Pfalz

5 Sep 2008 by Jancis Robinson

In a nutshell: Concentrated and increasingly dry, well-priced whites and now a massive 40 per cent reds.

Main grapes: Riesling, Scheurebe, Rieslaner, Grauburgunder (white); Dornfelder, Spätburgunder (red).

The Pfalz, once known in English as the Palatinate, is, like Rheinhessen, a very varied wine region but one of great current interest to bargain-hunting drinkers. Because of the region's relatively low land prices, increasing numbers of ambitious young wine producers have been able to make their mark here in some of Germany's warmest vineyards, where in many years natural alcohol levels of well over 13% can easily be reached by those prepared to restrict yields. As well as being one of Germany's most exciting wine regions, it is also the biggest.

Old estates such as Bassermann-Jordan, Bürklin-Wolf and von Buhl have been joined by some of Germany's greatest winemaking stars such as Josef Biffar, Christmann, Kurt Darting, Koehler-Ruprecht, Rainer Lingenfelder, Müller-Catoir and Pfeffingen. Pfalz producers have also been the quickest, and perhaps the best equipped thanks to the climate, to respond to the now well-established trend among German consumers towards a greater appreciation of dry wines.

Riesling is just one of the varieties capable of producing intensely flavoured, concentrated, full-bodied wines, from dry to Trockenbeerenauslese (see Understanding German labels). Others are mentioned above. Others include Scheurebe, Rieslaner, Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris) , Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc) and reds. In fact, some of Pfalz's 21st century wines have been almost too alcoholic - an unexpected development.