

Riesling Report

The voice of Riesling

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2001

The German Auctions of 2001

The four major annual auctions represent the best of the vintage



ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

A Special Report:

Australia's Riesling pioneer John Vickery

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Next Issue

Germany's 2000 vintage

The auction wines in this issue will give you a tip-of-the-iceberg preview of what went on with the 2000 vintage, but for our full report, you'll want to join us again with the January/February 2002 issue of Riesling Report. In it we'll help you separate the tops from the flops as we take a tasting tour of Germany's major Riesling regions. We can't taste everything (the Mosel-Saar-Ruwer region alone has over 6,000 producers!), but we will have plenty of tasting notes to give you a representative sampling of the finer estates.

In addition, we'll take a closer look at the Pfalz, as we examine the region's winemaking style, cultural history and geographical characteristics. This is a region that has been making great improvements lately, as many of the top producers are rediscovering their tradition for full-bodied dry wines. We'll give you our recommendations for vineyards and estates to follow and wines to seek out. Saumagen anyone?

Riesling Report is published electronically six times a year by Kirk Wille and Peter Liem. A one-year subscription is just \$24.

To subscribe, and for more information, please visit the Riesling Report Web site: www.rieslingreport.com

We welcome letters, comments and suggestions. Interesting and thoughtful letters will be published in future issues. Unproductive ranting will be disregarded. Useful suggestions will be adopted.

If you would like to tell us about a particularly thrilling Riesling experience you've had, or would like to ask us some questions, please direct your correspondence to:

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That's the ticket!

I STRONGLY URGE YOU to find some way to attend one or two of Germany's annual auctions at least once in your Riesling-drinking career. It's really not impossible. Tickets to the auctions are much easier to get (and much cheaper) than, say, tickets to "The Producers." And, in my opinion, they are a much better investment.

Don't get me wrong, Nathan Lane can make me laugh with the slightest furrow of his brow, but I'd much rather spend my day tasting a stellar collection of high-end Rieslings than staring at stars on a Broadway stage. Musicals are fun to watch, but they're not very interactive. These German auctions and their pre-tastings, however, are a hands-on, visceral experience that you will never forget.

Not all of the wines you will taste at the auctions will be runaway hits, but that goes with the territory. Still, in one day you will taste more than a few of the finest, rarest and most expensive wines in the world. Aside from the pure joy of tasting the best of them, there is a perverse pleasure in knowing that you are drinking something that very few others ever will. These are not everyday wines for pedestrian palates. These are vinous works of art, begging for the understanding of a sensitive soul.

You've waited long enough. Take your senses (and your soul) to Germany and step out with the real stars.

—Kirk Wille, editor & publisher

The German Auctions of 2001

SEPTEMBER IS AUCTION TIME IN GERMANY. Every year, wine lovers from around the globe gather for the four major auctions: two on the Mosel, one in Rheingau and a combined auction for the Nahe and Ahr. These auctions are for serious collectors and high-end wine merchants, and the winemakers set aside their rarest, most special creations for these showcase events. Most of the wines are from the current vintage, but a few rarities are usually included and upper-Prädikat dessert wines are normally auctioned a year or two later.

Using auction wines as an indicator for the overall quality of the vintage helps to make clear what areas fared better than others and who are really the great producers. “A difficult vintage like 2000,” say Johannes Selbach, “will really separate the men from the boys.” I think you will see what he’s talking about as you read through the auction notes below.

The auctions are essentially promotional events for the winegrowers. They are commercial auctions, however, and the participating estates do stand a chance to make some decent money. These are not charity events, they are a reminder of days past when all of the wine these estates produced was sold at auction. Today, most of their wines are sold through normal distribution channels. Only a few limited-production wines are reserved for the auctions.

Not every great estate in Germany participates in the auctions. Conversely, not every participating estate is a top-quality producer. The growers’ organizations have relatively high quality standards, but there are always underachievers. In addition, certain regions, such as the Pfalz, don’t have an auction at all. Overall, however, the quality of the wines is quite good at all of the auctions and we are here to help you sift the golden wheat from the dismal chaff.

So you want to do some bidding?

Germany’s auctions are not secretive events. Anyone can attend, provided you get your tickets while they are still available. See the box on page 10 for a schedule of the auctions coming in 2002. You can contact the respective organizations directly to request ticket reservations (they all can read English).

The auctions are a fun and inexpensive way to taste a lot of high-end wines. Each auction is preceded by a morning tasting where you have the chance to meet and talk to the winemakers. The auction takes place in the afternoon and each wine is poured again as it’s being auctioned (the logistical feat of serving one-ounce pours to 300 people in just a couple of minutes alone is worth seeing).

You don’t bid directly, however. You have to connect with an importer who attends the auctions or with one of the official commissioners who do the actual bidding. See “How to get German auction wines” on page 5 for a few ideas on how to get started. Our 2000 auction issue (still available to subscribers in the Library of our Web site) has a complete rundown on the auction process.



In September, a crowd of serious wine lovers gathered at the Museum Römerhalle in Bad Kreuznach for the annual collective auction of VDP Nahe and Ahr estates.

Bernkasteler Ring

Bernkastel, 18 September 2001

This auction is for a non-VDP association of Mosel-Saar-Ruwer estates, known as the Bernkasteler Ring. It is also sometimes called the “Kleiner Ring” to distinguish it from the VDP Mosel “Grosser Ring” auction in Trier. The Bernkasteler Ring always kicks off the auction week on the third Tuesday of September.

Though not as prestigious as the VDP Mosel auction, and generally of lesser overall quality, there are some excellent estates in this auction. Unfortunately, we can't give you personal tasting notes on this year's wines because our flight to Germany was delayed in all of the mid-September turmoil. We can, however, give you the complete list of wines and their hammer prices, along with some general impressions from friends in the trade who attended.

Most of the usual stars shone brightly again this year, but Markus Molitor clearly outclassed the field with his powerful, super-concentrated, yet sleek and racy Rieslings. He has quickly become the biggest fish in the Bernkastel pond. Wines from the venerable Pauly-Bergweiler estate suffered from ponderous weight in 2000, although Dr. Pauly's other estate, Peter Nicolay, produced excellent, well-balanced auction wines.

One of our perennial favorite estates is Kees-Kieren, and we were excited to hear that their 2000s were uniformly superb, including an Auslese that was one of the true highlights of the auction (auction item #29). Other estates with stand-out wines were: Kanzlerhof with a racy Kabinett; Lehnert-Veit with a fresh and clean Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Spätlese; Johann Peter Reinert with a delicious Auslese from Wiltinger Schlangengraben; Albert Gessinger with vibrant two- and three-star Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Auslesen; and Reinhold Franzen with his spicy, lively Bremmer Calmont Auslese.

The wines are listed in the order in which they were auctioned. All of the prices are in German marks; quantities and bottle sizes are listed in parentheses after each wine.

Paulinshof

1. Brauneberger Kammer Riesling Auslese trocken 2000 – DM62
AP 26. (60 – 750ml)

Kanzlerhof

2. Mehlinger Blattenberg Riesling Auslese feinherb 1999 – DM40
AP 6-01. (60 – 750ml)

Karp-Schreiber

3. Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese feinherb 2000 – DM30
AP 8. (90 – 750ml)

Peter Nicolay

4. Erdener Prälat Riesling Auslese halbtrocken 2000 – DM25
AP 12. (60 – 750ml)



At the pre-tasting for the Bernkasteler Ring auction, prospective buyers can sample all of the wines and meet the wine makers.



