

2011 Harvest report - Mosel, Germany

After a very small, not to mention difficult, 2010 harvest, the 2011 vintage returns the Mosel and Rhine regions to the high quality levels that we saw throughout most of the past decade.

The 2011 harvest was relatively early, with the Riesling pick starting about three weeks ahead of schedule in early October. The early budding, flowering and fruit-set, brought on by summer-like weather during much of the spring were a big reason for the advanced stage of development.

After a late-spring frost in the middle of May, the excellent weather continued through mid-June, as overcast skies and below average temperatures took firm hold until the end of August. Although not great for tourism, the moderate temperatures allowed the grapes to develop slowly - helping them gain complexity. September brought the last significant precipitation of the autumn harvest season, as much of the month was dry with clear skies and lots of sun. This trend continued through much of October. By the beginning of October, must weights had increased to above-average levels and, in turn, the acidity levels fell.

The 2011 vintage produced top-notch wines at all levels of the quality spectrum - from Qualitätswein through the higher levels of Prädikatswein - including Kabinett, Spätlese and Auslese.

Although it's too early to proclaim the vintage's place in historical terms, based on ripeness levels and the excellent health of the crop leading up to the harvest, the 2011s will, at the very least, offer classic Riesling character with excellent depth and structure.

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After a rough start during the spring vegetation period, with late frost and cold, wet weather hampering the budding and fruit-set, the 2012 growing season finally got on track by mid-summer with nice weather, albeit with moderate temperatures.

By then, however, it was clear that yields would be down significantly in many areas of the middle Mosel, as the vines visibly lacked the usual amount of grape clusters due to the problems of early spring. The summer, nonetheless, provided the vines with precisely what they needed - moderate temperatures with adequate precipitation - to allow them to develop and make the final push toward harvest.

Although September had a good amount of early precipitation, what followed was nothing short of ideal conditions, as a sunny autumn provided a very long ripening phase for the grapes in all of the German wine growing regions. This prolonged development time greatly benefited the fruit and aroma characteristics in the grapes. These ideal conditions allowed the growers to harvest later than usual, which enhanced both the quality and complexity of the wines.

According to the German Wine Institute, "The state of health of the grapes picked this year was particularly pleasing as it provided best possible prerequisites for top wines in all quality grades. Wine lovers can look forward to distinctively fruity, well balanced white wines." "The 2012 vintage is adapted well to the current market situation ... Germany's 2012 wines will tie in perfectly with the great 2011 vintage. With respect to volume in some regions and regarding particular grape varieties, we had hoped for more. All in all, we are confident that we will be able to strengthen our market position domestically as well as internationally."