



**VDP. The Prädikat Wine Estates celebrate a Century of Fine Wines from Top Sites and Creative Vintners.**

Ladies and gentlemen of the press:

The Prädikat Wine Estates will celebrate its centennial in 2010 under the motto: “A Century of Fine Wines from Top Sites and Creative Vintners.” Since its founding in 1910, the VDP, the world’s oldest association of wine estates, has been committed to the correlation of producer/site/quality, a trinity that has helped set high standards in German wine culture. The 200 members will celebrate this special birthday with a blaze of activities in Germany and wherever else top German wines are at home. The complete centennial program is on the VDP website ([www.vdp.de](http://www.vdp.de)) and will be updated on a regular basis.

During the century of its existence, the association has achieved tremendous recognition among wine enthusiasts and professionals alike. Today, the image of German wines and the high quality of wines produced from the finest vineyard sites has reached a level comparable with that of the heyday of German wines a century ago. Many a fine German wine enjoys cult status. With the centennial events in 2010, the VDP wants to celebrate all these achievements – for one whole year.

We would like to invite you to look into some facets that have contributed to the VDP becoming the leader for Germanys Wine culture. Attached please find some themes that we will be exploring during our centennial and that offer food for thought.

If any of these topics are of interest to you and / or your readers, please do not hesitate to contact: Kerry Brady (phone +49-611-373230, mail [kerry.b@online.de](mailto:kerry.b@online.de)).

We would be really pleased to hear from you and even more pleased to learn of your media coverage.

Best regards,

Steffen Christmann  
President  
VDP. Die Prädikatsweingüter



## **Themes on how to explore the VDP and its facets**

### **• VDP Portrait: What is the VDP? Who Makes it Tick?**

The VDP is celebrating its centennial in 2010. What better time than now to provide a little primer to help demystify “VDP” by clarifying the who, what, when, where and why behind this abbreviation for Verband Deutscher Prädikatsweingüter (Association of German Prädikat Wine Estates, i.e. estates that strive to produce a high proportion of top-quality wines at all levels).

### **• VDP: Germany’s Vanguard of Fine Winemaking in the Course of a Century**

The forerunner to today’s VDP was founded 100 years ago, at a time when fine German wines enjoyed a heyday. They numbered among the most expensive wines traded, and graced the tables of imperial houses as well as leading hotels and restaurants of the day. What role has the VDP played in the German wine industry during its century of existence and how do its quality standards compare with minimums prescribed by law?

### **• VDP Pioneers: Traditional Innovators and Innovative Traditionalists**

Some 20 years ago, when VDP members gathered for their annual meeting, their then-new president, Michael Prinz zu Salm-Salm, had an agenda – and he was successful in implementing new ideas based on ecologically friendly viticulture, yield restrictions, and a new capsule depicting the VDP logo (the stylized eagle bearing a cluster of grapes) to improve recognition value and signal a common marketing measure among members. At the same time, there were ongoing discussions about “terroir” and a vineyard classification. What ensued?

### **• VDP Classification: A Venture into Terra Incognita on Behalf of Terroir**

The Rheingau region, in conjunction with the Geisenheim Research Institute, among others, gathered scientifically based data on temperature, altitude, wind conditions, rainfall, solar exposure, etc., for decades – all of which to track “vineyard performance” over the years, i.e. to determine why some sites consistently yield a top-quality, ripe crop vs. others, where results fluctuate. The VDP firmly believes that the “top performers” are Erste Lagen (top sites) and that the wines sourced from these sites, which show site-specific characteristics, merit mention of the vineyard name on their labels. Other wines bear proprietor or regional/village names only. How does the VDP classification mesh with the German wine law and/or the classification systems of other wine-producing nations?

### **• VDP Visions for a Sustainable Future**

Dating from the efforts of Michael Prinz zu Salm-Salm, but even before his time, the concept of ecologically friendly viticulture was already in practice by several VDP estates, not least by pioneers, such as Wittmann and Heyl zu Herrnsheim (both in Rheinhessen). Today, controlled, environmentally sound viticulture is standard operating procedure. Numerous estates have switched to even more stringent, biodynamic measures. Sustainability is an important – and basic – issue for VDP member estates.

### **• VDP’s Feminine Touch: From Helping Hands to Taking the Reins**

It comes as no surprise that in family-owned and -operated estates, women have always lent a helping hand, primarily in vineyard maintenance and marketing. In recent years, however, an increasing number of estates are owned by women and/or viticulturally well-educated women are acclaimed winemakers. Let’s take a closer look.



- **VDP: Riesling and Other Varietals of Choice**

Germany's prime white wine variety, Riesling, has long been the grape of choice for VDP members. Other, traditional varietals are also cultivated, e.g. the ancient white varietal Silvaner (particularly in Franken and Rheinhessen), and members of the Pinot family, including Germany's all-important red wine grape, Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir), and the white wine grapes, Weiss- and Grauburgunder (Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris, respectively). Why?

- **VDP at Home: Germany's Wine Châteaux, Medieval to Postmodern**

Not only in the Rhine Valley, part of which is a UNESCO World Heritage site prized for its wonderful mix of breath-taking natural landscapes and manmade cultural monuments, are castles home to some of Germany's finest wine estates, such as Schloss Johannisberg or Schloss Vollrads (both in the Rheingau), to name but a couple with an international following. In recent years, many estates have undergone extensive renovations at the hand of leading architects, often with stunning results. Let's take a closer look.

- **VDP Wine Auctions: A Lively Tradition Lives On**

From day one, wine auctions have played an important role in the VDP. After all, the name under which the association was founded in 1910 was the *Verband Deutscher Naturweinversteigerer*, referring to estates that sold their *Naturweine* ("natural" or unchaptalized wines) exclusively at auction. What's behind the concept of *Naturweine* and why did the prices for these wines sold at auction serve as a benchmark within the German wine industry? To this day, many of these wines fetch worldwide record prices at VDP auctions. Except for one-bottle lots, these top wines can be sampled prior to and during the auction itself.

- **VDP's Treasures: What's Tucked Away in Members' Cellars**

The *Schatzkammer* (literally, treasure chamber) of every wine estate is hallowed ground within which many a treasure lies at rest for decades, until a bottle is opened to celebrate a festive occasion and/or make its way to auction, to the delight of many a wine connoisseur or collector. Let's take a closer look at some VDP members' treasure chambers.