if well hidden), I have generally included that information in parenthesis as part of the description. Yet another peculiarity of these "*Grosse Gewächse*" that must be noted is the labeling of such a Riesling not, for example, "*Erbacher Marcobrunn*" but instead "*Marcobrunn Erbach*." In extreme instances – in what strikes me as a misguided attempt to follow Burgundian "grand cru" practice – you may search in vain for the name of the towns on the label. I have in all instances retained the conventional order of town name (plus "er": the equivalent of an "er," "n" or "ian" in English) followed by vineyard. There might thus be a small discrepancy with the printed label, but the alternative would be an unnecessary discontinuity of nomenclature and a confused *Wine Advocate* data base. Speaking of discrepancies, in those instances where a vineyard name has more than one spelling (e.g. "Pettenthal" or "Rothenberg" with or without the "h") I utilize throughout the text of each review the spelling employed by the estate in question.

Since 2000, The German Wine Law has been loosened (in statute, but even more so in practice) to permit optional cuvée designations on labels. Particularly with dry wines, "*Alte Reben*" (= "Old Vines") and a host of other sometimes merely approbative and winery-internal designations are cropping up. I have incorporated these in my descriptions (with additional explanations where I deemed warranted) provided they have been given any degree of graphic prominence on the label. The stars that so frequently adorn the labels and qualify the "*Prädikat*" of German wines to distinguish one from another and to designate degrees of ripeness within a "*Prädikat*" have been rendered as asterisks but referred to in the text as stars. A word about lot designations and official registration ("A.P.") numbers: I have

adopted the convention of making reference to an "A.P.#" only if there exists more than one wine from a grower with an otherwise identical label. The common Mosel practice of designating wines as "gold capsule" or "long gold capsule" has been followed in my description, but the A.P. number will generally be noted as well, since the capsule does not appear on the label, and how long anyway is "long"? The A.P. number referred to is in fact the penultimate pair in the long string of tiny digits that make up each German wine's official registration code. This convention is complicated on the part of certain growers by "*Fuder* confusion": they assign a lot number to the wine in tank or cask ("*fuder*"), then display that on the label as a more visible means of disambiguating two otherwise (save for their A.P. #) identically-labeled wines. If such a lot number is prominently visible on the label and/or the grower or importer routinely refer to the wine by this lot number, I have noted it, but the A.P. # is also indicated and should be considered definitive. In some rare instances, where I tasted an individual lot that had neither been bottled nor assigned an A.P. #, it is impossible to unambiguously identify it, and I have then (if not without exasperation) indicated that fact in the text. I beg the reader's pardon – and indeed find myself embarrassed – to be going on at length about matters at best tangentially relevant to what is in the bottle. But recent practices of well-meaning (if at times ideologically misguided) growers, on top the infamous existing strata of the German Wine Law, easily engender a feeling of verbal indigestion. You might want to relieve those symptoms, reward yourself for having read this far, and renew your faith in German Riesling by pouring a glass of refreshing, low-alcohol Kabinett. And now, I think, you're ready to face part one of this year's onslaught of notes!

—David Schildknecht

Robert Weil

2004 Robert Weil Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese Kiedrich Gräfenberg

Rating: 99 points

Producer: Robert Weil

From: Gräfenberg, Kiedrich, Rheingau, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a sweet white dessert wine)

Estimated Cost:

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

Picked in November and December, Weil's 2004 Kiedricher Gräfenberg Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese ended up being assembled from 25 tiny lots. The astounding aromas include the ocean, lobster reduction, veal demi glace, caramelized peach and quince preserves. Thick, dense and creamy in the mouth, it displays remarkably restrained sweetness and a wafting, delicate sense that is hard to describe. The palate is positively teeming with ocean-deep minerality and field-sized florality. This wine is one of those full immersion experiences from which your soul will emerge changed, if not saved. In the finish, there is an invigorating and animating juiciness and saltiness for all of the persistent parallel impression of creamy richness. One senses that the selection was so deft and the material available so perfect, that a certain number of still juicy, unraised, green-golden berries could be retained.

Wilhelm Weil insists that his 2004s are more consistently ripe than were his 2001s, since the accumulation of sugars this year was more gradual and there was not the extreme contrast presented by a cool, rainy September and a warm October of 2001. “Two thousand four, after all,” he says, “displays the classic virtues we theoretically ascribe to Riesling: long ripening, late harvest, and conditions on the climatic margins.” I found considerable qualitative variation this year, though, on account of factors other than sheer ripeness. That said, the outstanding 2004 Weil Rieslings – and these are in the clear majority – include some breathtaking successes. Furthermore, the quantities behind some of the most exciting of these are far larger than in any previous vintages of this estate.