Kanzlerhof

5. Mehringer Blattenberg Riesling Kabinett 2000 – DM13,50
AP 6. (480 – 750ml)

Clüsserath-Eifel

6. Trittenheimer Apotheke Riesling Kabinett 2000 – DM16
AP 6. (600 – 750ml)

Kees-Kieren

7. Erdener Treppchen Riesling Kabinett 2000 – DM18
AP 19. (300 – 750ml)

Schmitt-Wagner

8. Longuicher Maximiner Herrenberg Riesling Spätlese 1999 – DM20
AP 2. (240 – 750ml)

Erben von Beulwitz

9. Kaseler Nies'chen Riesling Spätlese** 2000 – DM20
AP 10. (240 – 750ml)

Michael Goerg

10. Neumagener Rosengärtchen Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM16
AP 4. (240 – 750ml)

Lehnert-Veit

11. Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM25
AP 1. (240 – 750ml)

Peter Nicolay

12. Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM25
AP 4. (96 – 750ml)

Heribert Kerpen

13. Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM16,50
AP 12. (300 – 750ml)

Markus Molitor

14. Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM 50
AP 23. (180 – 750ml)

Alfred Merkelbach

15. Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM17,50
AP 10. (240 – 750ml)

Erben Hubert Schmitges

16. Erdener Treppchen Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM16
AP 5. (180 – 750ml)

E. Reverchon

17. Filzener Herrenberg Riesling Auslese 1997 – DM27,50
AP 18. (180 – 750ml)

Peter Neu Erben

18. Wiltinger Klosterberg Riesling Auslese 1999 – DM28 (500ml)
AP 9. (240 – 500ml)

Johann Peter Reinert

19. Wiltinger Schlangengraben Riesling Auslese 1999 – DM45
AP 26. (120 – 750ml; 120 – 375ml)

HOW TO GET GERMAN AUCTION WINES

Non-European Riesling fans usually have to traverse several layers of international trade regulations to get their hands on some auction wines.

Retail

Start with your favorite wine shop. Ask them to talk to their German wine supplier about submitting bids for you.

If you run into a brick wall, you can contact **Dee Vine Wines** in San Francisco, a committed auction wine retailer.
Phone: (415) 398-3838
www.dvw.com

Import/Wholesale

If the distributor that supplies your local wineshop doesn't have a clue about auction wines, have them contact an importer who does, such as **Ewald Moseler Selections**.
Phone: (503) 236-9370
www.moseler.com

Commissioner

Your last resort will be to contact one of the commissioners directly and see if they can help you work backwards to get the wines to you legally. The one we know best is Hans Selbach at **J&H Selbach**, the shipping and négociant family that also owns the excellent Selbach-Oster estate.
Phone: (+49) 6532-2081
selbach.zeltingen@t-online.de

European Riesling lovers have it easier. They can contact one of the auction commissioners directly to submit their bids. For a complete list of commissioners, please visit the Library of our Web site.

E. Reverchon

20. Wiltinger Gottesfuß Riesling Auslese 1999 – DM30
AP 26. (180 – 750ml)

Schmitt-Wagner

21. Longuicher Maximiner Herrenberg Riesling Auslese 1999 – DM35
AP 1. (120 – 750ml)

Erben Hubert Schmitges

22. Erdener Treppchen Riesling Auslese 1999 – DM25
AP 5. (150 – 750ml)

Erben von Beulwitz

23. Kaseler Nies'chen Riesling Auslese*** 2000 – DM80
AP 13. (120 – 750ml)

O. Werner

24. Schweicher Annaberg Riesling Auslese 2000 – DM43 (500ml)
AP 10. (120 – 500ml)

Lehnert-Veit

25. Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Auslese 2000 – DM 46 (500ml)
AP 2. (120 – 500ml)

Clüsserath-Eifel

26. Trittenheimer Apotheke Riesling Auslese 2000 – DM130 (375ml)
AP 10. (180 – 375ml)

Karp-Schreiber

27. Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese 2000 – DM57 (500ml)
AP 7. (90 – 500ml)

Pauly-Bergweiler

28. Bernkasteler alte Badstube am Doctorberg Riesling Auslese 2000 – DM94
AP 29. (48 – 750ml)

Kees-Kieren

29. Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese*** 2000 – DM80
AP 20. (84 – 750ml; 24 – 375ml)

Heribert Kerpen

30. Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese*** 2000 – DM60
AP 4. (24 – 750ml; 120 – 375ml)

Markus Molitor

31. Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese** 2000 – DM200
AP 28. (60 – 750ml; 36 – 375ml)

32. Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese*** 2000 – DM410
AP 29. (36 – 750ml; 36 – 375ml)

Albert Gessinger

33. Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese*** 2000 – DM35
AP 8. (60 – 750ml; 24 – 375ml)

Reinhold Franzen

34. Bremmer Calmont Riesling Auslese 2000 – DM46
AP 8. (72 – 750ml)

HOW TO GET GERMAN AUCTION WINES (after the auction)

Retail

Contact **Dee Vine Wines** in San Francisco. They buy heavily every year for their own retail inventory. They have a fine selection from some of the best producers, and they have a beautiful catalog.

Phone: (415) 398-3838
www.dvw.com

On the Web

You can't bid at the auctions through the Web yet, but you can bid on wines that a Web auction site has procured for resale. A good place to start is **Brentwood Wine Company**. They work a lot with high-end German wines and they were active bidders at the auctions this year.

www.brentwoodwine.com

Commissioners

Finally, you can contact the commissioners directly to see what auction wines they have in their own stocks. With list in hand, you can work with your local retail/import team to get the wines through the tricky waters of international trade. See the complete list of auction commissioners in the Library of our Web site.

Reinhard & Beate Knebel

35. Winniger Uhlen Riesling Auslese 2000 – DM100
AP 19. (48 – 750ml)

Heribert Kerpen

36. Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Beerenauslese 1997 – DM150 (375ml)
AP 26. (36 – 375ml)

Chateau de Schengen

37. Schengener Markusberg Vendange Tardive 1999 (Luxembourg) – DM300 (375ml)
L-7259. (36 – 375ml)

E. Reverchon

38. Wiltinger Gottesfuß Riesling Beerenauslese 1999 – DM155
AP 27. (60 – 375ml)

Erben von Beulwitz

39. Kaseler Nies'chen Riesling Beerenauslese 1999 – DM460 (375ml)
AP 14. (60 – 375ml)

O. Werner

40. Schweicher Annaberg Riesling Beerenauslese 1999 – DM190 (375ml)
AP 4. (60 – 375ml)

Clüsserath-Eifel

41. Trittenheimer Apotheke Riesling Beerenauslese 1999 – DM200 (375ml)
AP 12. (120 – 375ml)

Markus Molitor

42. Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Beerenauslese* 1999 – DM1170
AP 2-01. (24 – 750ml; 24 – 375ml)

43. Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Eiswein* 1998 – DM1000
AP 5-01. (36 – 750ml; 36 – 375ml)

Erben von Beulwitz

44. Eitelsbacher Marienholz Riesling Eiswein 1999 – DM800 (375ml)
AP 15-01. (24 – 375ml)

Pauly-Bergweiler

45. Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Eiswein 1999 – DM900 (375ml)
AP 60-01. (24 – 375ml)

Erben Hubert Schmitges

46. Erdener Treppchen Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese 1999 – DM350 (375ml)
AP 4. (24 – 375ml)

Pauly-Bergweiler

47. Bernkasteler alte Badstube am Doctorberg Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese 1999 –
DM 2000
AP 5-01. (24 – 375ml)

Markus Molitor

48. Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese* 1998 – DM2500
AP 5. (12 – 750ml; 12 – 375ml)



VDP Mosel-Saar-Ruwer ("Grosser Ring")

Trier, 19 September 2001

With so many illustrious names included in the Grosser Ring auction, this is usually an exciting event to attend, and this year was no exception. As in most of Germany, 2000 was not an easy vintage in the Mosel-Saar-Ruwer, with the Saar being hit especially hard. Yet even here there were promising wines, not only from the usual suspects Egon Müller and Zilliken, but also from von Othegraven, whose Spätlese and Goldkapsel Auslese were two of the greatest bargains of the auction.

In the Mittelmosel, Fritz Haag's Spätlese and lange Goldkapsel Auslese continued to prove that Haag's 2000 collection is among the finest in Germany. Other stars included Willi Schaefer, Dr. Loosen and a brilliant four-star Auslese from Christoffel. The auction concluded with a delectable series of dessert wines from the past few vintages, building to the climax of the extremely expensive and controversial 1994 Trockenbeerenauslese from Egon Müller, which at DM7800 per bottle (\$3,700) pretty much shattered all previous auction records.

