

Press Release

November 28th, 2017

Vintage 2017 in Germany's 13 wine regions

Early harvest, small volumes but good quality

The German 2017 grape wine harvest has yielded good to very good wine qualities with in many cases low volumes. Unusually heavy and widespread frosts in April were the key reason behind the relatively large crop losses at many estates. The year's total intake across the country of 7.5 million hectolitres is expected to be 18 per cent down on the previous year as well as the ten-year average of 9 million hectolitres.

In most German wine regions the harvest was completed very early, with only a very few estates leaving grapes in the vineyard for a possible ice wine production. The qualities harvested are on the whole very satisfactory, resulting in a 2017 vintage of generally light, fruity wines with great finesse which match the current trend in consumers' tastes.

The following overview shows how the wine year developed in Germany's 13 wine regions.

Ahr (563 ha)

After the spring frosts in April had already reduced yields, followed by heavy rains in the summer, selective harvesting was the order of the day in the Ahr. With the early ripening varieties such as Frühburgunder (Pinot Précoce), the harvest had in some areas already begun in August. The second half of September brought ideal harvest weather, which benefitted the region's main variety Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) as well as Riesling, leading to good qualities. With cropping levels anticipated at 31,000 hectolitres – roughly 21 per cent below the long-term average –, the Ahr wines have a welcome high level of extract and body and will delight the wine lovers' palate with their good structure and typically fine varietal fruit.

Baden (15,812 ha)

"We got off lightly" was how many Baden producers summarized the 2017 vintage. This year's frost catastrophe in the region was the biggest since 1953. Many vines recovered and produced secondary shoots but these generated only a few grapes. Thus already at the beginning of October, after a quick harvest, yields of 70 hectolitres per hectare were obtained – lower levels were last recorded only in 2010 and 2013. Harvest volume estimates of 1.05 million hectolitres

are 15 per cent below the ten-year average and 19 per cent down on the previous year. However, must weights and qualities were certainly good, especially with the later ripening varieties. At the end of October, the sunny weather even gave rise to the occasional noble sweet qualities, from Auslese to Trockenbeerenauslese. Overall Baden's 2017 wines are refreshingly rich in aromas and complex with a harmonious acid structure.

Franken (6,107 ha)

One should be careful with superlatives but the Franken winegrowers are all agreed: 2017 marked the fastest and earliest harvest in the region's history. This is of course linked to the capricious weather, which the year was certainly not short of. With a great deal of effort, the damage caused by the spring frosts could be minimized, so that despite some hail damage in the summer and heavy rain, as well as the corresponding pre-harvest grape selection, the harvest volume of around 487,000 hectolitres is expected to be even slightly higher than the previous year. The wines are mostly refreshingly light with vitalizing fruit flavours and are thus a nice contrast to the very concentrated, full-bodied vintage 2015 and a complement to the fruit-driven 2016. The slender, elegant 2017 is a particularly attractive Franken vintage!

Hessische Bergstrasse (461 ha)

A turbulent year lies behind the winegrowers of the Hessische Bergstrasse. Yields were not only depressed by the damaging frosts, which affected producers to varying degrees. Problems also arose due to the partly wet weather, requiring growers to undertake strict grape selection by hand to preserve quality. Fortunately September brought cool nights, albeit at the beginning also a good deal of rain, which further accelerated a harvest that had already begun early. By the 10 October all grapes were in the cellar. All in all, total yields of 25,000 hectolitres fall significantly below the norm of 31,000 hectolitres but the quality is right, in particular with the later ripening varieties such as Riesling. The Bergstrasse can look forward to a 2017 vintage which is varietally typical and fresh but above all graceful and elegant.

