



WEINGUT JOH. JOS. PRÜM, GERMANY

2017 VINTAGE, EN PRIMEUR

“A very classical vintage, of really typical Kabinetts, beautifully elegant Spätlesen and very fine Auslesen. Nice acidity, very good ripeness, some botrytis, with very well expressed vineyard characteristics.”

KATHARINA PRÜM, SEPTEMBER 2018

MEETING YOUR HEROES

It was with not a little excitement that Will Hargrove and I landed in Luxembourg last month. Although we knew its wines well, it was the first visit to the Mosel for both of us. We were headed east, for that hallowed sweep in the river running from Ürzig in the north to Bernkastel-Kues in the south, which is responsible for some of the world’s most majestic and long-lived white wines. Sitting at the centre of this meander, on the western bank, is the village of Wehlen.

As Pauillac is to Cabernet and Vosne-Romanée to Pinot Noir, so is Wehlen to Riesling. Whilst the western side of the Mosel is flat here, to the east rise steeply banked slopes, a vertiginous 65% gradient in places. Directly opposite JJ Prüm’s salubrious riverfront house lies the Wehlener Sonnenuhr vineyard, its name standing proud in large white capitals on a lower terrace and in the centre, the famous sundial from which it takes its name.

We tasted with Katharina Prüm and her newly appointed export manager, Mihailo Martinovic. The house’s open windows let in the fine early autumn morning and a spectacular view of the vines on the opposite bank of the river. As first impressions go, this was up there with the best of them. They say you shouldn’t meet your heroes, but we left suitably awe-struck by the land of these great wines.

GUY SEDDON, OCTOBER 2018

THE 2017 GROWING SEASON AT JJ PRÜM

The 2017 growing season in a nutshell could be summarised as:

- A cold winter, warm early spring and an early start to vegetative growth
- Spring frost then damaged some vineyards
- Hot and dry from mid-May until mid-July
- Humid until September, temperatures below average
- A golden October and an early harvest

The year started with a very cold, dry and sunny January, 21 days of frost and nearly 50% more sunshine than average making it a beautiful winter month. The weather changed markedly in February, bringing mild temperatures and a good deal of rain. March was sunnier, drier and warmer. Daytime temperatures reached more than 20°C by the end of the month.

This beautiful spring weather prompted an early start to vegetative growth, albeit at a moderated rate due to cool night-time temperatures. The sunny weather continued into April. However, while nearly summerlike temperatures were reached at the beginning of the month, these decreased sharply in late April and early May, even dipping below 0°C on occasion at night. In some vineyards, shoots were damaged by this frost, impacting yields seriously, “although not disastrously”, as Katharina Prüm relates. This cool period put the previously advanced growing season back in line with the average.

In mid-May, the weather changed again. Significant rain in the third week of the month was followed by temperatures over 30°C. Vegetative growth exploded and flowering began. After slowing down for a few days in early June, and some very rainy days, temperatures rose even further, reaching more than 35°C.

The "dry" period finished in early July. Temperatures then dropped substantially in mid-July, ending the month around 20°C. July saw nearly double the average amount of rain. More worrying yet was some hail, although fortunately “the damage was very limited”, again in Katharina’s words. August and early September remained unstable and humid. However, the weather stabilised by late September and early October.

Harvest started very early, on 25th September, finishing less than a month later, on 18th October. (To put this in context, there are some years when picking does not start until 20th October at Prüm.) The harvest weather was glorious: sunny and dry.

And so the wines? In Katharina’s words, “Quality-wise, the 2017s are fabulous – quantity-wise, less so.” The must-weights at harvest spanned the entire range, from Kabinett to TBA (Troockenbeerenauslese) level, with most emphasis on Spätlesen and Auslesen. There was a reasonable amount of botrytis, which was carefully selected for the higher Prädikate. Acidity levels were high, slowly decreasing during the harvest period, promising very vibrant wines. A hugely exciting year, in short, but one in which there will not be enough wine to satisfy demand.

THE VINEYARDS

BERNKASTELETER BADSTUBE

Bernkasteler Badstube lies to the south-east of the Prüm house, facing back across the river towards Bernkastel-Kues. The slopes here are marginally less steep than other parts of the estate (although steepness is all relative here!) The vines are afforded longer exposure to the afternoon sun. The wines, consequently have a tendency to be a little more flamboyant in youth, albeit with a marked mineral tension.

GRAACHER HIMMELREICH

The Graacher Himmelreich vineyard faces south-west and has deeper soils than Wehlener Sonnenuhr, which is often described as Graacher's older brother. This soil depth provides excellent water reserves. The wines tend towards fine acidity, pronounced minerality, white flowers and spices. These tend to be earlier-drinking wines. Mihailo related driving past this vineyard in the mornings, seeing it totally in the shade until around 8.30am. It is tempting to find this cooler character in the wines.

WEHLENER SONNENUHR

Lying opposite the family home, across the river, Wehlener Sonnenuhr is a fabulously sited and steeply sloping vineyard. It is the jewel in the Prüm holdings and one of the *grandes dames* of the Mosel. The name refers to a sundial constructed by Jodicus Prüm in the vineyard. There are five hectares of old, low-yielding, ungrafted vines here. An *Einzellage* (single vineyard plot), Wehlener Sonnenuhr produces wines defined by their warmth and impressive age-worthiness.