Mönchhof

1. Erdener Prälat Riesling Auslese 2000 – DM50 (375ml)

Ripe, orange-citrus fruitiness and a prominent botrytis component give this a lushly velvety feel, yet a nice balance of acidity prevents it from appearing overly soft. Its delicate fineness becomes more apparent on the long and elegant finish. **89** (480 – 375ml)

Joh. Jos. Prüm

2. Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM43

Racy and focused, with a lot of youthful yeastiness right now, but underneath there is a sneaky subtlety and plenty of appeal. **89** (360 – 750ml)

3. Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese 2000 – DM75 (750ml)

4. Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese 2000 – DM150 (1,5L)

This has fine, elegant ripeness and a really stylish quality about it, but it's also marked by very heavy sulfur, even in the context of young Prüm wines. Time will tell. **89?**

(192 – 750ml; 24 – 1,5L)

5. Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM130 (750ml)

6. Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM95 (375ml)

7. Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM180 (1,5L)

Makes a dramatic impact on the front end, with lush, botrytised richness. This is a pleasant wine and definitely has the Prüm signature, but it seems to lack a bit in presence and depth in the mid-palate through the back end, making it somewhat puzzling. **87**

(72 – 750ml; 72 – 375ml; 12 – 1,5L)

8. Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese lange Goldkapsel 2000 – DM400 (750ml)

9. Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese lange Goldkapsel 2000 – DM270 (375ml)

Explosive dimension on the nose, extremely fine and well-knit, continuing to build on the palate with harmonious, creamy layers that resonate on a long, graceful finish. Excellent wine, and a marked step up from the previous three. **93(+?)** (54 – 750ml; 60 – 375ml)

Joh. Jos. Christoffel-Erben

10. Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM60 (375ml)

Intensely tropical flavors of papaya, mango and lime. Despite its lushness, this has razor-sharp definition, sleekly racing its way through a full, aromatic and persistent finish. Wonderful. **94** (240 – 375ml)



Hanno Zilliken (right) and auctioneer Eberhard von Kunow take bids from the commissioners at the VDP Mosel auction in Trier.

Willi Haag

11. Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM32,50 (375ml)

Bright and lively, marked by botrytis and a slight herbalness, but this handles itself quite well. This acquires a fair bit of intensity as it moves back on the palate. **89** (240 – 375ml)

St. Urbans-Hof

12. Leiwener Laurentiuslay Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM25 (750ml)

13. Leiwener Laurentiuslay Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM50 (1,5L)

A bit overly herbal, with some apple skin-like bitterness. This is alright to drink, but it never really comes together properly. **82**

14. Ockfener Bockstein Riesling Auslese lange Goldkapsel 2000 – DM150 (750ml)

15. Ockfener Bockstein Riesling Auslese lange Goldkapsel 2000 – DM75 (375ml)

Broad, soft and easy-going. The flavors are alright, if a bit syrupy. **85**

Willi Schaefer

16. Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM50

Mandarin orange and tangerine-skin citrusness, backed by racy acidity that gives this an impeccable balance and poise. Not extremely long, but very stylish and very Domprobst. **92** (420 – 750ml)

Stüdert-Prüm

17. Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese 1976 – DM750

Not offered for tasting. (2 – 375ml)

Fritz Haag

18. Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM55 (750ml)

19. Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM115 (1,5L)

Flowery and sleek, with incisive, mineral-driven aromas of tangerine and pear. Very pretty and subtle as it lingers through a long back end. **92** (450 – 750ml; 42 – 1,5L)

20. Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese lange Goldkapsel 2000 – DM430 (750ml)

21. Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese lange Goldkapsel 2000 – DM180 (375ml)

22. Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese lange Goldkapsel 2000 – DM1200 (1,5L)

Pungently intense, with creamy depth and quite a bit of girth for a Fritz Haag wine. Even so, it balances its mass superbly, and what botrytis it has is perfectly integrated in that signature Haag way. Lingers in perfumed presence on a full, resonant finish. **94(+?)**

(60 – 750ml; 60 – 375ml; 4 – 1,5L)

Heymann-Löwenstein

23. Winninger Uhlen Riesling Auslese lange Goldkapsel #15 2000 – DM120 (375ml)

Big-boned, with a lot of initial power, but doesn't carry through in the mid-palate, missing real definition and completeness. Ultimately this focuses more on body than finesse, and it's a bit disappointing considering what we've come to expect from this top-notch producer. **87** (160 – 375ml)



Domprobst, that special vineyard in the village of Graach where Willi Schaefer works his Riesling magic.

Reinhold Haart

24. Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Auslese 2000 – DM52 (750ml)

25. Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Auslese 2000 – DM26 (375ml)

Firm and pure in profile, with the pronounced cassis and sweet-herbal tones that are so typical of Theo Haart's Goldtröpfchen. Its unusual style may deter some tasters, but I think it's wonderful. Its tightly wound structure will take a long time to develop, so bury this in the cellar. **92** (180 – 750ml; 120 – 375ml)

Wwe. Dr. H. Thanisch-Erben Thanisch

26. Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM40 (750ml)

27. Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM110 (1,5L)

This is a great example of the Doctor, exhibiting the distinct, flowery slatiness that is specific to this hillside. It is definitely a wine that could not have come from just anywhere. It's not the most complex wine, nor the most complete, but I like it for its pure expression of site. **90** (336 – 750ml; 12 – 1,5L)

28. Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM180 (750ml)

29. Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM60 (375ml)

This has a lot of charm – it's not terribly complex but it has a nicely balanced lushness and a sleek, ripely juicy allure. But while this is delicious to drink, the Spätlese is the more site-specific wine, and thus the more interesting one for me. **89** (60 – 750ml; 120 – 375ml)

Schloss Lieser

30. Lieser Niederberg Helden Riesling Auslese*** lange Goldkapsel 2000 – DM100 (750ml)

31. Lieser Niederberg Helden Riesling Auslese*** lange Goldkapsel 2000 – DM44 (375ml)

Velvety and ripe, with a great deal of puppy fat driving this right now. It seems to have a fine, firm acidity underneath to hold it all together, and should develop nicely. **90(+?)** (72 – 750ml; 150 – 375ml)

Dr. Loosen

32. Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM46 (750ml)

33. Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM31 (375ml)

34. Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM100 (1,5L)

This is rounder and more approachable than usual, and hasn't got quite the incisive grip that this wine usually has. However, it's every bit as dramatic, showing real old-vine concentration, ripeness and depth. **90(+?)** (276 – 750ml; 120 – 375ml; 12 – 1,5L)

35. Erdener Prälät Riesling Auslese lange Goldkapsel 2000 – DM560 (750ml)

36. Erdener Prälät Riesling Auslese lange Goldkapsel 2000 – DM280 (375ml)

Concentrated, pure and harmonious, exploding on the palate with wonderful flavors of white peach and mandarin orange. It's plush and ripe, yet it also maintains a wonderful definition and clarity. **94** (30 – 750ml; 100 – 375ml)

Karthäuserhof

37. Burgberg #21 feinste Auslese 1921 – DM3500 (700ml)

Not offered for tasting. (1 – 700ml)

Forstmeister Geltz-Zilliken

38. Saarburger Rausch Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM84 (750ml)

39. Saarburger Rausch Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM66 (375ml)

Subtle wine, flowery and delicately aromatic. This builds unhurriedly on the palate in quiet, expansive dimension – introverted in profile, versus the extroverted power of Loosen's Prälät. Very fine, and very impressive. **94** (90 – 750ml; 60 – 375ml)

Le Gallais

40. Wiltinger braune Kupp Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM42

Clean and racy, with a nearly red-berry aroma on the palate. Nicely ripe and appealing. **91** (480 – 750ml)

German auction schedule for 2002**Bernkasteler Ring**

Tuesday, Sept. 17, 2002

Hotel Moselpark, Bernkastel

"Kleiner Ring" auction of

non-VDP Mosel estates.

DM60 for pre-tasting & auction.

www.bernkasteler-ring.com

VDP-Mosel

Wednesday, Sept. 18, 2002

Europahalle, Trier

"Grosser Ring" auction of

Mosel-Saar-Ruwer VDP estates.

DM120 for pre-tasting & auction.

www.vdp.de

VDP-Rheingau

Saturday, Sept. 21, 2002

Kloster Eberbach

DM110 for pre-tasting & auction.

VDP Ahr & Nahe

Sunday, Sept. 22, 2002

Museum Römerhalle,

Bad Kreuznach

DM50 for pre-tasting & auction.

