



## Domaine Zind-Humbrecht, Alsace *2009 vintage, En Primeur*

### 2009 Growing Season

Winter 2008/2009 was extremely dry, not really cold, sometimes it felt like springtime, so it wasn't a surprise to us that bud break was early, around early/mid April. The growth was fast, helped by warm temperatures and decent rainfalls in May. End of May was extremely hot (hottest day ever recorded in May in Alsace: 37.5°C). Mid flowering was around 26<sup>th</sup> May in our precocious vineyards like Herrenweg in Turckheim. A brusque change of weather early June with temperature falling down almost 20°C stopped and delayed the flowering process in the later ripening vineyards. The Rangen in Thann and Clos Windsbuhl in Hunawir were the last vineyards to finish flowering around 15<sup>th</sup> June.

End of June was nice, quite dry with warm temperatures. July had a normal rainfall and temperatures, so the fruit set was perfect and we were heading for a very precocious vintage, more similar to 2007 than 2003, because the vines were very green and there was no drought in sight at that stage. Of course, humidity and warmth could mean more mildew disease, but it was actually easy to avoid the problems if proper care was given to the vineyards.

August was very dry and at moments very hot. The soils turned from green to yellow during the month as grass and cover crop were drying under the sunshine. It helped the vines to slow down their growth, which is very favourable to obtain a quick change of colour of the grapes (*véraison*).

For many years now, we have stopped hedging our vines and keep a few branches 'dancing' on top of the canopy. They help keeping the soil and grapes under the shade and avoid sun burn problems. If in the past we used to plough our soils a few times in spring in order to keep them grass free, we now allow any sort of grass, plants or cover crop to grow freely, as we usually stop ploughing the soils in May. Typically, if the weather isn't too dry, the soils are completely green in July. This grass is then rolled down in order to pinch the branches which become dry above ground, while the roots stay active. This is a great help to fight sun burns on the soil and avoids losing humidity by over-exposing the earth.

All this work paid in 2009, because no one would have expected the weather to be that warm and dry for over two months with no rain at all.

There could have been serious drought problems in August with bad viticulture. As always, vines cultivated with deeper root systems, smaller yields, more active leaves and un-compacted/protected soils, didn't suffer at all from the drought. However, warmer temperatures did change the acidity balance: the malic acid was almost completely burned out and only tartaric acidity remained in the grapes.

If some areas suffered from lack of sugar ripeness (especially Riesling), it was because the vines entered into hydric stress too early. These same vines, over stressed, also burnt too much of their acids. Overall, 2009 shows acidity levels which are lower than 2008/07/06, but of the same level as 2005/04/00, and much higher than 1997 or 2003, and, surprisingly, pH can be quite low for some wines.

It was critical to be able to harvest not too late so the acidity would not drop too quickly. Proper vineyard practice that allows the vines to mature the grapes physiologically quicker (bio-dynamic), allowed us to start harvest quite early and, thanks to fantastic weather condition during September

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and October, we were able to spread the harvest over a long period of time, harvesting only at the right moment.

The harvest started slowly 9<sup>th</sup> September and finished 16<sup>th</sup> October (very similar to 2007).

The grapes were harvested very healthy and 2009 produced some wonderful dry wines. The botrytis developed nicely early October, especially on Pinot Gris and it was possible to produce some late harvest wines. However, because acidities are not that high, we didn't 'push' our vineyards towards this style of wine and preferred to take the dry wine option. For this reason, we only produced one VT in Clos Jebstal and 3 SGN (Rangen, Clos Windsbuhl and Clos Jebstal), all in Pinot Gris.

The fermentation started fast for all the grapes harvested in September. Vineyards harvested later (mostly because the flowering was later) fermented slower. It is difficult to say that one grape variety is really better. All performed very well, including the Pinot Noir. 2009 will be a great vintage for both colours in Alsace. At varietal level, the wines will be very dry (<5g/l RS) and most Riesling show little sugars. The 2009 wines are all showing beautiful aromatics and nice structures on the palate, despite some strong lees character or slight youth reductions understandable in a warm and healthy harvest.