Mittelrhein (467 ha)

Winegrowers in the Mittelrhein were mostly spared from major crop losses due to the April frosts, with relatively moderate temperature lows of minus two degrees Celsius recorded on the steep vineyard sites. That said, the year posed other major challenges for growers in the form of a lot of rain in the summer and unsettled, wet weather at harvest time, with only a few exceptions. Rigorous grape selection was required to separate healthy from rotten berries, rewarding those who worked scrupulously with good qualities. The harvest, which had begun in September, was

largely over by the beginning of October. Noble sweet grapes up to Trockenbeerenauslese were also harvested. The total yield is approx. 33,000 hectolitres and thus roughly on a par with the previous year's figure. The wines are proving to be aromatic and balanced to concentrated with a wonderful interplay of sweetness and acidity.

Mosel (8,796 ha)

This year's harvest in the Mosel was the earliest ever and the smallest in volume terms for half a century. This was of course attributable to the April frosts, which affected almost a third of the region's vineyards. Even the steep sites suffered, which rarely happens as cold air normally flows down slope. At 600,000 hectolitres, the harvest volume is significantly lower than the long-term average of 800,000 hectolitres. The summer brought warm, dry weather as well as heavy rain and isolated hail storms. Picking got underway in mid-September, topping the earliest harvest on record from 2011 by ten days. Riesling grapes which were harvested later were able to profit from the favourable weather conditions in the second half of September. This resulted not only in good must weights, measuring up to 200 degrees Oechsle in the noble sweet grapes, but also balancing fruit acidity levels. The 2017 Mosel wines will be slender, playful and mineral with a wide quality spectrum up to Trockenbeerenauslese, especially in the Saar and Mittelmosel.

Nahe (4,205 ha)

The frost night of 20 April caused considerable damage to the vines in the Nahe, also partly in the region's top and steep vineyards. Even seasoned winegrowers could barely remember anything quite like it - yields were 30 to 80 per cent below the usual results. Happy the ones who lit candles in the vulnerable sites and largely managed to save the grapes. To make matters worse, there were hailstorms during the year, so that a minus of 18 per cent compared with the long-term average is anticipated. However, the mostly favourable weather in the summer and at harvest time had a positive influence on the remaining grapes, which yielded pleasing must weights. With extreme dedication, winegrowers nurtured every healthy berry and this effort brings its rewards: The Nahe wines of the vintage 2017 are proving to be true to variety, full-bodied and very well-balanced.

Pfalz (23,590 ha)

In Germany's second largest wine region, 2017 will also deliver good wine but less of it. Owing to frost damage in April, growers in the Pfalz brought in 1.8 million hectolitres of grapes - approx. 19 per cent less than the average. After a wet July, however, the weather gods were somewhat more benign in August and September. At harvest time, which began early in August, the weather brought warm days and cool nights, which were perfect for a good aroma profile. In September it then turned cooler towards the end of harvest, while the rain was not excessive. The grapes were thus able to accumulate a lot of sugar and registered good acidity levels. The 2017 vintage in the Pfalz promises characterful and expressive wines with a lovely interplay of aromas, especially in the aromatic varieties such as Sauvignon Blanc or Muskateller. The young wines are already proving to be stimulating and appealing.

Rheingau (3,168 ha)

The year 2017 showed again that the climatic challenges for the Rheingau winegrowers are not easing up. Volume estimates of 180,000 hectolitres are approx. 18 per cent down on the previous year. To blame were first and foremost the frosts in April, with the addition of major hail damage in the centre of the region in August. Nature was able to offset much of this with good weather during flowering and harvest. At the beginning of August, vine growth was ten days ahead of the long-term average. Rigorous grape selection became necessary after heavy rains during the ripening phase, which ultimately resulted in very good grape quality and must weights for the late ripening varieties Riesling and Spätburgunder. "Our growers expect a good vintage", concluded Peter Seyffardt, president of the Rheingau Winegrowers' Association. Aromatic wines with harmonious acidity and good structure are the defining characteristics of the current vintage.

Rheinhessen (26,628 ha)

Total harvest figures of two million hectolitres in Germany's largest wine region are significantly lower – approx. 20 per cent less - than the previous year and the long-term average. This was caused by frosts in April and hail storms especially in the Alzey-Worms district later in the season. Also in other respects 2017 had one or two hurdles "up its sleeve" for the Rheinhessen growers. "A roller coaster ride" was how the year's progression was described and steady nerves were required. The weather gods showed themselves to be more benign during the extremely early harvest following heavy rains shortly beforehand. The mild weather with its cold nights helped many grapes on the home run to a good level of ripeness and plenty of aroma. The young wines in Rheinhessen are proving to be very fruit-driven with a well-balanced, refreshing acidity.