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Robert Weil Riesling Auslese Kiedrich Gräfenberg (Gold Capsule)

Rating: 96 points

Producer: Robert Weil

From: Gräfenberg, Kiedrich, Rheingau, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a medium dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost:

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

The 2004 Kiedricher Gräfenberg Riesling Auslese Gold Capsule displays a clarity, lightness of touch, and overall elegance that lift it (in more than one sense) far above the “regular” Auslese. The palate impression is creamy and viscous yet nearly weightless, as the senses inhale white peach, honey, diverse sweet flowers, and the scents of the ocean. The wine’s high (over 10 grams per liter) acidity is deftly deployed to carry it to the far reaches of the palate and supply terrific torque in the finish. To achieve this level of sheer ripeness, nobility of botrytis, yet also clarity, lightness, lift, and vivid minerality, is an astonishing accomplishment. This is the worthy successor to this year’s spectacular Gräfenberg Spätlese. Of this there are, alas, only 500 half- and 300 full bottles, half of which will be auctioned.

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Robert Weil Kiedricher Gräfenberg Riesling Beerenauslese Gold Capsule

Rating: 95 points

Producer: Robert Weil
From: Gräfenberg, Kiedrich, Rheingau, Germany
Variety: Riesling (a sweet white dessert wine)
Estimated Cost:
Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

A 2004 Kiedricher Gräfenberg Riesling Beerenauslese Gold Capsule displays restrained smokiness, tropical fruit and honey aromas, suggesting purity and a very primary, unevolved personality, which is precisely what the palate – creamy, peachy, honeyed and as yet rather monolithic – confirms. One senses the wine's far-gone ripeness and enormous sweetness, yet it doesn't become gaudy or treacly. To an even greater extent than with most 2004s, this allies viscosity and creaminess of texture with an uncanny sense of lightness. Exhibited here is the sort of balance that presages a wine worth cellaring for a half century, so one's limited ability to assess its character now ought on no account to be held against it. In consequence – and I beg readers to appreciate this – like the wine itself under present circumstances, my rating is restrained. The long finish features peach jam with hints of butterscotch and toasted almond.

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Robert Weil Riesling Spätlese Kiedrich Gräfenberg

Rating: 95 points
Producer: Robert Weil
From: Gräfenberg, Kiedrich, Rheingau, Germany
Variety: Riesling (a medium dry white table wine)
Estimated Cost: \$72.00
Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

When we come to the 2004 Kiedricher Gräfenberg Spätlese, we are in a different realm from any of the wines that preceded it. Indeed, this not only stands comparison to several of the best Gräfenberg Spätlesen of the Wilhelm Weil era, but strikes me as the single best Gräfenberg Spätlese thus far. The nose is assaulted by a heady mixture of musky florality, brine and iodine minerality, white raisin, and orchard fruits ripe almost to the point of over-the-top decadence. On the palate, these flowers, yellow plum, quince, and white peach seethe with flavor, their being lashed to a formidable mineral base seemingly the only thing that restrains their eruption. The finish of this Riesling displays tremendous drive, nerve and verve as well Auslese-like richness of fruit, honey, and floral essences that go on and on. This gloriously decadent drink can be expected to age to marvelous additional complexity over at least a 25-year period. With just over a thousand cases produced, shame on any Riesling lovers who do not make the

necessary effort to taste it for themselves!

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Robert Weil Riesling Eiswein Kiedrich Gräfenberg

Rating: 94 points

Producer: Robert Weil

From: Gräfenberg, Kiedrich, Rheingau, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a sweet white dessert wine)

Estimated Cost: \$393.00

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

For all of the amazing records that the Weil estate has set since the collaboration of Suntory and Wilhelm Weil began (not least, their astonishing 16 consecutive vintage streak of T.B.A.), even they harvested their 2004 Kiedricher Gräfenberg Riesling Eiswein on December 21, just like virtually everybody else! Honey, quince preserve, pear drops, lemon and vanilla icing aromas lead to a tooth-rattlingly bright, sense-saturating palate that blazes a trail to a comet's tail of a finish that leaves behind whiffs of smoke and salt. Rather single-minded in its juxtaposition of lemony acidity and honeyed sweetness, this Riesling of amazing sheer purity and Zen-like concentration is as yet entirely embryonic.

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Robert Weil Riesling Beerenauslese Kiedrich Gräfenberg

Rating: 93 points

Producer: Robert Weil

From: Gräfenberg, Kiedrich, Rheingau, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a sweet white dessert wine)

Estimated Cost: \$281.00

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

Even when it comes to the 2004 Kiedricher Gräfenberg Riesling Beerenauslese, there is still a salty mineral dimension on this wine's headily decadent nose and plush, creamy palate. Peach jam, musky floral perfume and butterscotch dominate the aromas and flavors, leading it in a sedate, broad finishing direction. Like a delicately salted caramel Riesling ice cream, this hangs on in a palate-caressing, fascinating fashion.

