

# The 2017 Vintage at Weingut Egon Müller-Scharzhof

The winter 2016-2017 began early and it was cold. From the Eiswein harvest on November 30<sup>th</sup> at -9,5°C, it stayed cold until the end of January. The dry weather that prevailed since July continued. In February temperatures rose and March was quite warm and sunny. April began spring-like and soon the first fresh leaves appeared on the vines. Between April 18<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> temperatures dropped repeatedly to -5°C causing considerable frost damage particularly in the lower part of the Scharzhofberg. However, since it wasn't always radiation-frost but occasionally there was also wind-frost and even a bit of snow, no vineyard was completely spared. Overall, April was very dry with only 4,6 mm of precipitation and because of the dry conditions the losses were limited and probably didn't exceed 30%.

May was hot. It remained dry but the vineyards thrived. The first flowers could be found on the vines in late May and by mid-June, the flowering was finished everywhere. Since it didn't rain we only started spraying the vineyards in June, using organic products. Despite the continuing drought, the grapes developed well and the berries were rather big, compensating partially for the losses from the frost.

In July the trend turned: It remained warm but we had more than average rainfall. By the end of July veraison began and we finished spraying with the 5<sup>th</sup> treatment from July 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>. The warm and humid weather continued but the vines remained surprisingly healthy. Only by late August, Botrytis appeared. September was cold and wet but because of the cooler conditions, the spreading of Botrytis was slowed considerably. Yet it was clear that harvest would be early. The weather improved by mid-September and after a few dry and sunny days, we started picking on September 25<sup>th</sup>.

The first week of the harvest was fine with morning fog and sunny afternoons and we picked Botrytis affected grapes and from those selected the dry, shrivelled berries for Beerenauslese or Trockenbeerenauslese. Sugars were high and so were the acidity levels.

On September 30<sup>th</sup> it began to rain, and on October 3<sup>rd</sup> we received 18 mm overnight. Up to that point the long-range weather forecast had been favourable. The rainy weekend had been forecasted but the following 2 weeks were supposed to be dry. Over the weekend it did change however, and we had to prepare for rainier conditions. Still, we continued our selective picking, even though it slows down the harvest considerably. Fortunately, there were only minor showers and towards the next weekend it became dry again. After a few sunny days we picked the last grapes on October 14<sup>th</sup>.

For us this is the earliest harvest ever. We began 4 days earlier than 2003 and we finished 2 days earlier than 2014. This is of course due to the hot spring and summer speeding up the ripening of the grapes. The April frost played its part by reducing the quantity and allowing the vines a stress free development during the drought. Because of the experience of past hot vintages we do look a bit more at the acidity levels and maybe pick a bit earlier but first and foremost the early finish is due to the small yields: We only harvested 29 "Fuder" or an average of 18 hl/ha.

Besides the frost it was noble rot that caused loss of volume through evaporation, compensating us with increased concentration. We have promising Auslese, Beerenauslese and Trockenbeerenauslese that make up a significant part of the crop. Still, 2017 isn't a Botrytis vintage like 2005 or 2006, where every single grape is affected by Noble Rot. All the plots in Scharzhofberg and Wiltinger Braune Kupp were picked in 2 passes, each time selecting for Botrytis. The remaining grapes that will go into the Kabinett were healthy, golden and crunchy. Thus 2017 resembles 2011 but while the sugar levels are comparable, the acidity is on average 1,5 g/l higher, wines that with all their power and concentration will remain excitingly elegant.