



Mosel Fine Wines

"The Independent Review of Mosel Riesling"

By Jean Fisch and David Rayer

Weingut Willi Schaefer

(Graach – Middle Mosel)

Christoph Schaefer admits to being surprised by what eventually came out of the 2017 vintage: "March proved comparatively hot. When the frost hit us at the end of April, the flowering was already quite advanced. We had never experienced such a frost in this vegetation phase. Yet the frost was not that much of a problem. Our main issue was the hailstorm at the beginning of August, which hit us when the skins of the berries were already soft. Usually, such a hailstorm is really localized on a few rows in a vineyard. Not so in 2017. We were hit throughout our vineyards. September also proved a difficult month, as rot appeared early on already ripe grapes. The result was a complex situation with sometimes rotten berries next to clean ones on the same bunch. We started our harvest on September 25 and decided to discard quite some berries and grapes, and therefore were only able to produce one Auslese this year, which will be sold at the Auction. You now understand why, with all this trouble, we truly astonished at the resulting quality. We did some very strict and rigorous selections and were able to harvest clean grapes for great Kabinett and Spätlese. But the harvest window was really small this year. Fortunately, Andrea's brother, a winemaker in the Kaiserstuhl, was able to join us during the crucial first week of October. During the maturation process of the wines, I felt that it was crucial to regularly taste the wines to feel when you needed to stop the fermentation. For example, the 2017 wines have, in the end, less residual sugar than the 2016 at our Estate, even though acidity levels were higher. One of the explanation is that the wines have high dry extract levels which gives them more presence and structure."

Yields were down by 50% and this impacted the portfolio, as Christoph explained: "The grapes had a great acidic structure so we decided to focus on fruity wines only." The Estate therefore only produced six wines, two Kabinett and four Spätlese, which will be sold via regular channels. In addition, it was able to produce tiny quantities of an auction Auslese made from dried berries in a small sector of the Domprobst and will also bring a separate Spätlese to the Auction. The wines were bottled at the beginning of May, and Christoph Schaefer reported that they really benefitted from a longer aging on their fine lees in wooden casks ("You could feel that they evolved positively from week to week").

The very strict selections made by the Estate costed it dearly in terms of yields. But this paid off massively in terms of quality. Simply put, the 2017 collection by Willi Schaefer is awe-inspiring and possibly the finest ever. The wines all shine through huge complexity, purity and intensity yet retain elegance and precision. The real problem will just be to find some bottles as quantities are even smaller and tightly allocated than usual. But every effort should be made to lay one's hands on any bottle. These are modern-day legends in the making!

NB: The two auction wines will be reviewed in the dedicated Issue to be released ahead of the Auction.

2017er	Willi Schaefer	Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese	05 18	96
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The 2017er Graacher Domprobst Spätlese AP 05 displays a magnificent and beautifully expressive nose of yellow peach, smoke, aniseed herbs, almond, raspberry and much more. The wine shines through its gorgeous depth and intensity on the palate. A racy but juicy and ripe acidity makes for a stunningly focused, pure and smoky feel in the long finish. The after-taste is tight and incredibly pure. This mindboggling Spätlese in the making only needs a decade to show its full potential! 2027-2057

2017er	Willi Schaefer	Graacher Domprobst Riesling Kabinett	03 18	95
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The 2017er Graacher Domprobst Kabinett immediately catches one's attention through stunningly refined notes of smoke which give way to herbs, yellow peach, apricot blossom, tangerine, dried flowers and a hint of almond as the wine unfolds in the glass. It proves intense and almost powerful (despite the low level of alcohol) on the palate yet what sets this wine in a league of its own is its sheer incredibly focused, tight and yet playful structure. A stunning kick of acidity gives focus and energy to the after-taste. This is a stunning Kabinett in the making, which combines fabulous intensity and freshness. 2027-2047

2017er	Willi Schaefer	Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese	10 18	95
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The 2017er Graacher Domprobst Spätlese AP 10 delivers a most beautiful floral and smoky nose with elegant and refined scents of anise, yellow flowers, pear, orange blossom and smoke. The wine is very pure, straight and focused as a racy yet ripe acidity cuts through the palate. The intensity of this wine in the finish is just fascinating in its purity and elegance. What a fantastic Spätlese! 2027-2047

2017er	Willi Schaefer	Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Spätlese	08 18	95
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The 2017er Graacher Himmelreich Spätlese delivers an absolutely gorgeous and magnificently fruity nose made of tangerine, apricot, yellow peach, peach kernel, cherry, anise and mint. The wine is superbly playful and juicy on the multi-layered palate as plenty of yellow fruits and some exotic fruits kick in. A superb underlying zesty side adds to the finesse and vibrancy of the very long and racy finish. What a great classic and refined Spätlese in the making. 2027-2047



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2017er	Willi Schaefer	Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese	17 18	94+
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The 2017er Wehlener Sonnenuhr Spätlese exhibits a most beautiful nose of orange, apricot flower, ripe yellow peach, minty herbs and pear. The wine is gorgeously juicy and light on the palate, yet gradually shows more depth and intensity which is nicely wrapped into a creamy and delicate structure. The finish is long and delicately smooth. We would not be surprised if this stunning Spätlese would eventually warrant a higher rating at maturity, once the refined and elegant side will have fully come through. 2027-2047

2017er	Willi Schaefer	Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Kabinett	02 18	94
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The 2017er Graacher Himmelreich Kabinett proves still somewhat backward and only gradually reveals shy notes of smoke, white flowers, anise, yellow peach and grapefruit, all wrapped into a hint of herbs. The wine is quite intense yet playful on the palate as beautifully zesty and ripe acidity mingles with juicy yellow fruits. Despite the intensity, this Kabinett remains superbly light and develops some stunningly complex mineral and zesty fruity flavors in the finish. This is a brilliant Kabinett in the making. 2025-2037

About Mosel Fine Wines

[Independent publication](#) on Mosel Riesling (and beyond!) with reports on vintages, Estates and wines at maturity.

Covering every year up to [1,000 wines from the current vintage](#) from all leading Estates of the region, of which the best make it into the Issues.

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