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Robert Weil Riesling Spätlese

Rating: 92 points

Producer: Robert Weil

From: Germany

Variety: Riesling (a medium dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost: \$46.00

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

The 2004 Riesling Spätlese – picked botrytis-free but at over 100 Oechsle – smells beautifully of honeysuckle, pear, yellow plum, melons and honey. Its vibrant, juicy palate impression is stuffed with the aforementioned fruits as well. Not that this wine lacks for typical Kiedrich mineral expression as there is a fine dusting of chalk dust and crusting of salt throughout. The feel in the mouth is exceedingly smooth and polished, the overall effect enormously ripe and rich, yet refined, and the finish a real spreading peacock's tail of flowers, fruits and minerals. However highly a generically-labeled wine of this quality speaks of its estate, I feel it would convey a more appropriate sense of place and the wine's genuine nobility – while taking nothing away from the greatness of Gräfenberg – to label it “Kiedricher Wasseros Spätlese.”

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Robert Weil Riesling Auslese Kiedrich Gräfenberg

Rating: 91 points

Producer: Robert Weil

From: Gräfenberg, Kiedrich, Rheingau, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a medium dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost: \$145.00

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

Weil's 2004 Kiedricher Gräfenberg Riesling Auslese was produced in rather large quantities – 7,000 375 ml bottles and 3,000 750s – yet its 130 Oechsle and sheer viscosity suggest, correctly, that it is a Riesling of Beerenauslese concentration. Over-ripe pit fruits, honey, musk, and a faintly sweaty, briny note pour off the edge of the glass. The dense, creamy palate impression is like a paste of quince

and peach whipped into vanilla and fresh cream. Yet for all of the wine's decadent richness, there is an underlying note one can only describe as "wet stone" as well as a smoky manifestation of botrytis hovering over the entire proceedings. Over-ripe peach, quince jelly and musk dominate the long, sultry, rather candified and comfiture-like finish. If you are looking for clarity or precision, refreshment or crispness, this is not your wine. But it delivers abundant pleasures of a posh, plush sort.

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Robert Weil Kiedricher Gräfenberg Riesling Grosses Gewächs

Rating: 91 points

Producer: Robert Weil

From: Gräfenberg, Kiedrich, Rheingau, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost: \$72.00

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

The 2004 Kiedricher Gräfenberg Riesling Grosses Gewächs is one of the most powerful, concentrated, and tightly-wound dry German Rieslings in my experience. That said, precisely because of its density it is not yet entirely scrutable. The nose and mouth are dominated by concentrated yellow plum and lemon, by obvious dusty, stony minerality and by distinctive if more subtle florality and smokiness. The finish is explosively intense and almost frighteningly gripping, but also (as yet at least) rather severe in its high acidity and onslaught of sheer extract. After this wine puts you up against the ropes, the residues of plum skin, lemon zest and chalk dust cling almost indelibly to your gums. Thankfully, 13.5% alcohol generates little heat. I think it will be a fascinating responsibility for those who are serious devotees of Riesling to follow the evolution of this wine – of which there are 2,000 cases, an unusually large lot for this estate – but I cannot prognosticate with any confidence.

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Robert Weil Riesling Spätlese Trocken

Rating: 90 points

Producer: Robert Weil

From: Germany

Variety: Riesling (a dry white table wine)
Estimated Cost:
Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

Weil's 2004 Riesling Spätlese trocken smells overtly floral, alkaline, salty, iodine-like and nutty. In the mouth, this Riesling from the Wasseros vineyard (but generically labeled, as are all Weil wines other than those from the Gräfenberg) is positively dramatic in its briny expression of minerality, and it finishes with low-toned meaty, nutty richness. Tasters like myself will love this wine's uncompromising style and will want to invite it to the dinner table, but there will be those whose enthusiasm for it is tempered by the wine's single minded minerality.

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—David Schildknecht

Pfeffingen

2004 Pfeffingen Ungsteiner Herrenberg Riesling Beerenauslese

Rating: 94 points
Producer: Pfeffingen
From: Herrenberg, Ungstein, Pfalz, Germany
Variety: Riesling (a sweet white dessert wine)
Estimated Cost: \$56.00
Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

The 2004 Ungsteiner Herrenberg Riesling Beerenauslese, harvested with a goodly portion of botrytis, enhances the pineapple and spice aromas and flavors as well as the elegance and buoyancy of the Auslese, but there is also a lovely ripe nectarine character, a creamier texture, along with honey-drenched and salt-tinged aspects to the flavors, particularly in the finish. There exist only 400 half bottles of the Auslese and 300 of the Beerenauslese, but it would be worth a considerable effort to get hold of some!

