

THE 2011 VINTAGE AT WEINGUT EGON MÜLLER

The salient feature of the 2011 growing season was its lack of rainfall. By the end of the harvest we had a deficit of approximately 220 mm or about 1/3 of the normal precipitation. Especially the beginning of the year was very warm, too and the vegetation had a head start leading to a very early flowering that was finished on June 2nd, almost a full month earlier than usual. A frost on May 4th caused devastating damage in other growing regions but Mosel was spared and the damage was minor. Only the lowest rows in Scharzhofberg and Wiltinger Braunfels were touched. June was the only month that brought more than average and much needed rain. The summer appeared rainy and cool but the total amount of precipitation was small and it was not cold enough to really hamper the growth of the grapes. Veraison therefore came very early. We found the first soft grapes already in July. On August 26th a hailstorm damaged vineyards in the Middle-Mosel but again, we escaped. In the first half of September warm and humid conditions brought the onset of Botrytis and since not everything that was developing on the grapes was "noble", also cause for alarm. Fortunately, summer finally arrived after September 20th with blue skies and high temperatures that stopped the spread of Botrytis as well as of anything undesirable. What followed was probably the longest time of uninterrupted good weather that I have seen during any harvest season.

We started picking on October 3rd, The crop was large, generally very healthy and the grapes were ripe. Our goal was to eliminate any bad rot while at the same time to pick the shriveled noble rot affected berries. This was a very complex task, requiring the pickers to select only bunches affected by rot, to assess the quality of the Botrytis, to throw away anything dubious and to then separate the shriveled berries from the bunch, working with 2 buckets. We expected a slow progress and no spectacular results and were surprised that it took us only a day and a half to fill our press. Our surprise was even bigger when the sugar content of the juice turned out to be the highest ever recorded in our estate. By midweek, we had enough "Troockenbeeren" for a second press and because of a spell of less stable weather started to pick the remaining fruit in the vineyards already pre-harvested. The rainfall was minimal and on October 10th we resumed the picking of Trockenbeerenauslese for the whole week until we had combed through all the Scharzhofberg.

When we resumed harvesting the remaining grapes, still picking the botrytised fruit separately we were in for a second surprise: In any other year, the noble rot from the second pass will yield Auslese or Auslese Goldkapsel but here we were still well beyond Trockenbeerenauslese sugar levels. While all the time the vast majority of the grapes was healthy and the acidity levels remained stable, we were nevertheless feeling a sense of urgency since relatively little rain could have done great damage. We were lucky however, and the fine weather continued until the end of our harvest on October 28th and beyond.

Our first impression is that this is a great vintage. The average yield in our vineyards was 45 hl/ha, certainly not excessive but quite a bit more than what we had in recent years. Even the grapes for the "Scharzhof" were fully ripe and Wiltinger Braune Kupp, being our warmest vineyard yielded beautiful Spätlese material while in the Scharzhofberg we harvested substantial quantities of Kabinett as well as Spätlese. Possibly we will again be able to bottle the Scharzhofberger Kabinett "alte Reben" from our oldest, pre-phyloxera vineyards separately. On the other hand the quality of the Botrytis leads to curious situation that we have relatively little Auslese and almost no Auslese Goldkapsel but we have a great quantity of Trockenbeerenauslese, part of which, provided that it will ferment, could be monumental. Over all, 2011 seems to be similar to 2009 or 2007, as it had both a similar growing season with a very early start, a mixed summer allowing for a long and even ripening and beautiful harvest weather and a similar general aspect of the fruit, but we believe that 2011 could turn out to be even superior to those great years.