**Olivier Humbrecht**

2009 is a larger harvest for us, mainly because the varietal wines yielded between 50 and 65hl/ha. The average of the estate is 52hl/ha, with the Grand Crus at 34hl/ha. No wines were chaptalized of course. 2009 should produce many wines with great ageing potential, but also many dryer wines that will show well at an earlier stage.

2009 is a very good vintage, but only the long term will tell us if it will be better than some of the recent great years: 2008/2007/2005/2002/2001... and 2010!

**Indice:** level of sweetness on the palate. This note combines the sweetness, acidity, alcohol and overall structure of the wine. It ranges from 1 to 5. **1:** technically dry or tasting dry. **2:** not technically dry, but sweetness not apparent on the palate. Some tasters might find some roundness on the finish. **3:** medium sweetness, especially present when the wine is young and might gradually disappear with the ageing. **4:** Sweet wine **5:** High sweetness, VT in richness without the usual botrytis

## The wines

### **Muscat Golbert 2009**

The late ripening and marl rich Goldert vineyard in Guebenschwihr managed to produce a Muscat wine well balanced in acidity, which can look surprising considering the warm September month of 2009. The grapes were harvested slightly later, without any noble rot and showing perfect ripeness, which is always complicated on the small berry Muscat cultivar. The precocity of the vintage usually helped for fast and powerful fermentations, but here, this wine resisted and despite a yeast activity that lasted over 12 months it kept a certain amount of residual sweetness.

2/2011: the nose is characteristic of limestone vineyards in 2009. Early days, it is possible to detect some reductive, lees characters, usually enhanced on the early harvested vintages and also stronger on very healthy crops. This characteristic disappears after some aeration; therefore racking the wine wasn't necessary. The typical fruity flavours show up with air, but it is still the minerality of the Goldert that dominates. The palate shows some elegant sweetness.

**Recommended drinking from 2012-2024+**

**Alcohol: 12.5 ° Indice 2**

**£180/case of 12, in bond UK**

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### **Riesling Clos Häuserer 2009**

The Clos Häuserer is located just under the limit of the Hengst G.C. on a similar rich marl limestone, quite deep, as 50 to 80cm of marl covers the base calcareous mother rock. There is little slope there, as the vineyard is encircled by the hill, but the climate can get very warm in summer and there is good water retention. Clos Häuserer loves warm vintages, at least vintages with warm ripening season. There will always be good acidity here and the wines have always proven to have good ageing potential. In 2009, a slight over ripeness is expected, despite complete absence of noble rot. The fermentation was slow and balance was reached with some light sweetness.

2/2011: the Clos Häuserer is perhaps the wine in 2009 that shows the most the lees influence and limestone origin. The nose is not exactly closed, there are massive rocky, iodine and lees aromas, but one can guess that it will take some time and air for the fruity elements to show up. The palate is dominated by powerful minerals and salty flavours. Despite the richness of this wine, there is a refined acidity on the finish that gives a sense of delicacy to the wine. Like most 09s Rieslings, the pH is very low in this wine, which increases the power of the acids. The sweetness is slightly higher, but this wine really doesn't show it too much. Time needed though!

**Recommended drinking from 2014-2029**

**Alcohol: 13.8 ° Indice 2**

**£215/case of 12, in bond UK**

### **Riesling Brand 2009**

In 2009, the Brand showed an exceptional capacity to ripen the grapes. The warm location (Brand comes from Brandy/English or Brandig in Alsacian!) is due to an exceptional precocious climate but also a steep south exposure and a soil type, made of two micas granite that allows fast temperature increase deep under the surface at the roots level. The vineyards located in the eastern part of the Brand (Schnekelsbourg) see often more botrytis, but those located in the middle of the Brand on poorer granite (Steinglitz and Brand) produced healthier grapes. This part of the Brand was used to produce this drier Brand, only after 11 months fermentation though! Early harvest (in September versus October) and healthier grapes usually guarantee a steadier more complete yeast activity. Of course, with commercial yeasts, it doesn't matter!