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Pfeffingen Ungsteiner Herrenberg Scheurebe Trockenbeerenauslese

Rating: 94 points
Producer: Pfeffingen
From: Herrenberg, Ungstein, Pfalz, Germany
Variety: Scheurebe (a sweet white dessert wine)

Estimated Cost: \$83.00

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

The 2004 Ungsteiner Herrenberg Scheurebe Trockenbeerenauslese presents grapefruit marmalade and herbal essences in a honey and malt matrix of enormous viscosity and creaminess but not palate heaviness. The finish is more obviously honeyed and botrytized than it is typical of the varietal, as well as being satisfyingly soothing and creamy. The overall effect reminds me more of a Scheurebe from Burgenland than from the Pfalz. (Think: "Kracher"!)

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—David Schildknecht

2004 Pfeffingen Ungsteiner Herrenberg Riesling Auslese

Rating: 92 points

Producer: Pfeffingen

From: Herrenberg, Ungstein, Pfalz, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a medium dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost: \$31.00

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

At the end of October we had a little bit of a stand-off," relates Eymael. "Two of the family wanted to go ahead and finish the harvest, and two of us wanted to leave a little fruit hanging." That the latter party luckily got their way is evidenced by a 2004 Ungsteiner Herrenberg Riesling Auslese that smells of sweet herbal distillates, pineapple, and brown-spices, pickled watermelon rind. This wine is satisfyingly juicy and wonderfully balanced with a lovely sense of creaminess and an evocatively fruit and spice filled finish of great length and refinement. I expect this will retain its poise and buoyancy for at least a couple of decades in bottle.

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—David Schildknecht

2004 Pfeffingen Scheurebe Beerenauslese Ungsteiner Herrenberg

Rating: 90 points

Producer: Pfeffingen

From: Herrenberg, Ungstein, Pfalz, Germany

Variety: Scheurebe (a sweet white dessert wine)

Estimated Cost: \$49.00

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

More than half the fruit for the 2004 Ungsteiner Herrenberg Scheurebe Beerenauslese was botrytised. Its aromas of grapefruit zest, mint, sage flower and pungent wood smoke lead to a curious palate pitting these high-toned herbal flavors as well as that of celery root against an unusually strong note of caramel for a Riesling so young. The striking, long finish is of an elixir of distilled mint and sage mixed with caramel and honey. While this Scheurebe is undeniably impressive, I find less favor in its candied mint and yin-yang herbal-caramel characteristics than may some other tasters.

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Pfeffingen Ungsteiner Herrenberg Riesling Grosses Gewächs

Rating: 89 points

Producer: Pfeffingen

From: Herrenberg, Ungstein, Pfalz, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost:

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

The 2004 Ungsteiner Herrenberg Riesling Grosses Gewächs, harvested October 28 and cropped at four bunches per vine, offers a serious mouthful of dry Riesling. The nose of lemon oil, roasted parsnip and herbs could almost be that of a Gruner Veltliner. The palate is brothy, meaty, stuffed with roasted root vegetables and herbs and with a highly supportive leesy richness and creaminess of texture that does not preclude a sense of chewiness in the long finish. Those who don't like to eat their vegetables, or who don't distinguish "vegetable" from "vegetal" will like this wine less than I do.

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Reichsrat Von Buhl Riesling Spatlese Forster Jesuitengarten

Rating: 91 points

Producer: Reichsrat Von Buhl

From: Jesuitengarten, Forst an der Weinsstrasse, Pfalz, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a medium dry white table wine)

Drink: 2005-2025

Estimated Cost: \$33.00

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

The von Buhl 2004 Forster Jesuitengarten Riesling Spatlese smells alluringly of white peach, melons and honey. In the mouth it is ravishingly creamy and redolent of ripe melons and pit fruits, yet preserves that sense of lift and delicacy that give the best 2004s much of their charm. Sappy, juicy, honey-glazed fresh fruit pours out aplenty in the finish. The combination of richness with freshness is also vintage typical. Fascinating herbal nut oil and stony notes add complexity and mystery. This is a joy to drink now and should be worth following for a couple of decades.

Importer: Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Von Buhl Forster Pechstein Riesling Grosses Gewachs (Spatlese Trocken)

Rating: 90 points

Producer: Von Buhl

From: Pechstein, Forst an der Weinsstrasse, Pfalz, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost: \$51.00

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

When bottled as sweet Spatlesen and Auslesen, Kirchenstuck and Jesuitengarten Rieslings have proven themselves among the most ageworthy wines of the Pfalz. The 2004 Forster Pechstein Riesling Grosses Gewachs is redolent of pungent green herbs and spruce resin. In the mouth, it's sappy and luscious, intensely herbal and mineral but not at all austere; full-bodied by Riesling standards but not alcoholically hot; dense and gritty without crossing the line into roughness. The finish exhibits formidable grip with a cool mint, resin and herb cling as well as a stubborn element of sheer stoniness. The overall effect is of much greater clarity than with the Kirchenstuck.