41. Wiltinger braune Kupp Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM220 (750ml)

42. Wiltinger braune Kupp Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM150 (375ml)

Wonderful dimension and depth on the nose, showing fine aromas of dried apricot, fresh berries and cream. This has a lot of richness in the mouth – it remains a little high-toned throughout the palate, but it has a terrific sense of breed. **93** (80 – 750ml; 80 – 375ml)

von Othegraven

43. Kanzemer Altenberg Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM27

Beautifully clean and taut, subtly resonating with purity and harmony on the palate. This is really good. **92** (360 – 750ml)

44. Kanzemer Altenberg Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM70 (750ml)

45. Kanzemer Altenberg Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM40 (375ml)

Impressive wine, harmoniously built with subtle, penetrating depth. This is superbly balanced, giving an overall impression of extreme purity. **93** (60 – 750ml; 120 – 375ml)

Egon Müller-Scharzhof

46. Scharzhofberger Riesling Kabinett 2000 – DM41

Classy and elegant, very pointed and sleek. This seems to have a good deal of promise. **89** (1200 – 750ml)

47. Scharzhofberger Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM57

This also has a lot of class, resembling the Kabinett in profile if not quite as complete. It seems just a little short on the palate, but the quality here is high. **88** (600 – 750ml)

48. Scharzhofberger Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM450 (750ml)

49. Scharzhofberger Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM300 (375ml)

Very concentrated and raisiny, very decadent and Versace-esque, though this manages to pull everything together in a fine balance and harmony. **92(+?)** (150 – 750ml; 180 – 375ml)

von Hövel

50. Oberemmel Hütte Riesling Auslese 2000 – DM51

Almost chocolaty flavors, quite thick in texture, with a lot of aroma and nice length. **90** (240 – 750ml)

S.A. Prüm, Wehlen

51. Bernkasteler Lay Riesling Eiswein 1999 – DM170 (375ml)

This is certainly a powerful wine, and has a lot of impact, but I find that it hasn't got much to say beyond the expression of power. I don't think that this is the direction that Mosel Riesling should be moving in. **86?** (72 – 375ml)

Forstmeister Geltz-Zilliken

52. Saarbürger Rausch Riesling Eiswein 1997 – DM480 (750ml)

53. Saarbürger Rausch Riesling Eiswein 1997 – DM300 (375ml)

54. Saarbürger Rausch Riesling Eiswein 1997 – DM1000 (1,5L)

Sleekly perfumed and super-elegant, this is one of the standouts of the auction. It has a plush, full presence on the palate, yet is held firmly in place by razor-sharp acidity, exhibiting true Eiswein character and concentration. An absolute joy to drink. **95** (18 – 750ml; 24 – 375ml; 3 – 1,5L)

Karthäuserhof

55. Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Eiswein 1999 – DM390 (750ml)

56. Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Eiswein 1999 – DM220 (375ml)

Terrific aromas, exploding fragrantly in a floral- and berry-tinged density. On the palate it's very fruit-driven right now, even seeming a bit soft, but the flavors are great. This should improve with some bottle-age, once the fruit settles down. **91(+?)** (90 – 750ml; 180 – 375ml)



von Hövel**57. Oberemmeler Hütte Riesling Eiswein 1998 – DM310 (375ml)**

Caramelized, confectionary and botrytised, extremely concentrated and powerful. A big, big mouthful of wine. This is a wine of high quality, but it's in a very particular style which may not appeal to some. **90?** (72 – 375ml)

Wwe. Dr. H. Thanisch-Erben Thanisch**58. Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Eiswein 1998 – DM500 (750ml)****59. Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Eiswein 1998 – DM200 (375ml)**

Pineapple and tropical in profile, this is extremely intense and concentrated, with positively raging acidity. It's an interesting comparison between this and the last wine – this is equally concentrated, but has a clarity and clean, racy buoyancy that makes it seem more elegant overall. **91(+?)** (24 – 750ml; 48 – 375ml)

Geheimrat J. Wegeler Erben**60. Bernkasteler Doctor Riesling Beerenauslese 1999 – DM500 (750ml)****61. Bernkasteler Doctor Riesling Beerenauslese 1999 – DM260 (375ml)**

This has ripeness but lacks balance and breeding, and is strongly marked by an oddly herbal component. Not recommended. (24 – 750ml; 48 – 375ml)

Joh. Jos. Prüm**62. Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Beerenauslese 1999 – DM1000 (750ml)****63. Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Beerenauslese 1999 – DM500 (375ml)**

An intense experience, in every sense. This is profound in its aristocratic breed and elegant harmony, constantly expanding on the palate as it unfolds in layers of richly resonant complexity. **97** (24 – 750ml; 24 – 375ml)

Schloss Saarstein**64. Serriger Schloss Saarsteiner Riesling Beerenauslese 1999 – DM310 (750ml)****65. Serriger Schloss Saarsteiner Riesling Beerenauslese 1999 – DM190 (375ml)**

Apple-like in profile, backed by a steely Saar undertone and hints of mint and caramel. I'm not really sure how this will develop – it certainly has plenty of acidity, but will the fruit round out and catch up? **89?** (24 – 750ml; 96 – 375ml)

Karthäuserhof**66. Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Beerenauslese 1999 – DM320 (750ml)****67. Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Beerenauslese 1999 – DM180 (375ml)**

This certainly has a fineness and an elegant appeal about it. Like the Eiswein, it appears slightly soft right now, though the flavors are really compelling. I suppose ultimately it's a question of style. **90(+?)** (90 – 750ml; 180 – 375ml)

Egon Müller-Scharzhof**68. Scharzhofberger Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese 1994 – DM7800 (750ml)****69. Scharzhofberger Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese 1994 – DM3500 (375ml)**

One of the most controversial wines of the auction. Extremely deep in color, this wine exhibits an oddly oxidative character throughout, although I didn't find it offensive, as many people did. Interestingly enough, this character seemed to expand the complexity of aromas in much the same way as a fine amontillado or palo cortado (though it wasn't as oxidative as that, so perhaps it's a bad analogy as it may give the wrong impressions), showing a finely layered array of caramel, candied orange and marmalade. It is almost painfully viscous in the mouth, thickly concentrated and creamy. Definitely a wine unlike any other I've tasted, and I don't quite know what to make of it. ?? (24 – 750ml; 24 – 375ml)



VDP Rheingau

Kloster Eberbach, 22 September 2001

The Rheingau auction seemed to be a bit subdued this year, perhaps due to the fact that 2000 was an extremely difficult vintage in this region. In fact, many producers were unable to submit wines from 2000, opting instead to offer older vintages.

It is an exciting prospect to be able to purchase older vintages directly from producers' cellars; however, some of these wines are definitely better than others – older does not necessarily indicate better! Domdechant Werner presented some classy wines, as did Schloss Reinhartshausen and Langwerth von Simmern, but overall there was little here that truly expressed the glory of the Rheingau in the 60s and 70s. We advise the consumer to shop carefully.

It is generally accepted that, in the Rheingau, Rudesheim was the commune that fared the best in 2000, and the Eiswein from Josef Leitz, Rudesheim's VDP star, was as compelling as expected. But the cream of the auction crop was Schloss Schönborn's wonderful "Lothar Franz" Spätlese from Pfaffenberg, along with its sibling the Marcobrunn. These are terrific wines in their own right, but all the more amazing having come from the 2000 vintage.

Fans of the Rheingau will want to pursue the wines from their favorite producers, as always, but quite frankly 2000 was not a vintage to be terribly excited about here. We will cover this topic more widely in our report on the 2000 vintage in Germany, appearing in the January/February 2002 issue of Riesling Report.

Fritz Allendorf

1. Winkeler Jesuitengarten Riesling Kabinett trocken 2000 – DM14

Fragrant and flowery, with appealing flavors of pear, guava and lime. This could use a little more depth of fruit to balance the dryness and acidity, but overall it has a nice profile. **86** (240 – 750ml)

August Eser

2. Oestricher Lenchen Riesling Spätlese trocken 2000 – DM19

Light, appley and crisp, this is reasonably clean and refreshing but remains rather high-toned and incomplete in the mid-palate. **85** (120 – 750ml)

Prinz von Hessen

3. Johannisberger Klaus Riesling Spätlese trocken 2000 – DM25,50

Rich, concentrated depth and a lot of girth – too much, in fact. Personally I find that its muscularity somewhat overwhelms itself, throwing it out of balance and making it far less interesting than it would be if the fruit were allowed to properly express itself. Not recommended. (120 – 750ml)

Diefenhardt'sches Weingut Martinthal

4. Martinthaler Langenberg Riesling Erstes Gewächs 2000

After all those words in its name, this wine was unexpectedly removed from the auction list.