2/2011: the nose is showing both typical fruity aromas, typical of Brand, and also a certain minerality and light austerity which isn't that usual in this vineyard. The palate is rich and intense, very saline with a beautiful dry structure. The refinement of the Brand vineyard compensates the dry character and power of the wine. It is already very pleasurable but thanks to a beautiful acidity/low pH combination, it is also a wine that deserves further cellaring.

**Recommended drinking from 2014-2029+**

**Alcohol: 13.5° Indice 1**

**£330/case of 12, in bond UK**

### **Riesling Brand Vieilles Vignes 2009**

The 'Old Vines' selection comes from the eastern part of the Brand, where the granite is in fact lying above a very interesting marl/limestone mother rock. This rare combination is highly interesting as it produces wines with great structure and minerality but also very aromatic Rieslings. The granite allows for better drainage/heat and produces the minerals; the underlying clay/limestone brings water stability and structure. It is also a combination that helps the development of noble rot, and on old vines, the result can be a wine with incredible concentration. This wine was harvested under the limit of late harvest, but unfortunately too early for the local authorities (perhaps we work too hard in our vineyards trying to get good ripeness!), so, not wanted to harvest this vineyard any later, we lost the VT approval. Of course, allowing for more concentration and produce an SGN was tempting, but we thought that this wasn't a better option in a vintage like 2009 in this vineyard. Expectedly, the fermentation stopped early keeping a large amount of sweetness in the wine.

2/2011: the nose is already very open and expressive, showing intense fruity aromas, citrus, almost exotic, some honey (noble rot) and this wonderful ripe Riesling character. The palate is a real treat, very round with a beautiful elegant sweetness. Most people would probably drink this wine young to profit from the extraordinary flavours, but that would be missing much more complex aromas in the ageing process.

**Recommended drinking from 2012-2034+**

**Alcohol: 12.4° Indice 5**

**£390/case of 12, in bond UK**

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### **Riesling Rangen de Thann Clos-Saint-Urbain 2009**

The Rangen was partially replanted in the 50s and 60s (very well indeed by the previous owner of the Clos Saint Urbain) and it is these vines that were used to produce this wine. The Rangen is very steep, sometimes above 100% slope, and its south facing volcanic soil reacts dramatically well to intense sunshine. Having flowered much later than any of our other vineyard in 2009, the September sunshine actually helped this vineyard to finish ripening the grapes so by October the harvest was ripe and healthy for the Riesling. This was one of the fastest wine to ferment through, basically dry, but with the roundness of small concentrated yields.

2/2011: the nose shows the strong personality of the volcanic soil: flint stone, pencil lead, powdered rock, nicely balanced with more fruity aromas typical of the vintage. The palate is ample, quite rich, unctuous, showing a nice ripeness and again, typical volcanic flavours. The saline quality of this vineyard is perhaps attenuated in 2009 by the solar character of the vintage, which makes the Rangen perhaps more approachable in its youth than most recent vintages. Further ageing will however continue to improve the wine!

**Optimum drinking period: 2013-2025**

*Alcohol: 13.5° Indice 1*

**£390/case of 12, in bond UK**

### **Pinot-Gris Heimbours 2009**

The Pinot Gris is planted in the top part of the Heimbours, which is the poorest and exposed to the west, on very thin and rocky calcareous soils. It is probably the vineyard on our estate that has the highest pH at the roots level: 9.5, which explains why young vines struggle to grow here. The vineyard is still quite young, but does behave like a much more mature one. The Heimbours is slowly showing its potential as one of the great place of Turckheim. In 2009, the production was quite small and the grapes were harvested very healthy with a nice balance. The fermentation was slow and the wine kept some sweetness.

2/2011: everything is round and delicate in this wine. The aromas are dominated by almonds, light honey touch and some torrefaction (toast) with elegant lees contact flavours. The palate is slightly more closed, soft and almost delicate. The sweetness is surprisingly hidden in the wine. One can more sense the ripeness of the vintage than the actual sweetness. Long clean finish. The slightly higher residual sweetness also covers a nice phenolic ripeness and some tannin.

