

The Secrets of German Wines

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Hosts David & Alice Spurrell



German Wine Labels

Many people are confused or put off by the amount of more or less opaque information on German labels. So, here is a rough guide to help you decode them, which also is a good starting point for learning about the wines. You may consult an example label to go with this guide. There is a lot that German labels tell the consumer, but there is also plenty they do not say or where they can easily mislead unsuspecting buyers. The following items of information should be found:

Producer: the name of the estate should be prominent on the label, as the producer is the most crucial factor for the quality of the product. Look for the term "Erzeugerabfüllung", or the new, more strictly defined "Gutsabfüllung", which indicates a wine bottled by the producer/estate. Wines not labelled thus are best left alone.

Grape variety: this should be indicated, but not always is so in the lower qualities. If it is not the variety will be inferior, possibly a blend of them (Müller Thurgau and worse). Legally a wine needs only to contain 85% of the declared variety, and the remaining 15% are a matter of trust unfortunately. The classic variety is Riesling, but some others can be good too

Quality/Ripeness level: there is an ascending hierarchy of ripeness levels, which are determined mainly (though not exclusively) by the sugar content of the grapes before fermentation, their must weights. It is thus somewhat confusing to call them "quality levels" as more sugar alone does not make a better wine but only a sweeter or a more alcoholic one. The lowest qualities, Landwein and Tafelwein are normally best avoided. The next level is "Qualitätswein bestimmter Anbaugebiete" (QbA), which can be of decent quality. Occasionally though, very fine wines are sold as QbA's, or even Tafelwein, if they violate additional legal restrictions, for example by using new oak barrels. Chaptalisation is allowed for QbA's. No such addition of sugar is allowed for "Qualitätswein mit Prädikat" (QmP), which comes in 6 levels (the "Prädikate"/attributes).

They are in ascending order of must weights:



- Kabinett
- Spätlese
- Auslese
- Beerenauslese (BA)
- Eiswein (ice wine)
- Trockenbeerenauslese (TBA)

Quality Levels

QBA

The first category of German wine is QbA, or *Qualitätswein bestimmter Anbaugebiete*. In the North American market these are often branded as "Estate Rieslings". An Estate Riesling will give you a basic idea of what wines from the particular estate taste like. QBA's usually retail for \$15 - \$25 per bottle and are some of the best values in German wine today

QMP Wines - *Qualitätswein Mit Prädikat*

Kabinett

Normal harvest, the lightest and most delicate of German wines, made from normally ripe grapes. Generally the driest of QMP wines.

Spatlese

Late harvest, balanced, well-rounded wines from grapes harvested at least seven days after the normal harvest, and thus more intense in flavour and concentration.

Auslese

Harvest of selected, very ripe bunches, elegant, often slightly sweet wines, rich in flavour, from specially selected bunches of grapes that were particularly ripe and, in exceptional years, affected by botrytis cinerea or "noble rot".

Beerenauslese (BA)

Harvest of individually selected, overripe grapes, rare, remarkably rich, sweet wines with the unmistakable honey-like aroma of botrytis, from overripe grapes individually picked by hand from the bunches.

Eiswein

Ice wine, very rare wines from grapes of at least beerenauslese quality that have been left on the vine into mid-winter and picked and pressed while frozen. The result is a unique concentration of sweetness and fruity acidity.

Trockenbeerenauslese (TBA)

Harvest of individually selected dried grapes, intensely rich, sweet, honey-like wines from hand-picked grapes that have been left to shrivel on the vine until they have become "raisined". The crowning achievement of German viticulture.

Other Topics for Discussion

- **Vintage** - Is it important?
- **AP Number**

An example wine with an AP number of (2 577 050 10 02) breaks down as follows:

2 indicates the region of production, in this case the Mosel.

577 indicates the village, in this case Brauneberg.

050 denotes the estate; this number will be unique to Fritz Haag.

10 is the number unique to this bottling. In this case Wilhelm Haag (who was running the estate in 2001) has helpfully presented this in bold, as this is clearly an important element in the number for this wine; there will no doubt be several other bottlings at the Auslese level from the Juffer-Sonenuhr vineyard in this vintage. The number in this case matches the *fuder* (barrel) number, but this is only because Wilhelm will have numbered the barrels to match the AP number, rather than the AP number being governed by what lies in the Fritz Haag cellars.

02 denotes the year of tasting (2002). In most cases this will be the year after the vintage.

- **Regions**

Most popular? Which are commonly available in Vancouver?

- **Alcohol %**

Why is the alcohol level lower?

The Wines

Producer	Vineyard / Wine Name	Region	Pradikat	Vintage
Kendermanns	Riesling Brut Sekt	Mosel		
Dr. Loosen	Dr. L	Mosel	QBA	2006
Dr. Pauly Bergweiler		Mosel	QBA	2006
Toni Jost	Bacharacher Hahn	Mittlerhein	Kabinett	2006
Balthazar Ress	Hattenheimer Shutzenhaus	Rheingau	Kabinett	2005

Producer	Vineyard / Wine Name	Region	Pradikat	Vintage
Bichofliches	Ayler Kupp	Mosel	Spatlese	2005
Dr. Thanisch	Brauneberger Juffer Sonnenuhr	Mosel	Spatlese	2005
Dr. Loosen	Erdener Trepchen	Mosel	Auslese	2005
Burgespital	Wurzburger Stein-Harfe	Franken	Beerenauslese	1994

