



Vintage 2016 – A look at the regions

Ahr: Exceptional qualities

The all too wet early summer in combination with a cool spring caused a relatively late start to the vegetative cycle and flowering. However, the warm summer and ideal harvest weather in September and October triggered an unexpected race to catch up on quality, enabling healthy Frühburgunder (Pinot Precoce) and Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) grapes with impressive data to be harvested by hand. Fortunately the painstaking work of growers early in the season prevented any major losses to downy mildew. In the end, yields were also in line at an estimated 3.9 million litres. The Spätburgunder wines are deeply-coloured and high in extract, with ripe and well-integrated tannins. These are the qualities that characterise outstanding vintages.

Baden: All's well that ends well

The good news begins in Baden at the end: The quality of the wines as well as the harvest volume of ca. 1.25 million hectoliters are well above average. Especially in the second half of September, the grapes experienced a substantial leap in ripening thanks to the fabulous sunny and dry late summer weather in August and September. The Indian summer continued into October and the grapes - aided by the cool nights – were in pristine condition. Fruit-driven, juicy wines of very high quality are therefore the hallmarks of the 2016 vintage in Baden.

Back in the spring this was hardly to be expected. After a delayed budburst, the rainy weather continued into June, promoting the development of downy mildew. On the whole, however, the corresponding damage was contained, although severe crop losses were recorded in some parts. Thanks to the good water supply, the grapes were able to ripen optimally in a warm summer. The temperatures in July briefly hit 37° degrees. Overall, it was a very labour-intensive year for the winegrowers with a happy ending for wine lovers.

Franken: A grand finale after a nail-biting year

The 2016 growing season made life difficult for winegrowers in a different way to its predecessor, which was noteworthy for its great heat and drought. A defining characteristic were the heavy rains in May and June, which presented growers with an hitherto almost unknown pressure from *Peronospera* (downy mildew). This affected not only many

organically managed properties, with crop losses of up to one hundred per cent. To make matters worse, there were late frosts at the end of April and on 30 May some instances of massive hail damage in the south of the Main triangle. August was both very hot and dry, even making irrigation necessary for the young vines. Then at the end of September, in perfect autumn weather, picking started for Müller-Thurgau and Bacchus, followed by the Pinot varieties and Silvaner in October. The fruit was in excellent condition. The fact that the harvest after such a hectic time progressed at a relatively relaxed pace was the long-awaited - though hardly to be expected - reward for the growers. "A grand finale after a nail-biting year", enthused Artur Steinmann, president of the Franken Winegrowers' Association. The estimated harvest volume of ca. 500,000 hectolitres exceeds that of the previous year, with average must weights of Spätburgunder reaching up to 92° Oechsle. The proportion of *Prädikat* (superior quality) wines is estimated at over 65 per cent. The new wines are expected to be well-balanced and fruity, with a harmonious structure, fresh acidity and low alcohol levels – just what consumers love.

Hessische Bergstrasse: Tricky situation resolved

At the start of the year, growers in the Bergstrasse were happy with the rain as it made up for the prevailing water shortage. But then in May and June continuous rain set in, which created problems especially due to disease pressure from downy mildew. Moreover, some areas suffered losses of up to 50 per cent as a result of frost damage at the end of April. Rain in June did not help flowering and a heat wave in August caused damage from sunburn and subsequent further crop losses. After the long-awaited summer, the harvest finally began in mid-September and progressed at a very relaxed pace until the end of October. The grapes were thus able to reach optimal ripeness, giving a 2016 vintage that is defined by fine-fruited, elegant white wines and powerful, intensely-coloured reds. The harvest volume estimated at 30,000 hectolitres is slightly lower than last year's figures but in line with the long-term average.

Mittelrhein: A very mixed picture

Until mid-year, winegrowers in the Mittelrhein would cast a mostly worried look to the skies. It rained far too much and the temperatures were average. Vine protection became an important issue. Growers who had it under control by Whitsun profited the most from the very favourable weather from mid-July up to the harvest, especially with their late-ripening varieties such as Riesling. Flowering was late and progressed slowly. On the 24 June, hail damaged vineyards in the district of Oberwesel and Dellhofen, as well as on the right bank of the Rhine in Kaub and Dorscheid. Thanks to the sunny late summer weather, the grapes ripened very evenly and remained healthy to the end. However, with crop sizes ranging from 10 hl/ha to 110 hl/ha, yields as well as must weights varied greatly from producer to

producer. Nonetheless, the total harvest volume is estimated at 29,000 hectolitres and is therefore even 17 per cent higher than the long-term average. The young wines boast fresh acidities, rich aromas and a pronounced fruit character.