Lorenz H. Kunz

5. Oestricher Doosberg Riesling Kabinett halbtrocken 2000 – DM10,50

Nicely aromatic on the nose, subtle, floral and citrusy. Unfortunately it's not nearly as well-defined on the palate, coming off as simple and a bit disjointed. **82** (180 – 750ml)



Auctioneer Dr. Leo Gros directs the action, and Wilhelm Weil (far right) listens to the bidding at the VDP Rheingau in the historic Kloster Eberbach monastery.

Domdechant Werner**6. Hochheimer Kirchenstück Riesling Spätlese 1971 – DM68**

This seems slightly more advanced than expected, but it's really delicious and at a perfect point of drinking right now. Greenish-gold in color, it opens on the nose with fragrant, harmonious secondary aromas. Bright acidity keeps this focused and racy on the palate. **90** (36 – 750ml)

Lorenz H. Kunz**7. Oestricher Lenchen Riesling Spätlese 1973 – DM35**

Herbal and aggressive; difficult to warm up to, even after tasting it twice. Not recommended. (36 – 700ml)

Schloss Reinhartshausen**8. Erbacher Schlossberg Riesling Spätlese 1976 – DM101**

Powerfully built, with a creamy texture and a candied citrus tone. Its richness is very compelling, even if one wishes for a bit more acidity to buttress it – but it's in the profile of the vintage, anyway. There is a slight bitterness of botrytis on the back end which might bother some people (like me) more than others, but overall this is a nicely drinkable, mature wine. **88** (30 – 700ml)

Domdechant Werner**9. Hochheimer Kirchenstück Riesling Spätlese 1994 – DM41**

Racy and sleek, marked by aromas of cured lemon and lemon peel. Taut and nicely defined. **89** (60 – 750ml)

Balthasar Ress**10. Rüdesheimer Berg Rottland Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM28**

Yet another wine proving the quality of Rüdesheim in 2000. Elegant and refined, this delivers fragrant, juicy citrus flavors in a cleanly expressive package, all underlined by a pronounced mineral element. Classy wine. **90** (180 – 750ml)

Fritz Allendorf**11. Winkeler Jesuitengarten Riesling Spätlese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM23**

Unclean aromas and unlikeable flavors – this is definitely flawed. Not recommended. (120 – 750ml)

Schloss Schönborn**12. 'Lothar Franz' Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM26**

For me, this is the star of the whole auction. This wine is 100% Pfaffenberg, and it shows – clean, pure and aristocratic, it exhibits firm yet subtly refined depth and intensity. Wonderful wine, really a standout in this vintage. **93(+?)** (180 – 750ml)

13. Erbacher Marcobrunn Riesling Spätlese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM28

From 60-year old vines in this legendary site. This has a wonderful presence and depth, richly built yet clean and controlled. Perhaps this hasn't got quite the refinement of the Lothar Franz, but this is classy too. **91** (120 – 750ml)

Graf von Kanitz**14. Lorcher Krone Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM30**

Nice and minerally, with a delicate profile, but this has just a hint of unclean botrytis that is enough to mar it. Still, there are appealing elements about it. **86?** (180 – 750ml)

Prinz von Hessen**15. Winkeler Hasensprung Riesling Spätlese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM30**

Rich, glossy girth and a lot of ripeness, but like the Spätlese trocken (auction lot #3), this has the sense of being a bit overblown. It's good to drink, and certainly a well-made wine, but it's less interesting than it could (or should) be. **88?** (36 – 750ml)



Schloss Vollrads**16. Riesling Spätlese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM61**

High-powered and heavily botrytised, this comes on in the mouth like a Turley Zinfandel. A lot of power here may win marks from other tasters, but I find this wine to be utterly without soul. This is not the sort of wine that will recapture the past glories of this estate. **82?** (120 – 750ml)

Schloss Johannisberg**17. Riesling Spätlese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM33**

Delicate and citrusy, with a compelling finesse and tangerine-rind complexity, though it could use a little more concentration and depth on the mid-palate. **87** (300 – 750ml)

Lorenz H. Kunz**18. Oestricher Pfaffenberg Riesling feine Auslese Cabinet 1969 – DM180**

Mature, biscuity nose, with a strong citrus-peel element. A decent example of the vintage, and certainly still drinking well, but there is a streak of bitter botrytis that mars the back end. **85** (3 – 700ml)

Hans Barth**19. Hattenheimer Hassel Riesling Auslese 1971 – DM115**

A glossy, candied-fruit tone, with prominent acidity and a slight mustiness in the background. Seems overly advanced for this vintage, but it's not bad. **87** (6 – 700ml)

Domdechant Werner**20. Hochheimer Stein Riesling Auslese 1976 – DM101**

Smoky, stony nose, with cleanly toasty, creamy tones of maturity. While this shows the overall roundness of the vintage, it's not overly soft, still maintaining its sense of poise and balance. Very compelling. **91** (36 – 700ml)

Schloss Reinhartshausen**21. Erbacher Markobrunn Riesling Auslese 1976 – DM250**

Delicately smoky, subtle nose, really expressing the breed of the site. Fully resolved aromas on the palate, fragrantly mature and richly textured, finishing with good aroma and length. **90** (6 – 700ml)

Dr. Heinrich Nögler**22. Rudesheimer Berg Roseneck Riesling Auslese 1998 – DM32 (500ml)**

Large in body and oddly disjointed, showing a tone almost like coconut. The sugar is quite dominant right now. **83?** (60 – 500ml)

Hans Barth**23. Hattenheimer Wisselbrunnen Riesling Auslese 1999 – DM47**

Creamy and tangerine-scented, with a nice core of glossy, nearly confectionary fruitiness and the broad-shouldered profile of the site. Finishes with high-powered stickiness, yet without losing its focus. **90** (60 – 750ml)

24. Hattenheimer Wisselbrunnen Riesling Auslese 2000 – DM27 (375ml)

Not nearly as successful as the previous wine. Lots of botrytis here, and not all of it entirely clean. Unlikable. Not recommended. (36 – 375ml)

Geheimrat J. Wegeler**25. Geisenheimer Rothenberg 2000 – DM60**

Delicate and stony, showing a bright core of tangerine, fresh apricot and Meyer lemon fruitiness. Really subtle and refined on the palate, sleekly built and very impressive. **93** (120 – 750ml; 60 – 375ml)

Hans Lang**26. Hattenheimer Wisselbrunnen Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM48 (500ml)**

Extremely heavily botrytised, and seemingly containing no other discernible character at all. Bizarre wine. Not recommended. (48 – 500ml)



Riesling Reporter Peter Liem, working hard and taking names at the VDP Rheingau auction.

Josef Spreitzer**27. Oestricher Lenchen Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM100 (375ml)**

This is marked by a strong aroma of marshmallow, of all things. It comes off as disjointed at first but improves with some air, integrating its botrytis elements and harmonizing in structure. **86(+?)** (30 – 375ml)

Prinz von Hessen**28. Winkeler Hasensprung Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM54**

There is a hint of some unclean botrytis here, but the sheer weight and power of this overcomes and obscures it. Not necessarily a bad wine, but it suffers from the sameness of all of these Prinz von Hessen wines – except the Trockenbeerenauslese. **85?** (36 – 750ml; 24 – 375ml)

Graf von Kanitz**29. Lorcher Kapellenberg Riesling Auslese 2000 – DM 78 (500ml)**

Very ripe and tropical in tone, marred by bitter, plastic-like botrytis on the palate. Not recommended. (48 – 500ml)

Schloss Johannisberg**30. Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM100**

Classic Schloss Johannisberg nose – elegant, subtle and refined, marked by a perfumed stoniness. Unfortunately it takes a turn for the worse in the mouth, becoming bitter and disjointed, with an unlikable taste of overripe citrus peel. Not recommended. (150 – 750ml; 150 – 375ml)

Robert Weil**31. Kiedrich Gräfenberg Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM570**

Coming from one of the top estates in Germany, this was an alarmingly unusual showing. Both bottles I tasted from (one during the pre-tasting and one during the auction) were marked by strongly bitter botrytis and a disjointed, almost oxidized profile. Given the strong track record of this estate in the past decade, I have to consider the possibility of flawed samples, but there really was something wrong here. Not recommended. (24 – 750ml; 48 – 375ml)

Freiherrlich Langwerth von Simmern'sches Rentamt**32. Erbacher Marcobrunn Riesling Beerenauslese 1990 – DM250 (500ml)**