Importer: Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Von Buhl Deidesheimer Leinhohle Riesling Kabinett Halbtrocken

Rating: 89 points

Producer: Von Buhl

From: Leinhohle, Deidesheim, Pfalz, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a dry white table wine)
Estimated Cost:
Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

The 2004 Deidesheimer Leinhohle Riesling Kabinett halbtrocken is typical of von Buhl's successful track record with this site and style. Its 14 grams of residual sugar allow this Riesling to come off as a dry wine while having an enhancement of juicy fresh fruit and a sense of richness to enhance its delicate weight that a bit of sweetness so often provides. Melon, sweet corn and subtle herbs on the nose lead to a palate of similar cast, accompanied by delicate, fresh lemon acidity as well as wet stone and lightly salty mineral nuances. The finish is refined and satisfying.

Importer: Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Von Buhl Deidesheimer Maushohle Riesling Spatlese Trocken

Rating: 89 points
Producer: Von Buhl
From: Maushohle, Deidesheim, Pfalz, Germany
Variety: Riesling (a dry white table wine)
Estimated Cost:
Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

The 2004 Deidesheimer Maushohle Riesling Spatlese trocken reprises the aromas of melon and sweet corn so familiar from Deidesheim sites in this vintage. On the glossy, estrous, rich palate, these melons and maize combine with salted apricot. There is satisfying amplitude and textural richness as well as estrous high tones, all engendered or enhanced by the wine's relatively high alcohol, yet it evinces no heat.

Importer: Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Von Buhl Forster Stift Rieslaner Auslese

Rating: 89 points
Producer: Von Buhl
From: Stift, Forst an der Weinsstrasse, Pfalz, Germany
Variety: Rieslaner (a dry white table wine)
Estimated Cost: \$28.00

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

From a variety recently reintroduced at this estate, von Buhl's 2004 Forster Stift Rieslaner Auslese offers a heady aroma of tropical fruits allied to brown spice, comes onto the palate creamy, with flavors of spiced, lightly caramelized apricot as well as tropical overtones of pineapple and grapefruit. As heady and luscious as are the aromas and palate impression, the finish is nicely restrained and clear and enlivened by salty minerality and the acid retention typical of both this vintage and this variety.

Importer: Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Von Buhl Forster Kirchenstuck Riesling Grosses Gewachs (Spatlese Trocken)

Rating: 88 points

Producer: Von Buhl

From: Kirchenstuck, Forst an der Weinsstrasse, Pfalz, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost: \$51.00

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

A Grosses Gewachs from the Ruppertsberger Reiterpfad was notably coarse and disappointing, but that was far from the case with the 2004 Forster Kirchenstuck Riesling Grosses Gewachs. This wine's aromas of distilled plum and musk and the rich, oily, glycerin-rich palate impression are typical of Kirchenstuck's exotic and expansive personality. Full-bodied for a Riesling, the wine pays a price in its trace of heat. That said, it really clings impressively, with its musky scents, pit fruits and illusive carnal and stony mineral notes. In principle, this ought to improve with 5 to 10 years of cellaring. But I must admit that it has been difficult for me to procure samples of young Kirchenstuck in Grosses Gewachs format from several of this site's elite owners. Much less have I been able to follow the development over the first few years of Grosses Gewachs bottlings from this and other Pfalz sites. So I can claim little special insight.

Importer: Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

Schafer-Frohlich

2004 Weingut Schafer-Frohlich Bockenauer Felseneck Riesling Auslese Gold Capsule A P # (To Be Determined)

Rating: 96 points

Producer: Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich

From: Bockenau, Nahe, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a medium dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost:

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

The 2004 Bockenauer Felseneck Riesling Auslese Gold Capsule is not yet released, nor possessed of an A.P. #. It has captured the fresh plummy that characterized the Spätlese A.P. #17 and taken it in a honeyed, ultra-concentrated, yet also mineral-saturated direction. The resulting combination reminds me of a great Wiltinger Braune Kupp from Egon Muller. Diverse citrus fruits, brown spices and mineral salts serve for complexity. This is less creamy and dreamy than its sibling gold capsule Auslese, but is instead incisive and gripping. The bottomless well of pure fruit concentrate and slate from which this draws is not however one bit shallower. This sort of concentration along with such vividly fresh fruit character, this much sheer density yet with a sense of lightness, and this much botrytised ripeness along with such clarity, cut, and interplay of fruit and mineral are phenomena rare indeed. I often mention that truly noble rot is the sort that does its job surreptitiously without leaving any telltale fungal fingerprints, and here the botrytis got away with not just grand larceny but murder!

