

VIEW FROM THE CELLAR

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Weingut Willi Schaefer (Graach)

Christophe and Andrea Schaefer have crafted an amazing lineup of 2019ers, with everything that I tasted, up and down the Prädikat hierarchy gorgeously pure, electric and bursting with some of the most beautiful fruit tones one will ever find in the world of wine. The vintage at Weingut Schaefer also produced a Grosses Gewächs bottling from the Himmelreich vineyard this year, but as my samples were shipped long before the official September release date for GGs, I did not have a chance to taste it. However, everything that I did taste from the estate is pure magic in 2019, and this was probably the most exciting full collection of 2019ers that I tasted in preparing this report. The basic, entry level wines were both very high in quality in 2019 (though sealed under screwcaps, at least for the American market). The pair of shimmering, dancing Kabinetten that I tried (one each from the Himmelreich and Domprobst vineyards) were flawless in their effortless and weightless beauty. The Himmelreich Kabinett held up in my fridge for fully a week after it was opened, and the last glass was every bit as glorious as the first! I sampled five different Spätlesen as well this year, one each from the Wehlener Sonnenuhr and Himmelreich vineyards, and three from the Domprobst. All were sensational and the Domprobst Spätlese AP #13, which will be sold in the auction in Trier later this month, was probably perfect (but given as demand is always so strong for that wine at the auction and the estate invariably has to add cases to the availability to keep the price from going insanely high, I have scored the wine conservatively, only giving it “98”). There are also five brilliant Auslesen in the cellars this year, but unfortunately, my sample of the Wehlener Sonnenuhr Auslese was corked, so there are only tasting notes on four of these legends in the making. And the Domprobst Beerenauslese from 2019 is the pinnacle of the collection at Weingut Schaefer this year and every bit as stunning as one would expect from the confluence of a legendary vintage and an estate at the absolute top of its game today! Buy any bottling you can find from Christophe Schaefer this year, as there is absolutely nothing in the portfolio that will not be a cellar treasure in times to come.

2019 Graacher Riesling Trocken AP #6- Weingut Willi Schaefer (screwcap)

The 2019 Graacher Riesling Trocken AP #6 from Christophe Schaefer comes in at 11.5 percent octane and offers up a beautifully expressive nose of tart orange, apple, a superb base of slate minerality, white flowers and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is crisp, fullish and racy, with an impressive core of pure fruit, fine mineral drive and cut, bright acids and a long, complex and wide open finish. There is a slight textural degradation on the finish from the screwcap, when comparing this to the cork-sealed wines, but it is very, very slight right now, and for drinking over the next several years, I suspect that most tasters will not even notice it. This is an outstanding “entry level” Trocken! 2020-2035. **90.**

2019 Graacher Riesling Feinherb AP #7- Weingut Willi Schaefer (screwcap)

The 2019 Graacher Feinherb bottling is only a touch lower in octane than the Trocken, as this wine comes in at eleven percent alcohol in this vintage. The bouquet is vibrant and complex, delivering scents of lime, tart orange, complex base of salty minerality, orange peel and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, youthful and still fairly closed right now, with a lovely core, a nice buffering of residual sweetness (though this remains essentially a dry wine), bright acids and a long, moderately reserved and nascently complex finish. I love the underlying wine here, but I get the sense that the closure is working against the wine right now, as it is more clamped down on the backend than the Graacher Trocken and will demand some decanting time before drinking. This could simply be a function of the wine being closed down after its

relatively recent bottling, or it could be the screwcap. It will be interesting to follow its evolution over the next couple of years. If it is just closed, post-bottling, the score should track at the higher limit of the range. 2020-2035. **87-90.**

2019 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Kabinett AP #2- Weingut Willi Schaefer