Very compelling wine, even if it does seem a little more advanced than it should be at 11 years of age. Thick but cleanly clear and fragrant in profile, building with quietly refined concentration on the palate. The delicate balance of acidity allows this to appear extremely elegant despite its obvious mass. **90(+?)** (12 – 500ml)

Hans Lang**33. Hattenheimer Wisselbrunnen Riesling Beerenauslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM160 (500ml)**

High-gloss, full-throttle build, but the botrytis here really is not altogether clean. **80?** (12 – 500ml)

Schloss Johannisberg**34. Riesling Beerenauslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM105 (375ml)**

The auction list indicated 24 750ml bottles in addition to the half-bottles, but these were removed from the auction. After Schloss Johannisberg's relatively strong showing in last year's auction, these 2000 wines are extremely disappointing, and even rather flawed. I doubt that this wine had much of a chance from the start, with overripe, marmaladey flavors and a harshly bitter quality to the botrytis. Not recommended. (48 – 375ml)

Balthasar Röss**35. Hattenheimer Nussbrunnen Riesling Beerenauslese 2000 – DM160 (375ml)**

Very concentrated, but the flavors aren't very likable, and the whole thing comes off as a little unclean. Not recommended. (24 – 375ml)



Robert Weil**36. Kiedrich Gräfenberg Riesling Beerenauslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM1200**

This has a definition and a clarity that is lacking in the Goldkapsel Auslese, and is much more in the profile that we have come to expect from Robert Weil. Unctuous and velvety, this is nevertheless supported by fine and incisive acidity that brings this into harmony and focus. **91** (12 – 750ml; 24 – 375ml)

Freiherlich Langwerth von Simmern'sches Rentamt**37. Hattenheimer Mannberg Riesling Eiswein 1988 – DM250**

Intense, creamy and rich, with high-octane, confectionary power. Yet this not only avoids being cloying, it even manages somehow to give an overall impression of tremendous refinement and grace. This is definitely for fans of a big style of Eiswein, but it's superbly made. **92** (6 – 750ml)

Josef Leitz**38. Rudesheimer Drachenstein Riesling Eiswein 2000 – DM250 (375ml)**

Extremely concentrated, with flavors of baked peach, mandarin orange and crème brûlée. This is in a very high-powered style, but it's also of very high quality. **90(+?)** (24 – 750ml)

By the way, all of the proceeds from the sale of this wine are being donated to the cancer hospice in Wiesbaden where Johannes Leitz's young daughter has been receiving treatment for leukemia. He didn't want to publicize this at the auction just because that's the sort of guy he is – and he probably doesn't want me to say it either, but I just did because I think it's extremely touching (and I think you will too).

Hans Lang**39. Hallgartener Jungfer Riesling Eiswein Goldkapsel 2000 – DM170 (500ml)**

This is noticeably a step up from Lang's other offerings in this auction. It's not terribly complex, but it has a nice elegance and true Eiswein character. **88** (12 – 500ml)

Joachim Flick**40. Wickerer Mönchsgewann Riesling Eiswein 2000 – DM140 (500ml)**

A bit heavy and ponderous, with a thick layer of botrytis weighing this down. Flattens out on the palate, coming off as oddly soft and diffuse. Not recommended. (60 – 500ml)

Hans Barth**41. Hattenheimer Schützenhaus Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese 2000 – DM220 (375ml)**

Confectionary flavors of canned peach and dried figs, very glossy, but this has a bitter and unclean quality to the botrytis that detracts from its overall quality. **83?** (12 – 375ml)

Prinz von Hessen**42. Johannisberger Klaus Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese Goldkapsel 1999 – DM1550 (375ml)**

Distinctly tropical in tone, showing flavors of litchi, papaya and guava. Nicely fragrant, and carried with a certain elegance and purity, giving it a harmony and clarity that the other Prinz von Hessen wines in this auction seem to lack. It turns increasingly more candied as it moves back in the mouth, but remains well-poised and never cloying. **91** (6 – 375ml)

Balthasar Ress**43. Hattenheimer Nussbrunnen Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese 1999 – DM1370 (375ml)**

Plush and creamy, velvety in texture, showing an apricot- and coconut-like botrytis component. A bit overly broad and easy-going, but this is reasonably nice. **88** (12 – 375ml)



In 2000, much of the Rheingau suffered from continual cool and rainy weather. The Rudesheim area appears to have fared the best.

VDP Nahe-Ahr

Bad Kreuznach, 23 September 2001

The VDP in the Nahe is composed of a small number of highly dedicated and quality-minded producers, and this, combined with the prevailing opinion that the Nahe was in general the most successful Riesling region in Germany in 2000, made for high expectations at this year's auction.

Dönnhoff had some striking auction wines – high-powered, plush and distinctly different from his non-auction lineup in this vintage, but no less fine. Helmut Dönnhoff also presented his Beerenauslese from 1999, which is nothing short of a masterpiece. Schlossgut Diel also made absolutely terrific wines in 2000, and his Goldkapsel Spätlese from Goldloch was one of my favorite wines of the auction. Other notables include Crusius and Emrich-Schönleber.

In the Ahr, I continue to find excessive problems with volatile acidity and an unrealistic passion for wood. My picks would be the wines from Meyer-Näkel and J.J. Adeneuer, but is anybody outside of Germany going to pay these prices?

J. J. Adeneuer

1. Ahrweiler Rosenthal Spätburgunder trocken 2000 – DM55

Ripely perfumed red cherry notes on the nose, backed by a softly spicy oakiness. Firm acidity and slightly grainy tannins on the palate, but with a good depth of fruit to match, finishing with clean, harmonious freshness. **89** (300 – 750ml)

H. J. Kreuzberg

2. Frühburgunder trocken 2000 – DM51

Dark, earthy fruit, initially with a prominent woodiness, but this settles down in the glass to an appealing, if rustic, profile, backed by firm but not overly aggressive tannins. **86** (300 – 750ml)

Deutzerhof

3. Mayschosser Mönchberg Spätburgunder trocken 2000 – DM135

A prominent element of volatile acidity gives this a slightly offensive and plastic tone overall. It's too bad, because underneath there is a nice sense of ripeness and texture that could be very appealing. **80?** (300 – 750ml)

Staatliche Weinbaudomäne Marienthal

4. Ahrweiler Rosenthal Spätburgunder Auslese trocken 1999 – DM53

This is what I dislike about the current trend in Ahr wines – the light, fresh, red cherry and berry tones are perfectly fine, but they are overlaid by a thickly dominating, slightly plastic woodiness that works completely to the detriment of the overall wine. Not recommended. (300 – 750ml)

Nelles

5. Spätburgunder trocken 1999 – DM75

Sweet plum and strawberry fruitiness, backed by dark scents of wood and wet earth. Fills out with some time in the glass, and seems to have all the components to develop nicely over the next few years. **87(+?)** (300 – 750ml)

Meyer-Näkel

6. Walporzheimer Kräuterberg Spätburgunder trocken 2000 – DM145

Rich, velvety texture, initially quite constricted but opens with air to a dark, meaty fruitiness and subtle grace. **89(+?)** (300 – 750ml)



At the VDP Nahe-Ahr auction, Hans-Jürgen Podzun, president of the German Wine and Sommelier School in Koblenz, calls the shots as winemaker Martin Tesch wonders how high the bidding will go.