Mosel: Average yields despite erratic weather

From frost to sunburn, from heavy rain to drought, the weather in 2016 offered everything. Despite the extremes, the vintage generally turned out far better than expected, both in quality and quantity: At ca. 750,000 hectolitres, the harvest volume was only one per cent down on 2015. Similar to other regions, the impact of the weather events differed greatly even within small areas: “Whilst in some rows there was hardly a grape left on the vine, just 150 metres away the full crop could be harvested” explained Moselwein CEO Ansgar Schmitz, quoting a grower from the Saar region. Flowering did not begin until mid-June and stretched on into July. Only with the arrival of good weather in the autumn were the grapes allowed to ripen undisturbed. Thanks to the stable conditions, growers were granted a slow and selective harvest of good quality fruit. The young wines of the new vintage in the Mosel are characterised by moderate acidities and intense aromatics.

Nahe: An autumn of envy

Nahe winegrowers had feared the worst for their harvest after the wet spring from Whitsun onwards. Disease pressure from mildew was immense. Fortunately the long-awaited weather change occurred, which ultimately rewarded growers with an excellent vintage, albeit with yields which in some instances fell below expectations. A warm summer and picture-perfect autumn – four weeks of sunshine with almost no rain – allowed the grapes to ripen well. Varieties such as Dornfelder, Scheurebe, Müller-Thurgau and the Pinot varieties produced exceptionally healthy fruit, with must weights reaching up to 100° Oechsle. However, both yields and quality fluctuated widely, leading growers to speak of an autumn of envy. At an estimated 300,000 hectolitres, the harvest volume is slightly lower than last year’s result but in line with the ten-year average. Riesling especially benefited from the mild autumn temperatures and cool nights: the aromas developed to perfection. Vintage 2016 has the potential to deliver *Prädikat* wines of distinction, Nahe producers are sure of that.

Pfalz: Surprise, surprise!

Things often turn out differently from what one imagines. This saying is particularly apt for the ultimately very good vintage in the Pfalz - the wet spring had suggested a totally different scenario. Not even seasoned growers had seen so much rain in a May or June. Mildew pressure was correspondingly high - in some instances flower clusters were completely destroyed. Some estates, especially the organically-managed properties, were forced to accept in part dramatically reduced yields in some vineyards. But then came a warm July and a sunny, dry late summer, which segued into a picture-perfect Indian summer in

September. The main harvest began in the third week of September and progressed at a steady, unhurried pace. Up to November, exceptionally healthy and perfectly ripe fruit could be brought in. Especially the aromatic varieties, such as Sauvignon Blanc, Scheurebe and Muskateller, showed themselves to be intensely fragrant and well-balanced as young wines. But also the Pinot varieties and Riesling benefited from the good weather, resulting, in the experts' view, in a very classic Pfalz vintage: fruit-driven, elegant, fresh and moderate in alcohol. This is also a year for noble sweet specialities and there is still hope for an ice wine. The harvest volume was slightly down on the long-term average of ca. 2.2 million hectolitres. As *Ökonomierat (honorary title)* Edwin Schrank, head of the Pfalzwein organization, concludes: "Never before has a growing season surprised winegrowers so positively as this one!"

Rheingau: A question of nerves

Rain is fundamentally good. That is what Rheingau producers thought in January and February, especially as the previous year was very hot and dry. It is not bad when the water reservoirs are replenished. What happens, though, when in June so much rain falls as is usual for three months? That is too much of a good thing. For the winegrowers, this heralded the start of the tiring and nerve-wracking fight against infestations - above all, downy mildew. It was not always possible to drive in the vineyards to treat the vines as the ground was so wet. Nonetheless, the grapes developed more or less normally. *Veraison* (the onset of ripening) for Riesling began on the 20 August, which is exactly the 30-year average. The grapes were mostly harvested from the beginning to the middle of October. Thanks to the extremely good late summer and autumn weather, the grapes attained optimal maturity and showed good must weights. Fruit acidity and sugar levels in the berries were in perfect balance, promising fruity, balanced Rieslings with an elegant structure. At an estimated 200,000 litres, the harvest volume was at the level of the previous year but ten per cent below the ten-year average.

Rheinhessen: All you need is luck

The "Summer in September" will remain long in the memory of Rheinhessen winegrowers. The autumn month, with beautiful sunshine and temperatures of 3.8 °C above average, made up for quite a few of the deficits - a situation which had seemed almost unachievable in view of the difficult weather conditions in the first half of the year. In May it rained three times more than normal, and this was after an already very cool spring. As a result, vegetation was some two weeks behind until the summer; due to the damp conditions, disease pressure on the vines was high. Crucial treatments were hampered by the condition of the vineyards, where in some instances sodden soils made it impossible to use vehicles. The change came in July. Mostly dry, warm weather continued through to September, with top temperatures of

35 °C in August. The harvest kicked off at the beginning of September with the early-ripening varieties, followed by the main harvest from mid-September. With the exception of those sites where outbreaks of disease in the spring had caused heavy losses of up to 100% of the crop, mostly very healthy, fully ripe grapes with respectable must weights could be brought in. The harvest estimate of 2.5 million hectolitres was just short of the usual. Overall fruit-driven, juicy wines with slightly lower alcohol levels than in the previous year are to be expected. Rieslings in particular benefited from the ideal autumn and are displaying pronounced aromas – the excellent aromatic ripeness is, according to the experts, the secret of the 2016 vintage.