**Recommended drinking from 2013-2024+**

*Alcohol: 13.6° Indice 3*

**£210/case of 12, in bond UK**

### **Pinot-Gris Clos Windsbuhl 2009**

Despite a warm climate very favourable to high ripeness, 2009 wasn't a vintage with huge botrytis development. There were of course a few exceptions, and the Clos Windsbuhl Pinot Gris was particularly affected by noble rot. The late precocity of this vineyard favours a late ripening of the grapes, which makes it always easier with botrytis. There is nothing worse for botrytis to start developing under too warm condition and too early: it often turns into mould or acid rot. The calcareous rocky soil of the Windsbuhl also brings good acidity and structure to these rich wines. In 2009, we were able to select the noble rot in the old vines of Pinot Gris which produced an SGN. The other grapes, still affected with some decent amount of noble rot, produced this wine. Medium length fermentation and the wine finished with a beautiful sweet balance.

2/2011: this wine is already quite showy, probably due to the intensity and quality of the noble rot associated to the exotic character of the 2009 vintage; it is possible to see wonderful honeyed, cocoa, green tea and dried candied fruit flavours. The palate is ample and rich and develops a sweet, round, unctuous finish. It is a very concentrated wine but remains elegant and racy. It will also improve for many years if well kept...

**Recommended drinking from 2014-2034+**

*Alcohol: 13.8° Indice 5*

**£240/case of 12, in bond UK**



### **Pinot-Gris Rangen de Thann Clos-Saint-Urbain 2009**

Just like some of the other great vineyards on the estate, the Pinot Gris grapes, especially those located near the river, developed a beautiful noble rot, concentrated but also very pure (without excessive mycelium or mould). The Rangen was able to take advantage of its late precocity (altitude is between 350m and 450m) and could benefit from a longer ripening period, avoid suffering from heat during the early part of September. In fact, mid-August, the soils were still covered by a very green cover crop of a multitude of different plants! The importance of noble rot justified a selection which became an SGN. The other part of the crop produced this wine. The fermentation was relatively fast and the final balance was an off dry/sweet wine.

2/2011: the nose is dominated by smoky, flinty aromas that are a reminder of the volcanic origin of this vineyard. Of course, the noble rot also influences the nose with more classic honeyed, waxy notes and some 'rôti' character, closer to humus and fresh forest scent. The palate hides the richness of the wine very well behind the strong personality of this vineyard. Still closed, probably in need of air, this wine begs for more ageing. The finish is round, sweet, very racy and forceful.

**Recommended drinking from 2014-2034+**

**Alcohol: 14.3° Indice 3**

**£290/case of 12, in bond UK**

### **Gewurztraminer Clos Windsbuhl 2009**

Most vintages we usually worry (for nothing, really!) about the potential ripeness of the gewurztraminers in this late ripening vineyard. Even if the Windsbuhl is capable of catching up late in the season, there is always some fear that something may go wrong in September. In 2009, there was no doubt; this was the year of the Windsbuhl! Everything was there to help perfect ripeness: the altitude, proximity of the forest and its cooling effect, the poor thin rocky calcareous soil and its cracks, allowing the roots to grow deep, and, more importantly, the quality of the clay and minerals produced by the Muschelkalk limestone. The grapes were harvested ripe, healthy and produced a wine that fermented very slowly (the slowest for this grape variety in 2009) and finally stopped with some important residual sweetness. It doesn't show the highest acidity on the analysis report, but tasting the wine shows how well balanced it is. Figure! In bio-dynamie, we speak about the information of the acids. The wine speaks about acidity without necessarily having a lot.

2/2011: the nose shows an elegant combination of fruity aromas (litchi, mango) and complex flowers. There is a sense of ripeness there that doesn't betray the origin of the grapes. The Windsbuhl is already quite expressive, but remains delicate and well structured, which is the signature of its limestone origin. The palate is long, unctuous, no broad but persisting. Already very pleasurable, it should continue to develop and will show more spicy/earthy aromatics with further cellaring.

