Alsace white vintages

3 Sep 2008 by Jancis Robinson

2012 went well for the Alsatians. Volumes were roughly average, and quality was very pleasing, thanks to a warm, steady August and a cool, dry September that kept vineyards disease-free. The Crémants, Pinots Noir and Gris, and Gewürztraminers are all especially successful.

2011 Good quality in an early-maturing, drinkable style - but not so impressive as 2010 or the superior 2009s.

2010 Lower yields than 2009, by about 20% overall. Quality is heterogenous thanks to some chaotic weather patterns, meaning that selectivity is the key to finding the best wines.

2009 This year produced some of the most consistently healthy grapes ever in Alsace, translating into exemplary varietal character throughout the region.

2008 Challenging weather conditions looked ominous for Alsace this year, but the wines have turned out to enjoy good concentration with balancing high acidity. Quality is not as high as the 07 vintage. The Crémants are amongst the best.

2007 Very good vintage, even earlier than 2003, with extremely healthy, ripe grapes.

2006 Firm wines slightly lacking flesh.

2005 Pure, expressive, well balanced wines with good ripeness.

2004 Challenging vintage with quite a bit of rain.

2003 Very difficult in view of the high temperatures. Acidity levels were so low that growers were, for once, allowed to add acid, though few of them really got the hang of it. Early maturing wines.

2002 Fine weather at flowering followed an exceptionally cold winter so crop-thinning was necessary for high quality. The summer was much better than in most of France but rain in early October threatened the health of some grapes.

2001 Flowering was extended by low temperatures. Late autumn warmth made up somewhat for a coolish summer and wet September, which robbed the region of a great vintage but there are some excellent wines drinking well now.

2000 An exceptional vintage in every sense with a very early flowering and a very favourable growing season. A little rot of all sorts developed at the end of August and rains in October were sometimes heavy but good quantities of excellent wines, including late harvest styles, were produced.

1999 Rain plagued the growing season and brought rot and mildew. Fine weather began in mid August and continued for a month so that careful vignerons looked forward to good quality but hopes were dashed by yet more rain.

1998 Early harvest of very ripe grapes with some botrytis.

1997 Some really excellent wines. Early harvest of very ripe grapes plus some outstanding sweet, later picked wines.

1996 Solid but not desperately exciting wines.

1995 Varied year in which those who picked low-yielding vineyards well after the rains made great Rieslings, some very ripe. Rot threatened everyday wines. Slightly reduced crop.

1994 September rain, but impressive wines from those brave enough to pick late.

1993 A good year: ripe wines of weight and intensity.

1992 Better than most French regions: ripe, soft and forward.

1991 A difficult year, rain hit the harvest and the wines are light and acidic.

1990 A third wonderful year of classic, powerful, long-lived wines; the best still going strong.

1989 Massive sugar levels produced a blockbuster vintage with many still thrilling botrytis-affected bottles.

1988 Superb and intensely flavoured with the balance to last.

1985 Beautiful and elegant, these have gained complexity with age.