Kruger-Rumpf**7. Münsterer Kapellenberg Riesling Kabinett Goldkapsel 2000 – DM19,50**

Nearly a red-fruit tone, backed by a nice minerality underneath, but this doesn't quite harmonize overall, with the sweetness and alcohol seemingly in conflict. **84?** (300 – 750ml)

8. Münsterer Pittersberg Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM66 (375ml)

Confectionary and tropical, with a wild array of pungent pineapple, papaya and strawberry fruitiness. Appealing in a nearly lurid, candied way. **89** (36 – 375ml)

Prinz zu Salm-Dalberg'sches Weingut**9. Roxheimer Berg Riesling Spätlese 2000 – DM30**

Quite rich, with a soft, rounded build and a slightly candied tone. **86** (150 – 750ml)

10. Wallhäuser Johannisberg Riesling Beerenauslese 1999 – DM165 (375ml)

The botrytis here takes on a nearly plastic tone, but the beautiful fruit holds this together in delicate balance and subtle clarity, finishing with elegance and length. **88** (24 – 375ml)

Tesch**11. Laubenheimer St. Remigiusberg Riesling Spätlese trocken 2000 – DM13,50**

Rich and concentrated, with aromas of fresh pear and apricot skins. Bold and velvety, backed by firm acidity and a deeply-wound structure. **89** (1200 – 750ml)

12. Langenlonsheimer Löhler Berg Riesling Eiswein 2000 – DM77

Pungent, glossy intensity, showing a thickly concentrated array of baked peach, dried apricot and passion fruit flavors. There is plenty of acidity to support the lushness, carrying this through a long and expansive finish. **92** (36 – 750ml)

Schlossgut Diel**13. Dorsheimer Goldloch Riesling Spätlese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM85 (750ml); DM43 (375ml); DM240 (1,5L); DM510 (3L)**

Clean, pure, soil-driven. Really wonderful in its clarity and breed, taut and lithe as it penetrates the palate with incisive elegance and grace. Terrific wine. **95** (240 – 750ml; 120 – 375ml; 6 – 1,5L; 1 – 3L)

14. Dorsheimer Goldloch Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 1999 – DM130 (750ml); DM65 (375ml); DM400 (1,5L); DM800 (3L)

Prominent botrytis, backed by a hint of caramel. Richly textured and decadent in feel, finishing with plush length and a lot of finesse. **91** (120 – 750ml; 120 – 375ml; 6 – 1,5L; 1 – 3L)

15. Burg Layer Goldloch Riesling Edelbeerenauslese 1967 – DM1550

Not offered for tasting. (1 – 750ml)

Dr. Crusius**16. Traiser Bastei Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM50 (375ml)**

Richly focused depth, carrying a lot of velvety concentration yet this is underlined by a firm minerality and a wonderful acidity that keeps this racy and kinetic all the way through a long, finely-tuned finish. **93** (36 – 375ml)

17. Traiser Riesling Eiswein 2000 – DM145

Deeply-toned, glossy flavors of apricot, litchi syrup and mandarin orange. Big, bold and resonant, building to a powerful finish. **90** (12 – 750ml)



The steep Dorsheimer Goldloch vineyard, from which Schlossgut Diel produced one of the best wines of the VDP Nahe-Ahr auction.

Gutsverwaltung Niederhausen-Schlossböckelheim

18. Niederhäuser Hermannsberg Riesling Auslese 2000 – DM45
 Odd flavors, a little musty and plastic, with a soft yellow apple tone. Drinkable, but not really likeable. Not recommended. (108 – 750ml; 180 – 375ml)

19. Niederhäuser Hermannshöhle Riesling Beerenauslese 2000 – DM145

Confectionary and caramelized, with nearly bitter botrytis. Seems very disjointed, and definitely problematic. Not recommended. (54 – 750ml; 120 – 375ml)

20. Niederhäuser Rossel Riesling Spätlese 1957 – DM610

Not offered for tasting. (1 – 750ml)

Emrich-Schönleber, Monzingen

21. Monzinger Halenberg Riesling Spätlese* trocken 2000 – DM28**

Ripe and tropical, with deep flavors and textured, high-extract richness. Nice in a bold, brash style. **89(+?)** (300 – 750ml)

22. Monzinger Halenberg Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM56 (500ml)

Glossy, rich and pure, showing a gloriously sticky array of candied apricot, dried peach and dried pear flavors. A tight band of acidity pins this down in a firm, confident build. **92(+?)** (60 – 500ml)

23. Monzinger Frühlingsplätzchen Riesling Eiswein 1975 – DM800 (375ml)

Not offered for tasting. (1 – 375ml)

H. Dönnhoff, Oberhausen

24. Oberhäuser Brücke Riesling Spätlese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM33

Wonderful dimension, with a slight tone of dried or candied fruitiness backed by a subtle, earthy minerality. Clean and sleek on the palate, finishing with finesse and length. **93** (600 – 750ml)

25. Oberhäuser Brücke Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel 2000 – DM 200 (750ml); DM100 (375ml); DM510 (1,5L)

Concentrated, pure and aristocratic. There is so much tension on the palate as it sparkles in multi-dimensional, kaleidoscopic brilliance, dancing toward a long and subtle finish. **95** (60 – 750ml; 180 – 375ml; 6 – 1,5L)

26. Oberhäuser Brücke Riesling Beerenauslese 1999 – DM 530 (750ml); DM265 (375ml); DM1040 (1,5L)

Despite its great concentration, this has a sleekly crystalline delicacy. Penetrating and intense on the palate, expanding with nearly thunderous resonance, yet somehow the overall feeling here is one of harmony, elegance and poise. Superb. **97** (30 – 750ml; 120 – 375ml; 6 – 1,5L)



The great Brücke (“bridge”) vineyard in the village of Oberhausen, home to Helmut Dönnhoff.

AUSTRALIA'S JOHN VICKERY King of the Riesling Castle

FOR AS LONG AS ANYONE in the district can remember, there has been a small, cement-rendered winery nestled here amid statuesque redgums and the grassy banks of the lazy North Para River. Like many of its neighboring wineries in this part of South Australia, the business premises of Richmond Grove Wines at Tanunda have had their share of incarnations during the changing fortunes of the Barossa Valley's 150-year-long wine-growing history.

When current boss John Vickery first came here for vintage 1955, it was for the position of assistant winemaker. He was barely out of winemaking studies at Adelaide's Roseworthy Agricultural College and it was his first full-time job. His workplace back then was called Chateau Leonay.

New employer Leo Buring had been ensconced on the site for more than a decade. The former Gottlieb Hoffmann winery he had acquired in 1945 had been re-equipped and remodeled, and its owner had grand plans for its future. The castellated oddity he created there – with its turrets and its planned mock-Flemish towers – would change the way people looked at his winery. Buring's nurturing of the young John Vickery also would help change the world's view of South Australia's rieslings.

Now almost half a century on from that first appointment, and nearing the end of a dazzling career, the gently-spoken Vickery looks back at those early years with a sense of bemusement. "Winemaking in those days certainly was very crude," he recalls. "The industry then was based around ports and sheries...fortified wines."

Crushers here were old, and wines were fermented inside wax-lined open vats set deep into concrete floors. Fermentations ran hot and uncontrolled, and they stopped when all available grape sugars had been converted into the requisite amount of alcohol. "We once figured that we forked each bunch of grapes by hand four times just to process it, so it was a slow grind," remembers Vickery. Specially cultivated wine yeasts, the use of inert gases and vacuum corking would be the stuff of following decades. Even stainless steel tanks were not to arrive here until very late in the '60s.

Vickery's training and understanding of the menace of oxidation told him things would have to improve. In a bid to gain some control of the fermentation process, a variety of cooling techniques was attempted. He still remembers 1962 as the year when a series of overhead pipes and nozzles, rigged up to spray bursts of water over fermenting vats in order to keep temperatures under any kind of control, caused slippery chaos for winemakers and cellar hands alike.

Today's Riesling lovers, wedded to the belief that wines were better in the old days, would be disappointed. Australian Rieslings of the '50s and early '60s were



John Vickery, presiding at a recent tasting in Southern Tasmania, which contributing Riesling Reporter Mark Smith attended.

LEO BURING

Now part of Australia's largest wine company, Southcorp Wines, Leo Buring was founded in 1931. Throughout the 1960s, '70s and '80s, the company produced a myriad of white-labeled reserve bin DW ('Dry White') Rieslings from vineyards in Watervale, Eden Valley and the Barossa.

"Australia's foremost producer of Rieslings over a 30-year period, with a rich legacy left by former winemaker John Vickery."

— James Halliday,
Australia and New Zealand Wine Companion, 2002 Edition

heavy, phenolic and prone to oxidation, he admits. As the most rudimentary of equipment made way for advances in technology, the quality of wines improved, too. Traditional basket presses gave way to pneumatic presses in 1964. Primitive forms of refrigeration arrived around the same time, though it was not until the late '60s that the wines made under the Leo Buring label could employ sufficient equipment to enable ferments to be stopped by rapid cooling and chilling. Even then, refrigeration breakdowns could still create havoc for busy winemakers. Vickery smiles as he remembers sleeping alone some nights in his cottage close by the winery in order to keep his ear tuned to the constant hum of its refrigeration plant.

