

Superlative Indian Summer Max Ferd. Richter 2005 Vintage Report

The autumn of 2005 brought sunshine, heat at times and steady warm temperatures. It seemed as if summer had decided to come back to complete its task. The sun worked overtime and the temperature throughout was over 20 centigrade (70° F).

Thanks to an early and rapid flowering in the middle of June, the development of the leaves and the grapes reached two weeks in advance of usual. As a result, the *Golden October* 2005 brought an early Riesling vintage in the Mosel. At Max Ferd. Richter we started picking on the 10th October and the last grapes were in the cellar and pressed on the 3rd November . The volume of wine was slightly less than we anticipated, an average of 55 hl/ha, or about half a litre per square metre.

Never before have Max Ferd. Richter harvested such ripe grapes with such high sugar levels. The average must weight was over 100 Oechsle (24 Brix), higher than in 1959, or 1976, or even 2003. Propitious and localised rain showers in July, August and September reduced drought stress on the vines, increasing the acidity and mineral extract in the grapes, so that we anticipate wines that are more racy and versatile than those of the more opulent 2003 vintage. From the very first day of picking we were able to select botrytised grapes, difficult and expensive work by hand but justified by the superb noble sweet wines.

For the first time for twenty years we did not leave grapes in the Mülheimer Helenenkloster vineyard for potential Eiswein because they were so rich and ripe that the risk of losing them from frost was too great. Thus, we have been rewarded with Beeren- and Trockenbeereauslesen from Mülheim, Graach and Brauneberg vineyards. The must weights of these wines are between 160 and 220 Oechsle (36 – 50 Brix).

Our customers and Riesling aficionados were enraptured with our 2004 vintage and its racy, fresh, mouth-watering wines. We could have liked to see some kind of continuity with the new vintage but nature follows its own rules. We have a vintage that meets the highest expectations and demand for great wines but there is very little every-day wine. Mercifully, we still have got good stocks of 2004 Kabinett and Spätlesen.

The unbroken series of top vintages since 1988 clearly reflects global warming. Though at first higher sugar levels make wine growers happy, global warming also brings new challenges. We have to fight new diseases, such as black rot (*Guignardia Bidwellii*) that was previously only found in Mediterranean vineyards.

In conclusion, Riesling continues to enjoy worldwide acclaim and demand – the *Riesling Renaissance* strides on.

Dr. Dirk Richter, Mülheim/Mosel 27th November 2005.