2017 TASTING NOTES

These tasting notes are based on a tasting at the estate in September 2018, of wines bottled 8-10 weeks previously.

KABINETT

This term was originally derived from the English word ‘cabinet’, which before the German wine law of 1971 was used as a mark of quality wines. Kabinett is the ‘lowest’ (least rich) of the six German wine Prädikats. Mosel Kabinetts are particularly light in alcohol and might be described as off-dry.

GRAACHER HIMMELREICH KABINETT

Gunflint and lemon on the nose, in tune with this vineyard’s cooler aspect, with effusive green melon and sherbet. The palate is citric and quite juicy on the entry, with white flower detailing. Power builds on the mid-palate, with a crisp precision to the saline finish.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE 17

RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2023 - 2036+

£175/CASE OF 12 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

WEHLENER SONNENUHR KABINETT

Grilled almonds and white flowers on the nose, leading into a palate of generous, supple green melon and spritzly lemon and lime. Lovely verve and drive here, with that tell-tale precision on the back-palate. This brings together breadth of fruit and nervy focus effortlessly. Really impressive.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE 17.5+

RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2022 - 2037+

£225/CASE OF 12 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

SPÄTLESE

Literally ‘late harvest’, within the Prädikat system, Spätlese is a step up in grape sugar, as measured at harvest time. Many consider Spätlesen to be the ideal expression of Riesling – where grape variety meets *terroir*.

BERNKASTELER BADSTUBE SPÄTLESE

A flinty nose, with crushed rock minerality and generous white peach behind. The palate is intensely green fruited, lemon-driven and precise, with beautifully textural, upfront stone-fruit. The volume and presence of the mid-palate testify to this vineyard’s expressiveness in youth.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE 17.5 - 18

RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2023 - 2035

£210/CASE OF 12 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

WEHLENER SONNENUHR SPÄTLESE

A measured, confident nose, with white peach and green apple mingling with a line of smoky minerality. Will Hargrove called this “such a perfect Riesling nose”. The palate is drivingly pure on the entry, with an almost grapefruited twist and a building sense of density. There is a lot of power here in reserve, coming to a lovely clipped finish.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE 18+

RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2025 - 2045+

£275/CASE OF 12 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

£160/CASE OF 3 MAGNUMS, IN BOND UK

AUSLESE

Meaning 'selected harvest', Auslese is another notch up in volume. Auslesen may also have some botrytis, or 'noble rot', contributing to the sense of marmaladed richness. In the best examples, as here below, this contrasts with the Mosel's signature high-line of taut acidity.

WEHLENER SONNENUHR AUSLESE

Brightly fruited and vivacious on the nose, white pithy stone-fruit and a pretty floral aspect. The palate is very immediate and open, with zippy acidity – how tempting to drink this now – although the sterner, firmer back-palate suggests there is a lot more to come here. This exemplifies brilliantly the extra layer of vitality in Wehlener Sonnenuhr.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE 18.5

RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2025 – 2045

£315/CASE OF 12 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

£185/CASE OF 12 HALVES, IN BOND UK

£185/CASE OF 3 MAGNUMS, IN BOND UK

AUSLESE GOLDKAPSEL

Goldkapsel, referring to the gold capsule around the neck of these bottles, is an unregulated term in Germany, but has become widely used in the Mosel to denote an additional level of quality.

BERNKASTELER LAY AUSLESE GOLDKAPSEL

Lay lies within the larger Badstube vineyard, but the two can be blended together. Katharina now bottles them separately as a matter of course. The low-lying Lay plot is particularly prone to botrytis, being both warmer and closer to the river. This has a complex, assertively fruited nose, of white peach, with blanched almonds. The palate is beautifully pure and immediate, with a sense of unctuous density, yet without overt sweetness. Honey and yellow flowers, rather than the white flowers of the lower Prädikats at this early stage, and a long finish.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE 19

RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2025 - 2045+

£640/CASE OF 12 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

WEHLENER SONNENUHR AUSLESE GOLDKAPSEL

Perfumed and gently nutty on the nose, with a hint of yellow flowers and honey. There is a lot of fine botrytic character here, in the focused, intense stone-fruit and a certain lactic richness. The palate, by contrast, appears quite stunningly delicate, a latticework of acid curves, soaring white flowers and green citrus. The acidity is filigree-fine, leaving a sense of volume without weight. The finish goes on and on... A thrilling wine to taste and a masterclass in bringing together great power and fine elegance.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE 19+

(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2028 – 2048+)

£680/CASE OF 12 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

£400/CASE OF 12 HALVES, IN BOND UK

£400/CASE OF 3 MAGNUMS, IN BOND UK

TASTING GUIDE

Our tasting notes provide full details but, at your request, we have also introduced a clear and simple marking system. We hope these guidelines assist you in your selection.

Wines are scored out of 20; it has the benefit of simplicity.

We will often use a range of scores (e.g. 16.5 to 17) to indicate the potential to achieve a higher mark. When a '+' is shown it adds further to that potential. Wines from lesser vintages will, inevitably, show a lower overall score.

Wines are judged, in a very broad sense, against their peers. Why? Well, you cannot easily compare a Ford with an Aston Martin, other than they are both cars and have wheels. It is not that different with wine.

A score is a summary only. The devil is in the detail, so please focus on the tasting notes and, as always, speak to our sales team.

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