Saale-Unstrut: Something of everything

In Germany's northernmost wine region, budburst occurred in May under clear blue skies and was followed by an equally unproblematic flowering from mid-June. No sooner had summer arrived than the thermometer rose to some 30 °C. July was just as hot and dry, although the area around Freyburg was hit by a hailstorm on 17 July. The warmth and humidity did cause a certain amount of disease pressure, which winegrowers countered with precise canopy management in order to improve aeration and drying of the bunches. August brought high temperatures and in some cases storms with hail damage. The harvest finally got underway on 20 September in calm, dry autumn weather. Then in October the rain came with cooler temperatures, however the fruit remained in very good health throughout the autumn. This formed the basis for distinctly fruity, full-bodied wines with moderate acidity levels both in the entry-level sector and the specialities. The estimated harvest volume of 55,000 hectolitres is on the same level as the previous year. However the quality is a step up from 2015, explained Winegrowers' Association president Siegfried Boy. The young wines reflect the sunshine of this vintage. 2016 will delight wine lovers.

Sachsen: Flexibility despite the rain

The harvest called for "a lot of flexibility" from the winegrowers, the Sachsen Agricultural Board reported. This was of course due to the weather, which was not short of challenges. Spring was relatively dry. June was then very wet, causing damage from *coulure* - for example, in the Traminer vineyards -, and some disease pressure from downy mildew. More favourable for growth were the mid-summer temperatures from August to September, however the extreme heat at the end of August again meant stress for the grapes. Picking of the early-ripening varieties began on 10 September with very good quality fruit, although the Cherry Vinegar Fly (*Drosophila suzukii*) created problems in some parts. Fortunately, the cooler temperatures in the cold and damp October prevented any major damage. With assiduous work in the vineyard, growers were able to bring in an overall very healthy crop. Volumes were also in line at an estimated 27,500 hectolitres. "At last we have again two

good vintages in a row in Sachsen”, enthused Winegrowers’ Association president Christoph Reiner. There will also be very high quality specialities right up to the noble sweet category.

Wuerttemberg: Challenges expertly mastered

As elsewhere in Germany’s southwest, spring in Wuerttemberg was also extremely wet and called for fine-tuned vine protection. Thereafter it was increasingly hot and dry; the Acolon and Dornfelder grapes were already fully-coloured by mid-August. Other varieties, such as Riesling, Müller-Thurgau, Kerner, Trollinger and Schwarzriesling (Pinot Meunier), also attained excellent physiological ripeness. The harvest progressed steadily under mostly dry conditions from 24 September to the end of October, the only interruption being a heavy rainfall on 21.10. In the opinion of the experts, Wuerttemberg producers will bring a very good quality into the glass this year, comparable with the exceptional vintage of 2015. The harvest volume of 1.1 million hectolitres was a little better than the long-term average and even a little higher than in the picture-perfect vintage of 2015. The young wines are fruity with a pronounced varietal character.

Nationwide must estimate from october 20th 2016

| | 10/20/2016 | 2015 | 10y medium | change 2016/2015 | change 2016/long term medium |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| | Hectoliter | Hectoliter | Hectoliter | % | % |
| Ahr | 39.000 | 39.000 | 40.000 | 0 | -3 |
| Mittelrhein | 35.000 | 29.000 | 30.000 | 21 | 17 1 |
| Mosel | 750.000 | 760.000 | 809.000 | -1 | -7 |
| Nahe | 300.000 | 314.000 | 331.000 | -4 | -9 |
| Rheinhessen | 2.450.000 | 2.495.000 | 2.563.000 | -2 | -4 |
| Pfalz | 2.220.000 | 2.267.000 | 2.221.000 | -2 | 0 |
| Rheingau | 200.000 | 202.000 | 222.000 | -1 | -10 |
| Hessische Bergstraße | 30.000 | 31.000 | 30.000 | -3 | -0 |
| Franken | 500.000 | 420.000 | 446.000 | 19 | 12 |
| Württemberg | 1.100.000 | 1.078.000 | 1.069.000 | 2 | 3 |
| Baden | 1.300.000 | 1.159.000 | 1.224.000 | 12 | 6 |
| Saale-Unstrut | 53.000 | 53.000 | 43.000 | 0 | 23 |
| Sachsen | 31.000 | 25.000 | 20.000 | 24 | 55 |
| overall | 9.008.000 | 8.873.000 | 9.048.000 | 2 | 0 |

source: The German Wine Institute (DWI) i.e.Wines of Germany. data: Deutscher Weinbauverband (DWV)