Christophe Schaefer's 2019 Himmelreich Kabinett AP #2 is an absolutely brilliant young wine. The nose wafts from the glass in a crystal clear blend of lime, green apple, a strong vein of slate salinity, a touch of wild yeasts, bee pollen and a topnote of lime blossoms. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full, complex and beautifully balanced, with a succulent core of absolutely pristine fruit, a lovely girdle of acidity, great focus and grip and a long, vibrant and complex finish. The backend of this wine is simply electric. Stunning juice. 2020-2060. **96.**

2019 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Kabinett AP #3- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2019 Domprobst Kabinett AP #3 from the Schaefer family is another absolutely stunning young wine. The bouquet is pure, precise and very promising, offering up scents of pear, tart orange, wild yeasts, a beautiful and deep base of slate, a touch of iris blossom and gentle smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and medium-full, with a superb core of fruit, classic Domprobst mineral drive, bright, zesty acids and impeccable balance and grip on the long, focused and nascently complex finish. As is typical of the Domprobst, this wine is not as expressive as the Himmelreich Kabinett out of the blocks and will demand some time in the cellar to blossom, but it will be another great wine with some bottle age. 2026-2060+. **95.**

2019 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Spätlese AP #8- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2019 Himmelreich Spätlese AP #8 from the Schaefer family is a really classic and flat out delicious example of its Prädikat level and *terroir*. The wine comes in at 7.5 percent alcohol and offers up a vibrant, complex bouquet of lime, tangerine, lovely slate minerality, bee pollen, apple blossoms and a topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is crisp, medium-full and succulent on the attack, with a lovely core, fine mineral drive and focus, bright acids and a long, complex and seamlessly balanced, bouncy finish. This is simply gorgeous wine. 2020-2065+. **95.**

2019 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese AP #10- Weingut Willi Schaefer

Christophe Schaefer's 2019 Domprobst Spätlese AP #10 is a bit more reserved out of the blocks than the Himmelreich Spätlese, but that is the nature of the Domprobst. However, it shares the same beautiful purity and precision of the Himmelreich example, eventually delivering scents of apple, pear, a refined base of slate, just a whisper of honeycomb, a touch of lime zest, lilacs and iris blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and medium-full, with great soil signature, zesty acids, excellent focus and grip and a long, refined and perfectly balanced finish. This is still quite primary in personality, but there is plenty of complexity waiting to unfold and in due course, this too will be stunning juice. 2025-2065+. **94.**

2019 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese AP #17- Weingut Willi Schaefer

It is so nice to see two different wines from the Schaefer family's small holdings in Wehlener Sonnenuhr this year. The 2019 Spätlese offers up a beautiful aromatic constellation of pear, orange, vanilla bean, fruit blossoms, slate and a topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex, vibrant and seamlessly balanced, with a lovely core, fine slate undertow, a lovely girdle of acidity and excellent focus and grip on the very long, very pure and dancing finish. One can taste the Indian Summer in this wine. Another truly stunning Spätlese! 2022-2065+. **95.**

2019 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese AP #5- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2019 Domprobst Spätlese AP #5 from the Schaefer family is a touch richer in personality than the AP #10 from the same vineyard, but not with retaining the same beautiful filigree of classic Spätlese. The bouquet is deep, precise and quite expressive for a young Domprobst, wafting from the glass in a blend of pear, fresh apricot, orange blossoms, slate, incipient notes of honeycomb, violets and a topnote of lime zest. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish, complex and perfectly balanced, with bright acids, lovely focus and bounce and a long, refined and juicy finish. This is another gorgeous Spätlese. It is as approachable out of the blocks as the Himmelreich Spätlese, but given this *terroir's* propensity to close down for long aging, I have to believe that this is a brief window of accessibility before it settles in for a bit of hibernation before really starting to stretch its wings. So try it over the next year, or bury it for another six or seven years before starting to drink it in earnest. 2020-2070+. **95+**.

