

## **The 2014 vintage at Weingut Egon Müller-Scharzhof**

We had no real winter 2013/14. The coldest night was on November 27<sup>th</sup> with -5,3°C. December, January and February were warmer than usual, but with about average rainfall. Spring came very early. March and April were significantly warmer, sunnier and dryer than average. On Easter Monday we were hit by a tremendous hailstorm. The damage was quite localized. While most of our vineyards escaped, the Western part of the Scharzhofberg was badly hit. The shoots at that time were still quite small and many of them were simply knocked off the vines.

May was rather average but still the first flowers bloomed around the 20<sup>th</sup>. June was very sunny and dry, but not extremely hot, ideal conditions for the flowering, but while most vineyards flowered well, the plots that were hit by hail lingered until mid-June.

By the end of June the vineyards were looking beautiful and everything seemed set for a great vintage. In July the weather changed, only a few days were completely dry and while it was quite warm, it was overcast most of the time, creating ideal conditions for mildew. Up to that point we had only sprayed the vineyards twice, using an organic regime. We struggled to stay with that regime and had to suffer a few infections by mildew and towards the end of the season also by black rot.

August was the only month that was colder than the long term average with at the same time twice the average rainfall, and the high hopes for a great 2014 were reduced considerably. September however, was warm, dry and sunny. Only on the 20<sup>th</sup> we had significant rainfall and Botrytis began to show on the ripening grapes. We decided to start harvesting on October 6<sup>th</sup> but during the first days of October the weather forecast that had been for very stable high-pressure weather changed dramatically and we started a day earlier, picking some of the best plots both in Wiltinger braune Kupp and Scharzhofberg before the rain. At this time, sugar levels and acidity were near perfect but the rain came on October 7<sup>th</sup>: 70 mm in 3 days. By October 9<sup>th</sup>, the must weights had dropped by about 10° Oechsle. At the same time it was quite warm and Botrytis was spreading rapidly. With no improvement of the weather in sight, we continued picking the grapes for "Scharzhof". After October 12<sup>th</sup> it was drier and as some of the water drained away and evaporated, the must weights rose again but the acidity levels started dropping. Still, the weather forecast wasn't at all encouraging and we quickly finished our harvest, bringing in the last grapes on October 16<sup>th</sup>. We never finished a harvest earlier. The next day, there was more heavy rain and the first autumn storm passed through on the 20<sup>th</sup> but after that, the weather was fine and dry.

Overall, these were conditions not unlike those seen in 2006. At that time we waited for the weather to improve and the harvest consequently was very small with lots of Auslese and even Trockenbeerenauslese but it could be argued that the wines lacked some of their usual precision and cut. In 2014 we took a different approach and harvested before the grapes were completely botrytised. Sugar and acidity levels were high and we have some Auslese but with the exception of a small barrel of Scharzhofberger Auslese Goldkapsel, it was not possible to select any higher Prädikat. It will be interesting to see how those vintages compare in a few years' time.