

The 2020 vintage at Weingut Egon Müller-Scharzhof

Once again, there was no real winter. In October 2019, during harvest, it had rained considerably after a long drought and November and December were wet as well, but rather mild. January was largely dry, only towards the end of the month significant precipitation fell but then it rained continuously, until March. It remained very warm and from mid-March the sun shone almost continuously.

The vegetation started very early, the first flowers on Riesling vines could be found on May 12th. Then a brief cold snap slowed down nature: On May 12th there was light frost after rain, but it caused only very limited damage in our vineyards. However, the flowering dragged on and was not completely finished until June 15.

On June 5th, the first heavy rain fell after a prolonged dry period and we had to start spraying. Overall it was sunny and warm, but there were occasional thunderstorms, which totaled an above-average 75 mm by the end of the month. We had only sprayed sulfur and copper and so a second treatment was necessary on June 15th. The rain stopped at the end of June and July was hot and dry. From July 10th to 13th we sprayed for the third and last time.

During the spring, Europe was in lockdown because of the Corona pandemic. Our spring-team could not arrive from Poland and we were concerned about being able to carry out the necessary work on time. In summer the situation normalized and the warm and sunny weather did the rest. July and August were hot and dry, but there was no extreme heat. Only around August, 10th there were a few really hot days and in places sunburn on the grapes.

The grapes developed magnificently and one could expect a large harvest. Due to the hygiene requirements in the wake of the pandemic, we had to plan for a relatively small picking team and, expecting a long harvest, we decided to start early. In the week before the planned start, the weather forecast deteriorated considerably and instead of picking on September 21st as planned, we began on the 20th. The grapes were ripe but not overripe and completely healthy. The announced rain didn't come at first and for a week we picked Kabinett-grade grapes in ideal weather.

It began to rain on September 27th, and for us a poker game started. We wanted to wait for noble rot, but beautiful, almost summery days alternated with rainy days. Botrytis came but the grapes never dried properly and slowly the acid levels began to drop. We paused several times in the hope of better weather, then picked again for a few days and finally, on October 21st, we finished.

Hoping for early frost, we had left a few grapes hanging. The frost did not come, but after the wet October the weather improved in November. Finally the botrytised grapes dried in and since a storm was forecasted for the next week, we harvested the last grapes on November 14th, finally at Auslese-level ripeness.

I can't think of a comparable vintage. Perhaps, certain parallels can be drawn with 2016: the flawless, healthy, ripe grapes at the beginning of the harvest, the poker game around noble rot and finally the capitulation to nature. Even if, without Noble Rot we do not reach the peaks attained in the last 3 years, Scharzhof should turn out very fine and one can certainly expect excellent, mineral Kabinett and classically proportioned Spätlese wines.