The daring with which young Tim Fröhlich and his parents have approached their work over the past several years and their audacious success in crafting riveting Rieslings that marry intense fruit and distinctive minerality has left me astonished. 2004 sets new standards of quality, and no Riesling lover will want to be deprived of a serious sampling of the results. "Everything just clicked this year," says Fröhlich, without any need to be modest, adding, however, that he had to wait until the end of October before he could even begin harvesting fruit that he considered fully ripe. And in fact, the few less-than-successful wines this year were rather thin and too-prominently acidic, early-harvested dry Kabinett Rieslings. Fröhlich was still harvesting clean fruit for dry wines near the end of November. Emboldened by his experiments over the past three years, this year he moved to largely spontaneous fermentation and, where he has inoculated, it is with selected yeasts cultured (by a certain Professor Fröhlich – no relation – at the Geisenheim Institute) from the vineyard in question. Acid levels in the fruit were high but generally harmonious, and he never considered adjusting them. The Bockenau vineyards were hailed upon in June but this turned out to be for the best as "nature took care of" the drastic green harvest of a potentially huge crop that in Monzingen had to be done by human hands. Speaking of viticultural labors, in the last two years the Fröhlich's have carted 500 tons of natural ameliorant onto the stony Felseneck alone, and that's no ? well, actually, that's what much of it is! Incidentally, the Fröhlich's have acquired new acreage this

year in Monzinger Halenberg, Bockenauer Felseneck and Schlossbockelheimer Felsenberg, plus, beginning next year, they will be farming a prime acre of the famed Schlossbockelheimer Kupfergrube acquired from Paul Anheuser. In short, there isn't a more exciting winery to watch out for in Germany today.

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463.

—David Schildknecht

2004 Weingut Schafer-Frohlich Bockenauer Felseneck Riesling Auslese Gold Capsule A P # 33

Rating: 95 points

Producer: Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich

From: Bockenau, Nahe, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a medium dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost:

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

The 2004 Bockenauer Felseneck Riesling Auslese Gold Capsules, A.P. #33 displays pure and concentrated aromas of honey, truffle, white raisin, vanilla and apple jelly. On the palate, the wine's textural combination of oily richness and bright juicy citricity, as well as its abundance of all of the aforementioned flavors, make for a spectacular show. Purity, polish, refinement and length are the watchwords for the finish, with enormous concentration and textural creaminess not keeping the wine from offering an overall impression of elegance and lift.

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463.

—David Schildknecht

2004 Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich Bockenauer Felseneck Riesling Spätlese A P #17

Rating: 94 points

Producer: Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich

From: Bockenau, Nahe, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a medium dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost: \$34.00

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

While the Halenberg Spätlese was fermented with selected yeasts, the gauze-like shroud of youthful yeastiness and CO₂ give away origins of the 2004 Bockenauer Felseneck Riesling Spätlese A.P. #17 in spontaneous (and, says

Fröhlich, “endlessly long”) fermentation. This wine is from the highest portions of the towering Felseneck vineyard. The nose clears to reveal yellow and red plum aromas. The palate impression is one of astonishingly vivid fresh plum, dripping with fresh lime, but without the obvious verve of the Halenberg. The mineral expression is a suffusion of salts and infusion of shrimp shells rather than the dynamically diverse range exhibited in the Halenberg. The balance is just extraordinarily poised (despite an unbelievably high nearly 90 grams residual sugar), and the finish pure, sedate, yet endlessly refreshing and satisfying.

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463.

—David Schildknecht

2004 Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich Bockenauer Felseneck Riesling Spätlese A P #18

Rating: 93 points

Producer: Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich

From: Bockenau, Nahe, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a medium dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost:

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

A second 2004 Bockenauer Felseneck Riesling Spätlese A.P. #18, harvested temporally and geographically close by the #17, spontaneously fermented, and exhibits a very different personality. Fresh apple, a Chartreuse-like distilled herbal and floral essence, and a scent of steamy stones emerge from the mists of yeast and CO₂. The palate presents a purity of sweet apple and herbal essences playing against vivid wet-stone slatiness that suggests a Middle Mosel Riesling. Both a sense of honeyed richness and invigorating saltiness join the flavor melange in a finish of outstanding length and grip.

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463.

—David Schildknecht

2004 Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich Bockenauer Felseneck Riesling Eiswein Gold Capsule A P #32

Rating: 92 points

Producer: Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich

From: Bockenau, Nahe, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a sweet white dessert wine)

Estimated Cost:

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

The 2004 Bockenauer Felseneck Riesling Eiswein Gold Capsule A.P. #32 represents the heart of this year's Eiswein pressing. With even more residual sugar than the A.P. #31, and more concentration of all other elements as well, it nevertheless manages to taste less sweet and to leave a lighter, brighter palate impression. A mysteriously meaty, musky cast adds allure to an aroma dominated by distilled plum, apricot jam and white raisin. The richness, density and sheer chewiness of a mouthful of honey, white raisin and dried apricot paste are impressive, with layer upon layer of fruit concentrate, citrus and honey revealing themselves. The finish exhibits considerable vigor by way of strong, yet not at all strident acidity.

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463.