Especially the late-ripening varieties such as Riesling benefitted from this challenging vintage 2017.

Saale-Unstrut (765 ha)

Growers in the Saale-Unstrut region can look back on a good year. There were no major weather problems in the sheltered – often terraced – sites along the rivers and the east of Germany remained largely free of frost damage in April. The mix of sun, rain and warmth in summer was ideal for the grapes and encouraged strong growth in the canopies. After an unusually long ripening period, the harvest got underway at the beginning of September. The dry wines are delicate, fruity and graceful - typically Saale-Unstrut. But the harvest also rendered full-bodied Spätlese (late-harvest) grapes up to mid-October, when picking was completed. At an estimated 58,000 hectolitres, volumes are even slightly higher than the previous year's figure of 54,000 hectolitres, an increase of roughly 7 per cent.

Sachsen (11,306 ha)

In Germany's easternmost wine region, major frost damage also remained at bay. Both quantity and quality were spot-on. In the often warm weather, the grapes had a long period in which to ripen. The harvest stretched into the second half of October, enabling for example the Riesling berries to attain must weights into the high 90 degrees Oechsle. Fruity, juicy wines with good levels of extract are the pleasing result. The harvest volume of roughly 27,000 hectolitres is forecast to fall slightly below the previous year's figure but significantly higher than the long-term average of 21,000 hectolitres. 2017 was a good wine year in Sachsen with a long harvest season, which rewarded the efforts of the growers. Besides assiduous work in the vineyard and careful selection, the great virtue was patience, which gave the grapes the necessary time for ripening.

Württemberg (11,306 ha)

In Württemberg a mixed picture is emerging at the end of the wine year 2017. The year had brought a lot of hardship, the severe April frosts causing partly considerable crop losses. In some instances, a minus of 25 to 30 per cent - in regions such as the Taubertal or Hohenlohe even 50 to 60 per cent - had to be absorbed. Volume estimates across the region of 850,000 litres are 20 per cent below the long-term average and 26 per cent down on the previous year. Unfavourable weather at harvest time required in many places an early and rapid picking, which was largely over within the short – and rare – time span of only three weeks. This was also due to the fact that the late ripening varieties had to be picked directly after the early ones. Württemberg growers are satisfied with the qualities harvested - especially the late ripening varieties yielded healthy grapes

with high must weights. One can therefore expect a vintage of balanced, fruity wines with true-to-varietal aromas.

Wine must estimates 2017 in the German winegrowing regions

(As of 27 September 2017)

	Avg. 2007-2016		Provisional	2017 prov.	2017 prov.
Wine region	10-year average	2016	27.09.2017	% Change Volume	%- Change Volume
	hl	hl	hl	Rel. long-term avg.	Rel. previous year
Ahr	39.000	40.000	31.000	- 21	- 23
Mittelrhein	29.000	25.000	30.000	3	20
Mosel	795.000	706.000	600.000	- 25	- 15
Nahe	329.000	308.000	270.000	- 18	- 12
Rheinhessen	2.563.000	2.557.000	2.050.000	- 20	- 20
Pfalz	2.232.000	2.209.000	1.800.000	- 19	- 19
Rheingau	220.000	200.000	180.000	- 18	- 10
Hess. Bergstraße	30.000	31.000	25.000	- 17	- 19
Franken	445.000	471.000	490.000	10	4
Württemberg	1.065.000	1.145.000	850.000	- 20	- 26
Baden	1.237.000	1.293.000	1.050.000	- 15	- 19
Saale-Unstrut	44.000	54.000	58.000	32	7
Sachsen	21.000	29.000	27.000	29	- 7
Deutschland	9.049.000	9.069.000	7.461.000	- 18	- 18

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