Van Volxem Saar Riesling 2008/2009

12 Jul 2010 by Jancis Robinson

From €9.95, £10, $17.85

Find this wine

This sizzling dry white was the first that I tasted at Howard Ripley's inspiring tasting of German's alluring 2009s in London last month and I was blown off my feet by its energy and concentration. I gave it 16.5 out of 20, a very high score for such an inexpensive wine at the beginning of a day's tasting.

Our man in Germany Michael Schmidt also tasted it at the mega 2009 tasting in Germany in April and gave it 16, a generous score for a QbA wine from him. He noted:

Van Volxem, Saar Riesling trocken 2009 Saar 16 Drink 2010-14
Dusty and with a hint of pear peel. Dusty, almost smoky on the palate with a slightly bitter edge of minerality. Uncompromisingly dry, but with good substance and length. (MS) '

My note reads:

Van Volxem, Saar Riesling trocken 2009 Saar 16.5 Drink 2010-14
Wonderfully well balanced and exciting; I could happily drink this for lunch today! Great nerve but lots of ripe fruit on the front palate though it finishes bone dry. Great white wine by any measure even if there is no amazing finish.

So, although we disagree over quite how persistent this wine is, we are agreed that it is a fine example of Germany's new generation of dry Rieslings with no shortage of flavour. For some background on Roman Niewodniczanski (pictured), the unusual young owner of this estate, a neighbour of the famous Egon Müller estate, and his philosophy of making 'harmonic, dry wines', see my 2006 article on The weird and the wonderful from Germany.

It is already widely available in Germany. Indeed our friend winesearcher.com lists dozens of stockists there from €9.95 as well as one in Holland. In the UK the only way to buy this wine at the moment is as part of Howard Ripley's 2009 German offer (in which the emotive word trocken is omitted from the wine name) at £42 per six-bottle case in bond, which will work out at around £10 a bottle plus delivery. I think this is a very fair price indeed, though I should point out that these simpler wines tend to suffer when they are part of what is effectively an en primeur offer because they are usually shipped together with much more serious wines and have to wait until they are all bottled and ready for shipment. This wine should be delicious any time over the next three or four years but it would already be lovely this summer. Ah well, instant gratification should perhaps be resisted.

Americans may have to wait even longer. The most recent vintage of this wine currently available there seems to be the rather tarter **Van Volxem, Saar Riesling trocken 2008 Saar**. Thanks to the enthusiasm of German wine enthusiast Stephen Bitterolf, his company Crush of NYC has the 2008 vintage at $17.85 and there are many other stockists too. I see from my tasting note on the 2008 that I was just as enthusiastic about this vintage and felt it would drink well until 2012 so this is not disastrous. I see that I also noted a slightly short finish on the 2008 incidentally but also gave it an enthusiastic score of 16.5.

The 2008 is currently on sale in Austria and Spain, and in the UK chez Howard Ripley, Berry Bros, Corks of Cotham and Reserve Wine Shop of Manchester at around £15 a bottle.

Drink either of these vintages either as an aperitif or with foods as full of flavour as the wine itself.