—David Schildknecht

2004 Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich Riesling Spätlese Monzinger Halenberg

Rating: 92 points

Producer: Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich

From: Halenberg, Monzingen, Nahe, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a medium dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost:

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

The fruit for Fröhlich's 2004 Monzinger Halenberg Riesling Spätlese, in complete contrast with that from the Felsenberg, came in early at both high sugar and acid. White peach, honey, lemon, and green tea aromas lead to a relatively light weight, bright, yet concentrated and penetrating palate. The interplay of peach, honey, red berry and diverse mineral expressions is delightfully entertaining and generous, leaving me smacking my lips as this wine finishes ear-to-ear.

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463.

—David Schildknecht

2004 Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich Riesling

Rating: 91 points

Producer: Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich

From: Germany

Variety: Riesling (a medium dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost: \$18.00

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

After Fröhlich's formidable onslaught of dry wines commenced a series of residually sweet Rieslings that were stunning in their crescendo of expression and left me truly dazzled. The wine labeled for the U.S. as 2004 Riesling is in fact a Monzinger Halenberg Riesling Kabinett halbtrocken, but one can scarcely blame importer Rudi Wiest for wanting something that can simply be referred to as "estate Riesling." Whether one could blame him for selecting something this absurdly delicious to fill that role is another matter! Fresh lime, toasted almond, red berry and tangerine rind aromas lead to a pure, even, juicily citric and red berry and orchard-fruit stuffed palate with a perfectly-judged, supportive hint of sweetness that adds allure, interplay, and cling to the long, fruitful, slate-paved finish. What an extraordinary value this wine offers!

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463.

—David Schildknecht

2004 Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich Bockenauer Felseneck Riesling Grosses Gewächs

Rating: 91 points

Producer: Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich

From: Bockenau, Nahe, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost:

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

About the 2004 Bockenauer Felseneck Riesling Grosses Gewächs – representing a spontaneous fermentation from tiny, concentrated berries (traits Fröhlich associates with this site and not just the genetic heritage of his vines) – there can be no doubt: this is an outstanding dry Riesling. Orange and grapefruit with their zests figure in the nose. On the palate, this offers a generously juicy mouthful of citrus and berries along with a diversity of mineral expressions – salts, wet stone, chalk, pepper – that goes well beyond what the Fröhlich's two Monzinger Grosse Gewächs are currently revealing. This is dense but also open and expressive, its finish rapier in penetration with blazing citricity, lip-smacking saltiness and invigorating pungency. Here is a wine that's bound to be fun to follow for a few years, during which its Monzinger counterparts may pull themselves together and give chase.

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463.

—David Schildknecht

2004 Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich Riesling Spätlese Bockenauer Felseneck

Rating: 90 points

Producer: Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich

From: Im Felseneck, Bockenu, Nahe, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a medium dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost:

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

The Fröhlich's 2004 Bockenauer Felseneck Riesling Spätlese trocken was half spontaneously-fermented and half with site-specific cultured yeasts. Pear and pear pip, lemon, toasted nuts and resinous green herbs in the nose lead to an elegant fine-grained palate with prominent wet-stone mineral expression and vivid citrus and orchard fruits. Somehow the texture and feel suggest only moderate weight and yet a palpable sense of mineral and fruit extract and stuffing (unlike a too-spare corresponding dry Kabinett). A sappy finish of pear and grapefruit accented by toasted nuts, resin, pear pip, salts and wet stone satisfies on repeated sips.

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463.

—David Schildknecht

2004 Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich Bockenauer Felseneck Riesling Eiswein A P #31

Rating: 90 points

Producer: Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich

From: Bockenu, Nahe, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a sweet white dessert wine)

Estimated Cost:

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

The 2004 Bockenauer Felseneck Riesling Eiswein A.P. #31 comes from a lower (hence colder) part of this site. Sugared plum and candied lemon aromas lead to yet another wine of purity and incredible richness, shot through with citricity. But this fails to exhibit the depth, poise or complexity of this collection's best (which, granted, set an exceedingly tough quality standard). The finish is long but dominated by sheer sweetness (at well over 200 grams residual sugar!) which – once it lifts – may reveal nuances and further complexity.

Imported by Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463.

—David Schildknecht

Gunderloch

2004 Gunderloch Nackenheimer Rothenberg Riesling

Rating: (94-96) points

Producer: Gunderloch

From: Rothenberg, Nackenheim, Rheinhessen, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a medium dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost:

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

Tasted from cask, the 2004 Nackenheimer Rothenberg smells alluringly of tangerine, sweet, resinous green herbs, bacon, lemon oil, honey, and sea breezes. In fact, speaking of breezes, everything about this wine simply blew me away! The vivid essence of fresh citrus, rich nut oils, pungent herb and citrus rind, sea spray, intensely smoky, soil-borne tones, creamy texture, subtle and supportive leesy notes, and a mysterious musky animal side all add up to a tour de force of flavor. By the time you read this, the wine will have been bottled and I challenge you to beat me to the next sip! The Gunderloch signature Riesling Kabinett "Jean Baptiste" is again composed of material from top sites, but it doesn't display the clarity, fresh fruit essence or minerality that one normally associates with this cuvee. For the first time I can recall, it is also a bit tripped up by its sweetness.