2019 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese AP #13 (Auction)- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2019 Domprobst Auction Spätlese AP #13 from Christophe Schaefer is pure magic. The bouquet is just stunning, jumping from the glass in a blaze of lime, pear, tangerine, salty slate minerality, violets, lilacs, orange zest and a lovely topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is medium-full and more reserved in personality today than the nose would suggest, with a great core of fruit, stellar mineral undertow, bright, buried acids and laser-like focus on the long, nascently complex, seamlessly balanced and completely effortless finish. While this wine is still a bit primary on the palate, it is incredibly long and precise and once it is ready to drink, it seems likely to be one of the very best wines of this great vintage. 2026-2070+. **98**.

2019 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese AP #11- Weingut Willi Schaefer

There are three distinct Auslesen from the Domprobst in this vintage, with AP #11 being the least botrytized in personality (though certainly still with a beautiful glazing). The bouquet here wafts from the glass in a gorgeous blend of pear, pineapple, a hint of the yellow plum to come, a lovely vein of slate, honey, iris blossoms and white lilies. On the palate the wine is deep, pure, fullish and vibrant, with a superb core of fruit, bright acids, excellent focus and balance and impressive lift on the nascently complex, youthful and very promising finish. This is a gorgeous wine in the making, but like most examples from the Domprobst vineyard, it will demand a full decade's worth of bottle age to start to really hit on all cylinders. 2029-2085+. **94+**.

2019 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Auslese AP #9- Weingut Willi Schaefer

This is the only Auslese from the Himmelreich from Christophe Schaefer in 2019 and it is an absolute beauty. The wine offers up just stunningly clean botrytis notes in its aromatic constellation of peach, mango, orange, a nice pull of minerality, honeycomb, lime blossoms and citrus zest. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish, very complex and zesty, with a great core, outstanding focus and grip, a lovely girdle of acidity and stunning length on the perfectly balanced and vibrant finish. This is brilliant Auslese! 2029-2085+. **97**.

2019 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese AP #14- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2019 AP #14 Auslese from the Domprobst is a bit more botrytized in personality than the AP #11 from the same vineyard, but like all of these Schaefer wines in this vintage, it is beautifully pure, precise and energetic on the palate. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a beautiful young blend of pear, fresh apricot, white cherry, a fine foundation of salty minerality, orange zest, honeycomb, violets and apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and vibrant, with a dreamy core of fruit, fine mineral undertow, ripe, buried acids, with laser-like focus, stunning complexity and grip and a long, electric finish. This is absolutely effortless in its shimmering beauty. 2027-2085+. **97**.

2019 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese (Auction) AP #15- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2019 Auction Auslese bottling AP #15 from the Domprobst is the most beautifully botrytized of all the Auslesen in the cellar this year, but one has the sense that these were perfectly golden berries before the botrytis arrived. The bouquet is celestial, delivering a magical array of tangerine, mango, fresh apricot, citrus zest, honeycomb, a beautiful base of minerality, orange blossoms and violets. On the palate the wine is pure, complex, fullish and electric, with a great core of fruit, superb mineral drive and grip, a superb girdle of acidity and a very, very long, very complex and perfectly balanced finish. This is pure magic. 2030-2085+. **98+**.

2019 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Beerenauslese AP #16- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2019 Beerenauslese from the Domprobst from Christophe Schaefer is another stunningly beautiful wine and a marvelous summit for this amazing lineup of 2019ers. The bouquet is pure and utterly refined, wafting from the glass in a blend of white cherry, pineapple, tangerine, a hint of the yellow plum that will come with bottle age, a nice dollop of slate, citrus zest, honey, violets and a beautiful array of tropical floral tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is refined, fullish and complex, with seamless balance, laser-like focus, a marvelous core of fruit and a very, very long, elegant and dancing finish. This is so refined and effortless! It is still a young wine and I would not even consider opening a bottle for at least another six to eight years (despite it being absolutely delicious right now), as there is so much here, lurking just below the surface and waiting for bottle age to set it free! 2026-2085. **97**.