From his Geisenheim-trained boss, Vickery acquired and refined a mania for keeping a scrupulously clean and tidy workplace. Of today's Riesling makers who learned their trade as cellar-hands at Chateau Leonay, some have memories of a fastidiousness that bordered on obsession. On finishing a shift, workers would have to scrub floors and equipment meticulously, then scrub some more again. Hoses needed to be stowed in neat coils; waterproof gear pegged up in places provided – or else.

Many new advances in technology became available during the 1960s, and the team at Leo Buring soon adopted and used them to best effect. Before long, Australia's leading Riesling producer, Orlando Wines – nowadays the owners of Richmond Grove Wines – was being challenged in the market place and on the wine show circuit. With time, and with new ownership by the Lindeman company, Vickery and his team were beating their South Australian rivals at their own games. What followed was a dazzling array of stylish white-labeled Leo Buring wines that became industry flagships throughout the late 1960s, '70s, and '80s.

“Perhaps his greatest misfortune was to make his indelible mark with Riesling,” writes the authoritative James Halliday of John Vickery's successes with the variety. “Had it been Shiraz, he would surely now be basking in the kind of thoroughly deserved glory which was finally bestowed on Max Schubert in the latter stages of his career.”

Comparisons with the man responsible for Australia's most famous wine, Penfolds Grange, seem to flow from many a writer and critic. In commenting upon a 1996 retrospective viewing of wines produced by John Vickery over more than 30 years, highly respected Adelaide wine writer Phillip White wrote, “I have enjoyed no vertical tasting of white wines more, anywhere.”

Vickery accepts the praise graciously, adding that his handiwork was not the sole reason for the wines' successes. Technological advances account for only a modest proportion of the increase in quality seen since the 1960s, and most of those improvements took effect early in the lineage of his Leo Buring wines.

Among more recent changes, he says the widespread adoption of machine-harvesting has played an important part in improving wine quality. Much-maligned among Riesling purists, its benefits run beyond those of sheer cost-saving. “Hand-picking in cool climates like Tasmania's is great, but in warm climates like we have here in South Australia, you often find we get some pretty hot days out there in the vineyard. It's far better then that the fruit be taken off at



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night when it's colder and less oxidative, and can be delivered more quickly to the winery for processing.

"Actual winemaking today is much the same as it was in the '60s, except that we didn't quite have the toys that the boys have these days in the winery," says Vickery. "For example, we had airbag presses in 1964, but there was no program then that could monitor functions. We had to be there with it the whole time, and it was a matter of making manual adjustments to its operation."

More importantly, Vickery is a committed 'terroirist' when it comes to Riesling. The variety's delicate aromas, structures and flavors set it apart from its peers, he says, and no white grape variety responds more markedly to varying growing environments. In his opinion, improvements in viticulture have played a significant role in enhancing the intrinsic qualities of Riesling. He believes there are three regions of South Australia that can stand tall and proud when the variety and its wines are mentioned in the same breath. Foremost among them is the Watervale district of the Clare Valley, some 120km (70 miles) north of Adelaide. Yet he has a soft spot or two for the surrounding hills of the Eden Valley, and the floor of the Barossa Valley itself, something that's reflected in Richmond Grove's production of two distinctive, regional-based wines, one under the Watervale label, the other under Barossa.

Vickery believes the wines of Clare/Watervale stand out most consistently over South Australia's long history of making premium-quality Riesling. "I think it achieves the best balance of fruit and acid and overall finesse. To me, it produces wines that are quite tight and limey/citrusy, with a lovely dry limestone finish."

By contrast, he sees the Rieslings from the warmer Barossa Valley as riper, rounder and softer, capable of being enjoyed early, yet still with a capacity for long cellar life. "Generally, we see more tropical aromas and flavors from the Barossa. Certainly there's citrus there, but it's not limey or melony. It's more generous than that, and can carry over into white peach characters in riper years. With time, the wines develop lovely, honied, mouthfilling flavors."

Eden Valley wines can be much less consistent in their quality, but at their best they show austere, flinty characters that develop great complexity over 10 years and more. Even as the coolest of the three regions – ranging from 1,390 degree-days to 1,770 degree-days – the Eden Valley produces wines that bear no comparison with those of Europe. "Germanic Rieslings have an incredibly floral and mineral character that shows with intense flavor at low sugar levels," says Vickery.

Vickery sees the availability of water in South Australia's vineyards as being a key determinant of wine quality, by influencing harvest dates. "We pick on flavor development rather than on any measurement. That might mean we pick Barossa riesling at 10.5 Baumé if we've had warm weather and we've made the decision to pick, because there's already sufficient flavor, and hot weather is forecast.

"In Watervale, generally we get to about 11.5 to 12.0 Baumé before we start to get water stress, especially at Florita Vineyard. On the other hand, a lot of the old Leo Buring Eden Valley wines used to be so acidic because they didn't ripen prop-



The state of South Australia is home to some of Australia's best Riesling terroir, particularly in Clare Valley, Barossa Valley and the hills around Adelaide.

The Baumé Scale

The Baumé scale is another system for measuring must weight. It does the same job as Oechsle or Brix, but is actually a little easier to comprehend. One degree on the Baumé scale corresponds to one percent of potential alcohol in the must.

12° Baumé equals:

12 percent potential alcohol
93° Oechsle
21.7 Brix

erly. They didn't have any water, and they're still very dependent upon dams out there. You can't ripen grapes properly under conditions of water stress. At times, we've seen fruit sitting on vines that had been stripped bare because of the wind and lack of available moisture.

"Growers would be getting jittery because the acids would still be so high. They'd be getting ripeness through the concentration of grape sugars, but wouldn't be getting any physiological ripeness or flavor development. We'd frequently be picking Eden Valley fruit at 9 – 10 grams per liter of acid and needing to de-acidify the wines a little to take the edge off them. That way, we made them drinkable when young, but built into the wines intrinsic qualities that would build with time."

Hiding hard natural acidity behind residual sweetness was not an easy option for makers like Vickery in the 1950s and 1960s. It wasn't until the early '70s that it became possible to reliably stop fermentations to retain some residual sugar in their wines. Off-dry wines were created by blending back small proportions of grape juice.

These days, Vickery's winemaking work is restricted to membership of a four-person team overseeing quality control of the entire Orlando white wine portfolio, including brand-leader Jacobs Creek Riesling. More noticeable is his promotion of the Stelvin screwcap seal on the Australian wine market. He's been a big fan of it since the 1970s when it was used extensively by Yalumba Wines. He supported its use on his company's Richmond Grove wines in 1998, when a trial batch was packaged under Stelvin for a Sydney-based retailing company. That 10 percent portion of the company's Watervale Riesling became 100 percent from vintage 2000.

"The oxidation problem with corks is quite enormous," he says. "That really is what motivates us more than the problem of cork taint. With corks, you frequently lose that lovely honied character and you're left with extreme madeirised characters that don't do anything to assist in marketing aged Rieslings to the consumer."

The move has prompted even greater scrutiny of the winemaking process. Bottling is now deliberately carried out later in order to make sure that any errant fermentation characters, or problems such as hydrogen sulfide, are ironed out. "We don't try to rush anything. The wine now has to be squeaky clean," he explains. "When it's bottled under Stelvin, you seal in everything, good and bad."

Today's wines are definitely better for the additional care they are given in the vineyard and the winery. "What we were doing in the '60s is pretty much what we're doing today. It's just that we've got improved technology to do it with," says Vickery. "New technology allows the consumer to enjoy wines with fruit flavors that are livelier and fresher. Flavors not hammered out by oxidation and excessive sulfur and all the other consequences of the old ways of making Riesling."

These are great and noble achievements for one who has spent so much of his working-life behind the walls of a Barossa castle.



RICHMOND GROVE

Richmond Grove began its life in the Hunter Valley of New South Wales. Since 1993, it has been based in Tanunda, in the heart of South Australia's Barossa Valley, and presided over by legendary winemaker, John Vickery. A part of the giant Orlando Wydham group, makers of internationally recognized Jacob's Creek Riesling, Richmond Grove draws its fruit from a diverse range of sources, and is best known for its Watervale and Barossa Valley Rieslings.

"[John Vickery] is to Riesling what Max Schubert was to Shiraz: unchallenged as the greatest Riesling practitioner, able to take the variety onto another plane."

— James Halliday,
Classic Wines Of Australia,
Second Edition