

TERRAOR

THE REAL DIRT FROM THE ESTATES OF ERNST LOESEN

KEEPING KABINETT REAL

Preserving a delicate tradition in the face of global warming

SUMMER 2008

Kabinett is the lightest and most delicate style of Riesling that we produce in Germany, and Kabinett from the Mosel is the lightest of all. There is nothing quite like the elegant structure and ethereal balance of a fine, low-alcohol Mosel Riesling Kabinett. But now, the undeniable fact of global warming is making it more and more difficult to produce the true Kabinett style.

Kabinett is the first of six ripeness levels in Germany's controversial *Prädikat* system, which was put into place in 1971, at a time when it was often difficult to achieve full ripeness in this cool, northern climate. This meant that growers had to carefully select only the ripest fruit to get the higher *Prädikats* without botrytis (*Spätlese* and *Auslese*).

"If we put 'Kabinett' on the label, the wine should taste like Kabinett."

Unfortunately, global climate change has turned the whole system on its head. Today we have to make very labor-intensive harvest selections in order to get the *lower Prädikats*, especially in the top-rated "*grand cru*" sites, because the grapes now get *too* ripe.

In Germany, it is allowed to declassify from a higher (riper) *Prädikat* to a lower one, but



Kabinett is made from the first picking of grapes, such as these, that are lower in ripeness but bursting with flavor and crisp acidity.

this usually results in wines that are atypical in style and less consistent from year to year, which can destroy the very definition of the *Prädikat* category. As Ernie says, "If we put 'Kabinett' on the label, the wine should taste like a Kabinett."

To continue to provide our customers with the real thing,

we have started bottling an "Estate" Kabinett made with fruit from cooler sites,

outside our single-vineyard parcels. These sites give us the lighter body and crisper acidity needed to make true Kabinett.

Our first bottling is the 2007 Dr. Loosen Riesling Kabinett. We subtitled it "Blue Slate," because it comes only from the classic blue slate slopes in the villages of Bernkastel, Graach and Wehlen.

In addition, we will continue

KEEPING KABINETT REAL

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to make small amounts of Kabinett from our single-vineyard sites. These sites are designated *grand cru* precisely because they've always had the warmest microclimates, but we still can get a little Kabinett from the



cooler parcels in five of the six sites: Bernkasteler Lay, Graacher Himmelreich, Wehlener Sonnenuhr, Ürziger Würzgarten and Erdener Treppchen. Only our greatest *grand cru* vineyard, Erdener Prälat, produces no Kabinett.

As Ernie explains, "It's not just a matter of picking earlier and earlier. You have to wait



for the acidity to come down and the ripe flavors to develop before you can start the harvest. But by then, these days, we're often already up to Auslese." If the global warming trend continues like this, he says, "We could end up with no *grand cru* Kabinetts at all — only Spätlese, Auslese and the botrytis wines." 🍷

OUR "EARLY BA" DISCOVERY

In the wild and crazy 2006 harvest, we had far more botrytis than usual. It started early and never let up, giving us daily headaches, but also an extraordinary amount of super-tasty Beerenauslese (BA).

Normally, we expect to harvest BA late in the season, when botrytis has shriveled Auslese-level grapes that are already very ripe. But in 2006, a lot of early botrytis started concentrating grapes that were only at the Kabinett stage.

It has long been our practice to select out early-arriving botrytis, if only to protect the remaining healthy fruit. If the botrytis fruit is in good condition (dry, rather than wet and moldy), we press it with later-picked botrytis fruit for Gold Capsule Auslese or BA.

The sheer volume of botrytis in 2006, however, gave us more early-harvest BA than we've ever had before. Although the juice was well above the minimum ripeness for BA, it had a

totally different character than the usual late-arriving BA. The early botrytis concentrated the bright fruit flavors of Kabinett — green apple, white peach and lemon — creating a brighter, lighter and more refreshing style of dessert wine. So we bottled it.

This has really opened our eyes to the pure joy of "Early BA." To share this joy with as many wine lovers as possible, we've packaged it in an elegant 187ml flute bottle at a very affordable price.

Of course, if you prefer the weightier late-harvest style, we've bottled some joy for you, too. Look for the bigger "Estate" Beerenauslese, as well as our monstrous single-vineyard BA from Ürziger Würzgarten. 🍷



HANGING OUT IN 2007

An early spring and a cool summer deliver extraordinary wines

2007 VINTAGE REPORT

The most remarkable thing about the 2007 harvest in Germany was the extraordinary hang time that the fruit experienced. Normally, we want at least 105 days between flowering and harvest. In 2007, we started picking after about 130 days. That's simply astonishing, and the purity and intensity that come from such long, slow development on the vine are already apparent in the wines.

A very mild winter and an early-arriving spring set the stage for this unusually long growing season. We were worried that we'd have to begin the harvest in the middle of September, about four weeks early. But the weather decided to be kind to us — or, at least, kind to the vines.

Here in Bernkastel, we measure the warmth of summer by how many barbecues we have out on our patio. In 2007, we only fired up the grill two or three times! In September, it turned even cooler, which helped slow down the development of the fruit and delayed the harvest until a nearly normal October 4.

Once the harvest began, we had very little rain, so we were able to pick some of the healthiest, most beautiful fruit we've ever seen. This outstanding vintage gave us very precise wines in every category, from QbA through TBA. And, for the first time since 2004, we were able to harvest Eiswein —



A cluster of frozen Riesling grapes harvested for Eiswein on December 19, 2007.

a most welcome gift that arrived just a few days before Christmas.

This is another classic vintage that lies somewhere between the firm raciness of 2004 and the powerful ripeness of 2005. The wines are simply gorgeous — they remove any doubt about the importance of hang time.

At J.L. Wolf, in the Pfalz, the hang time wasn't quite as long, but it was still well beyond average for this region. Here, too, the fruit was perfectly clean and healthy, with full ripeness and bright acidity. The wines are very pure, with excellent structure balanced by enormous fruit.

We are extremely happy with the quality — and the quantity — of the range of wines from both estates in 2007. It was an unusual growing season that started out rather too early for comfort, but ended up balancing itself out and giving us some truly amazing wines.

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James Halliday, Ernst Loosen and Stuart Pigott at the 2007 Riesling Rendezvous.

A RENDEZVOUS WITH RIESLING

In June of 2007, I attended the first Riesling Rendezvous in Seattle, a spirited gathering of growers, trade, press and consumers who all share a true love of Riesling. It is an event that Dr. Loosen is very honored to co-sponsor, along with Chateau Ste. Michelle.

One of the primary goals of the Riesling Rendezvous is to continue rebuilding the reputation of our favorite white grape through increased awareness and understanding in the media and trade. But, most important of all, we want to ensure that Riesling producers remain focused on quality. If we are seduced by the illusion of a quick, easy buck, and we let quality slip (as Germany did in the '60s and '70s), then we'll be shooting

ourselves in the foot all over again. We can't let that happen.

The 2007 Riesling Rendezvous was very well received by all who participated. So we are doing it again in late July of 2008. Once again, we have a stellar line-up of producers coming from all over the world,

"It will be another three days of total Riesling immersion."

so there is no doubt that it will be another intense three days of total Riesling immersion.

[www.rieslingrendezvous.com]

This amazing grape deserves to regain its place as the King of White Wines. But it's up to all of us to make it happen. I hope that you will join us!

— Ernst Loosen

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