Imported: Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Gunderloch Niersteiner Pettental Riesling

Rating: 93 points

Producer: Gunderloch

From: Nierstein, Rheinhessen, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost: \$23.00

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

There is a lovely hint of creaminess amid all of the wine's lively, juicy acidity. The 2004 Niersteiner Pettental Riesling (whose main label actually reads simply "Pettental") is also within the legal parameters of trocken. But Fritz Hasselbach prefers to "play with the terroir idea" as well as, quite sensibly, to reserve the right to exceed 9 grams of sugar if that is what seems right for the wine. (I realize that this hardly seems a radical notion, but it is, in light of how many German growers are wedded to "trocken" by shackles of law, fashion and ideology.) Hess and Hasselbach also experimented with a day's pre-fermentative skin contact. The nose is more treble and the palate even brighter and more fine-grained than in

the Gunderloch estate Riesling. Lemon, orange and raw almond saturate the palate, with suggestions of honey, musk and smoked meat adding complexity. A pure, clear bugle call of nectarous fruit and smoky minerality sound the charge in the finish. This, ladies and gentlemen, is what dry German wine should be about: balance, fruit and flavor, not grams per liter! Furthermore, it represents an astonishing value.

Imported: Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Gunderloch Riesling Trocken

Rating: 92 points

Producer: Gunderloch

From: Germany

Variety: Riesling (a dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost: \$20.00

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

The estate's 2004 Riesling trocken, composed of material from exclusively first-rate red stone sites, represents an extraordinary value and demonstrates not just the sort of vintage success with which we are dealing at this address, but also precisely what a dry German Riesling should be. The grapes were harvested at Auslese level, with 8 grams of ripe acidity, and 8 grams of sugar – one gram short of the legal limit for “trocken” – left behind for fruit boosting and balance. The aromas are of soil typical citrus, herb and smoked nuts. The clarity and length of flavors, vivid smoky mineral notes and sappy juicy fruit on the palate are truly formidable.

Imported: Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Gunderloch Riesling Auslese Nackenheimer Rothenberg (Gold Cap)

Rating: (92-94) points

Producer: Gunderloch

From: Rothenberg, Nackenheim, Rheinhessen, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a medium dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost: \$91.00

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

The 2004 Nackenheimer Rothenberg Riesling Auslese Gold Capsule was

harvested from fruit left behind on the first pass for the “regular” Auslese and was residing in tank when I tasted. Beneath a haze of primary fermentative aromas emerged suggestions of sea salt and citrus rind. The refined, ethereal but concentrated palate offers smoked meat, peach preserves, marzipan, honey, orange marmalade, brown spices, quince jelly, malt and brine. This enormously concentrated and complex wine finishes with a long rush of flavor and seems destined to perform superbly for several decades in bottle. The main harvest was finished in mid-November after what Hess called “a glorious burst of sunny weather” but, incredibly, Beerenauslese and Trockenbeerenauslese – still fermenting when I visited – were harvested on the 29th of January! I shall report on those at this time next year.

Imported: Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Gunderloch Riesling Auslese Nackenheimer Rothenberg

Rating: 92 points

Producer: Gunderloch

From: Rothenberg, Nackenheim, Rheinhessen, Germany

Variety: Riesling (a medium dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost: \$50.00

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

The 2004 Nackenheimer Rothenberg Riesling Auslese, fascinatingly, smells first and foremost of smoked pork products and only secondarily of citrus and orchard fruits. In the mouth, honey, kumquat, peach preserves and tangerine mingle with smoked meats and the overall effect is juicy, elegant, even delicate despite its creaminess of texture and its high residual sugar. I suspect this has years to go before it shows all it's got. Fermentation of this wine was stopped in January – exceedingly early by Gunderloch standards – and it was bottled in June.

Imported: Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht

2004 Gunderloch Riesling Spätlese

Rating: 88 points

Producer: Gunderloch

From: Germany

Variety: Riesling (a medium dry white table wine)

Estimated Cost: \$38.00

Source: *Wine Advocate* #161 (Oct 2005)

The generic 2004 Riesling Spätlese gets things back on track, with a poached peach, tangerine, lemon and honey nose, a correspondingly citric and peachy palate of glossy, polished texture and juicy generosity, and suggestions of marzipan, vanilla and candied citrus zest in the finish without being overly-sweet.

Imported: Rudi Wiest, Cellars International, Carlsbad, CA; tel. (800) 596-9463

—David Schildknecht
