

## The 2012 vintage at Weingut Egon Müller-Scharzhof

After the predominantly dry 2011 growing season, the winter 2011-2012 remained dry. Until February it was very mild, too and only when nature was gearing up for spring, it became very cold. For 2 weeks the temperatures stayed below zero, dropping to -14 and occasionally even to -17° C at night. I don't believe that the vineyards were damaged but it set the pace for a very unusual growing season. March was very warm and dry and 2011 seemed to repeat itself. In April however it became cooler and rainy and while the rain was first seen almost with relief, when it didn't stop it became soon clear why old people say that one should never pray for rain.

By June the dry spring was forgotten. The humidity hampered the flowering and drew it out over a period from late May to late June. About 1/3 of the crop was lost through "coulure" and the berries within one grape were quite different in their development because of the protracted flowering.

At the same time, the humidity caused high pressure of mildew. In 2011 we had been successful treating the vineyards organically and in 2012 we started out organically as well. On June 29<sup>th</sup>, however, we had mildew infection under "ideal" conditions and lacking experience with organic treatments in an adverse situation, I decided to go back to "chemical" spraying. It was too late and we suffered another considerable loss of our crop.

The second half of July was finally dryer but virtually all hope was lost for 2012 to become a quality vintage. Then came a splendid August with 245 sunshine hours and an almost equally beautiful September. "Veraison" started on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 3 weeks later than in 2011 but at about the same time as in 2004 or 2006. Now it was interesting to see, how quickly summer rain disappears. By the end of August, young vineyards were showing signs of drought stress and as the dry conditions persisted, it seemed as though grapes in vineyards with low yields were ripening while higher crop loads were stuck in their development.

In late September wild animals invaded the vineyards and ate our grapes. Especially between Wiltingen and Oberemmel, on the borderline between Scharzhofberg and Oberemmeler Rosenberg every night 80 or 100 deer could be seen. I reckon that we lost about 4 Fuders of wine despite protective fences.

In late September the weather deteriorated. We started our harvest on October 15<sup>th</sup> in cool and rainy weather. The grapes were completely healthy and selection was neither necessary nor possible. Within 2 and a half days we had picked the Oberemmeler Rosenberg and the Eastern part of the Scharzhofberg where the damage by wild animals was greatest. Because the acidity levels were still slightly on the high side and hoping for better weather, we stopped picking until October 22<sup>nd</sup>.

By then the weather was sunny and warm and some noble rot had appeared. It was possible to select Auslese of good quality but the grapes were not dry enough and the quantity was too small for higher Prädikat levels. Again, the question was whether to wait for the Botrytis to completely dry or to pick what was already there. I did not trust the fine weather and we kept picking. On Sunday, October 28<sup>th</sup>, the thermometer dropped to -6° C and we were able to harvest frozen grapes in the Scharzhofberg. On Monday, it was a bit colder yet and again we picked frozen grapes that might even qualify for Eiswein in the tradition of the Eiswein Auslese from years like 1973 or 1975.

We finished picking on that day, and by late afternoon, it was raining.

With only 10 picking days, 2012 is the shortest harvest I have seen and one of the smallest, too. The quality appears to be very high, however with generally very healthy grapes that had must weights of up to 100 ° Oechsle and very good acidity levels. The old vineyards in the Scharzhofberg produced particularly good grapes and we may be able to bottle both Kabinett and Spätlese "alte Reben". 2012 bears no similarity to any of the recent vintages. I have looked through my fathers notes and found that must weights and acidity levels are comparable to 1953 but other than that it was a great year, I don't know anything and I have only tasted the wines a couple of times. They have passed the test of time, and I hope the same for the 2012s.