Top Producers / Estates

Ahr

- Deutzerhof
- Meyer-Nakel
- Stodden

Mittelrhein

- Toni Jost
- Weingart
- Ratzenberger

Mosel-Saar-Ruwer

- Fritz Haag
- Dr. Loosen
- Egon Muller
- Joh. Jos. Prum
- J.J. Christoffel
- Markus Molitor
- Selbach-Oster
- Wegler
- Dr. Thanisch
- Zilliken
- Dr. Pauly Bergweiler
- Maximin Grunhaus

Rheingau

- Robert Weil
- George Breuer
- Kessler
- Josef Leitz
- Schloss Johannisberg
- Wegeler

Nahe

- Donhoff
- Schafer-Frohlich
- Emrich-Schonleber
- Kruger Rumpf

Rheinessen

- Keller
- Gunderloch

Pfalz

- Rebholz
- Basserman-Jordan
- Reichstrat Von Buhl
- Burklin-Wolf
- Muller-Catoir

- Kurt Darting

Franken

- Furst Castell
- Rudolph Furst
- Horst Sauer
- Furst Lowenstein
- Burgerspital

Baden

- Herger
- Bernhard Huber
- Andreas Laible
- Salwey
- R.U.C. Schneider

Württemberg

- Aldinger
- Dautel
- Adelman
- Drautz-Able
- Ellwanger
- Karl Haidle

Hessische Bergstrasse

- Staatsweingut Bergstrasse

Saale-Unstrut

- Lutzkendorf
- Pawis

Sachsen

- Schloss Proschwitz
- Zimmerling

Top Vineyards

Ahr

- **Ahrweiler:** Rosenthal, Silberg
- **Dernau:** Pfarrwingert, Hardtberg
- **Heimersheim:** Landskrone, Burggarten
- **Marienthal:** Klostergarten, Trotzenberg
- **Mayschoß:** Monchberg
- **Neunahr:** Sonnenberg, Schierferlay
- **Walporzheim:** Garkammer, Krauterberg, Domlay

Mittelrhein

- **Bacharach:** Hahn, Posten, Wolfshohle
- **Engenholl:** Bernstein
- **Oberwesel:** Oelsberg
- **Steed:** St. Jost

Mosel-Saar-Ruwer

Mosel

- **Bernkastel:** Doctor, Lay, Graben, Badstube, alte badstube am doctorberg
- **Brauneberg:** Juffer-Sonnenuhr, Juffer
- **Dhron:** Hofberg
- **Erden:** Treppchen, Pralat
- **Graach:** Himmelreich, Domprobst
- **Lieser:** Niederberg, Helden
- **Piesport:** Goldtropfchen, Domherr
- **Trittenheim:** Apotheke, Felsenkopf, Leiterchen
- **Urzig:** Wurzgarten
- **Wehlen:** Sonnenuhr
- **Zeltingen:** Sonnenuhr, Schlossberg

Saar

- **Ayl:** Kupp
- **Kanzem:** Altenberg
- **Ockfen:** Bockstein
- **Saarburg:** Rausch
- **Scharzhofberg:**
- **Serrig:** Herrenberg, Wurtzberg
- **Wiltingen:** Scharzhofberg, Braune Kupp

Ruwer

- **Eitelsbach:** Karthausenhofberg

Rheingau

- **Assmannshausen:** Frankenthal, Hollenberg
- **Eltville:** Langenstuck, Sonnenberg
- **Erbach:** Hohenrain, Marcobrunn
- **Florsheim:** Herrnberg
- **Geisenheim:** Fuchsberg
- **Hallgarten:** Jungfer
- **Hattenheim:** Engelmansberg, Nussbrunnen, Schutzenhaus
- **Hochheim:** Domdechanehy, Konigin Viktoriaberg, Kirchenstuck

- **Johannisberg:** Holle, Klaus
- **Kiedrich:** Grafenberg
- **Mittleheim:** Edelmann, St. Nikolaus
- **Oestrich:** Doosberg
- **Rudesheim:** Berg Roseneck
- **Winkel:** Gutenber, Hasensprung

Nahe

- **Altenbamburg:** Rotenberg
- **Bockenu:** Felsneck
- **Dorsheim:** Burgberg, Goldloch, Pittermannchen
- **Niederhausen:** Hermannsberg, Hermannshohle, Steinberg
- **Norheim:** Delichen, Kirschheck
- **Oberhausen:** Brucke, Leistenberg

Rheinhesen

- **Bingen:** Scharlachberg
- **Dalsheim:** Burgel, Hubracker
- **Nackenheim:** Rothenberg
- **Nierstein:** Brudersberg, Hipping, Oelberg
- **Oppenheimer:** Kreuz, Sacktrager

Pfalz

- **Deidesheim:**
- **Bad Durkheim:** Michelsberg
- **Forst:** Ungeheuer, Jesuitengarten, Kirchenstuck
- **Kirrweiler:** Mandelberg
- **Ruppertsberg:** Reiterpfad

Franken

- **Burgstadt:** Centgrafenberg
- **Castell:** Schlossberg
- **Randersacker:** Pfulben, Sonnenstuhl
- **Somerhausen:** Steinbach
- **Volbach:** Karthaus
- **Wurzberg:** Stein, Innere Leiste

Baden

- **Ihring:** Winkleberg
- **Achkarr:** Schossberg
- **Freiburg:** Schlossberg
- **Heckling:** Schlossberg
- **Malterding:** Bienenberg
- **Oberrotweiler:** Kirchberg, Eichberg
- **Glotttaler:** Eichberg

Württemberg

- **Unterturkheim:** Gips
- **Fellbach:** Lammler
- **Stetten:** Pulvermacher, Brotwasser

Hessische Bergstrasse

- **Heppenheim:** Centgericht, Steinkopf
- **Bensheim:** Kalkgass