**Recommended drinking from 2014-2031+**

**Alcohol: 13.3° Indice 5**

**£310/case of 12, in bond UK**

### **Gewurztraminer Rangen de Thann 2009**

The Gewurztraminer finds its place at the bottom of the steep volcanic hillside of the Rangen. Higher altitude (the Rangen is between 350m and 450m) and more wind exposure can affect the flowering and delay ripeness, so the proximity of the river, on more sheltered slopes, help this grape and allows it to ripen fully. If most of the Rangen is perhaps better suited to Riesling and Pinot Gris, it is perhaps because these terraces near the river are small, and therefore Gewurztraminer is rarer in the Rangen. The Rangen also has the potential to overpower the intense aromatics of Gewurztraminer. Sometimes, too much is too much, and the Rangen is one of the rare Grand Cru vineyards that show its volcanic personality over the varietal flavours. The grapes were slightly affected by noble rot, but the fermentation was quite fast, keeping some sweetness over a rich palate.

2/2011: the nose is still closed, barely showing any fruit, such is the importance of the flinty, smoky, gun powder volcanic character. The nose is intense, but does need lots of air to open up. The palate is round, well balanced, long lasting and just like the nose, begs for time. The finish has a saline richness, almost like maritime sea air. Please decant before serving!

**Recommended drinking from 2014-2031+**

**Alcohol: 14.3° Indice 3**

**£335/case of 12, in bond UK**

### **Pinot-Gris Clos Jebsal Vendange Tardive 2009**

Just like in 2008, the Clos Jebsal is the only vineyard that produced a Vendange Tardive in 2009. It wasn't because of lack of sunshine or good weather, but the few vineyards that allowed noble rot to develop (Rangen, Windsbuhl, and Jebsal) were actually harvested in SGN. Jebsal was the only vineyard that could produce both VT and SGN. This vineyard is quite amazing, because every single year it shows its capacity to produce rich sweet wines. We don't think that we will be able to produce one year a dry Jebsal! The combination of warm precocious climate and rich marl-gypsum soil (that keeps good humidity) allows for such botrytis regularity. The vineyard can also take huge concentrations because it doesn't go in the direction of exotic sweet easy wines, but rather keeps a complex structure and flavour profile that can age very well. The 2009 was heavily botrytised and the fermentation stopped with a very sweet balance.

2/2011: the nose shows lots of candied fruits, honey flavours, yellow plums and a nice clean botrytis influence. The palate is unctuous, sweet, without any asperity or sharpness which makes it very easy to drink. This wine is surprisingly showy today and quite enjoyable, despite the fact that further ageing would bring more complexity.

**Recommended drinking from 2014-2030**

**Alcohol: 12.5°**

**£370/case of 12, in bond UK**

**£190/case of 12 (halves), in bond UK**

### **Pinot-Gris Rangen de Thann, Sélection de Grains Nobles 2009**

Even if noble rot is part of the Rangen vineyard most vintages, we do not produce regularly VTs or SGNs here. Very often, the higher vineyards on the steep Rangen hillside, further away from the influence of the river, are harvested healthy and it is very interesting to assemble all parts together in order to obtain more complexity and structure in the final wine. In 2009, however, this vineyard was harvested later, because of the later flowering, and under sunny cool October days, the botrytis developed intensely almost everywhere. Selecting the SGN here also allowed us to control the maturity of the normal Pinot Gris Rangen. The concentration effect of the noble rot is quite amazing. It mostly demonstrated in the fantastic acidity of this wine. Of course, the fermentation stopped early keeping a decent sweetness in this elegant SGN.

2/2011: the colour is pale yellow, very fresh looking for 2009. The nose is delicate, with some honey, candied fruits, raisins, and some light smoky flavours. The Rangen character is there, despite the noble rot influence. The palate is elegant and the yeast did a superb job in choosing this final sweetness balance. This is probably not our most powerful or sweetest SGN, but probably one of our most elegant one, which will also be able to age nicely for a very long time.

**Recommended drinking from 2015-2039+**

**Alcohol: 11.8°**

**£450/case of 12, in bond UK**