

# VIEW FROM THE CELLAR

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Number Eighty

## Weingut Willi Schaefer (Graach)

*Christophe Schaefer was yet another winegrower in the middle Mosel who reported the earliest start to harvest in 2018 in the history of their estate, as the picking teams were out on the slopes collecting grapes on September 17<sup>th</sup>. Everything was brought in within four weeks of getting started, which was again very fast for the estate, but as I mentioned in my introductory remarks about the vintage, Christophe was of the opinion that during the harvest of 2018, there may well have been a tipping point after which what was lost leaving the grapes out on the vines was more important than what was gained by allowing the sugars to climb a bit higher. Of course, with the weather absolutely perfect at harvest time, producers could take their time, target small parcels for specific styles of wines and the temptation was to not hurry bringing in the grapes and some people probably let their grapes hang a bit longer than was optimal as a result. Unlike in nearby Zeltingen, there was not much botrytis in the village of Graach in 2018, so the beautiful array of Auslesen produced here this year are primarily based on golden berries and shriveled, but non-botrytized grapes, and there is only a whisper of botrytis in these sweeter wines from Christophe Schaefer in 2018.; There is a small bit of dry wine here as well in 2018, though we did not taste the Grosses Gewächs from the Himmelreich during my visit, as the wine was not yet ready. However, Christophe feels that the real strength of the 2018 vintage is at the level of Kabinetten and Spätlesen, and this is where the lion's share of production ended up. But, there are also some stellar Auslesen, made in fairly small quantities (including one from a tiny new parcel for the Schaefer in the Wehlener Sonnenuhr) and a gorgeous Beerenauslese from the Domprobst as well, so for fans of Prädikat wines, there is a little something for everyone this year. The lone dry wine in the cellar is Graacher Trocken that is really tasty and will make fans of dry Riesling from the estate quite happy, as it will be an excellent value and there has not been much dry wine here in the last few vintages. There are single bottlings of Kabinett here from the Himmelreich and Domprobst this year, but Christophe noted that they have pretty good quantities of both of these wines this year. At the Spätlese level there are three distinct examples from the Domprobst and one each from the Wehlener Sonnenuhr and Himmelreich. All the Auslesen in the Schaefer cellars this year are also breathtakingly beautiful young wines, with stunning purity and individuality. As the botrytis plays such a tiny, tiny role in their personalities, they are wines that show remarkable levels of minerality for their Prädikats and will be cellar treasures for many, many decades to come. Of the following notes, the first three wines had been bottled the week before my visit, with everything else still in cask and due for bottling in the coming weeks.*

### **2018 Graacher Riesling Trocken AP #6- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

The 2018 Graacher Riesling Trocken from Weingut Schaefer is really a lovely wine and will drink well from a young age, but also evolve beautifully with extended cellaring. The bouquet offers up a lovely, complex nose of tart orange, grapefruit, a lovely base of slate, citrus peel and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and vibrant, with a good core, fine mineral drive, bright, ripe acids and lovely length and grip on the well-balanced and zesty finish. Good juice. 2019-2040+. **90.**

### **2018 Graacher Riesling Feinherb AP #7- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

The 2018 Graacher Feinherb is also an excellent value in the making. The bouquet is pure and already quite expressive, wafting from the glass in a mix of pear, a touch of fresh pineapple, salty slate minerality, a touch of bee pollen and a topnote of apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and nicely juicy at the core, with lovely backend minerality, excellent focus and live and a long, bouncy, complex and flat out delicious finish. I really like the balance and vibrancy to this bottling this year. 2019-2045. **90+.**

### **2018 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Kabinett AP #2- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

The 2018 Himmelreich Kabinett from Christophe Schaefer is a superb bottle, with classic delicacy and filigree one expects from this Prädikat level. The lovely nose wafts from the glass in a very pure mix of grapefruit, lime, a touch of wild yeasts, a beautiful base of slate, a whisper of petrol and a lovely topnote of violet. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and succulent at the core, with lovely backend mineral drive, bright acids and excellent length and grip on the complex finish. This is eight percent alcohol this year, with eight grams of acidity and around fifty grams of residual sugar. Just a lovely bottle and really showing well for having just been bottled. 2023-2060+. **92+.**

### **2018 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Kabinett AP #3- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

The 2018 Kabinett from the Domprobst is an absolute classic in the making. As is customary with wines from this great *terroir*, this is more reserved in profile than the Himmelreich Kabinett, but it is going to have a long and beautiful life ahead of it. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a youthful blend of pear, tangerine, a salty base of slate, citrus peel, gentle smokiness and a whisper of wild yeasts in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full, crisp and complex, with lovely transparency and grip, fine acids and a long, vibrant and filigreed finish. First class Kabinett. 2025-2065. **93.**

### **2018 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Spätlese AP #8- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

The Himmelreich has produced a beautiful Spätlese as well in 2018, and this is destined to be a long-lived and superb bottle. The complex nose is vibrant and refined, offering up scents of lime, pear, a nice touch of orange zest, bee pollen, elder flowers, lovely minerality and a topnote of citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and zesty, with lovely inner tension between its beautiful fruit tones and mineral undertow. The finish is long, focused and bouncy, with lovely lift, cut and grip. 2022-2075. **93+.**

### **2018 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese AP #10- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

The AP #10 Spätlese from the Domprobst vineyard is also superb in 2018. The bouquet is bright and beautifully expressive for a young Domprobst, wafting from the glass in a blend of pear, apple, violets, bee pollen, a lovely base of slate and a gentle topnote of wild yeasts. On the palate the wine is fullish and nicely succulent on the attack, with truly beautiful purity to the fruit, fine soil signature and a long, perfectly balanced and zesty. I love the backend slate-acid duality that defines the backend of this wine. This is a Domprobst Spätlese that will only need three or four years in the cellar to really start drinking with style and generosity. 2023-2075. **93+.**

### **2018 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese AP #17- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

The 2018 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Spätlese from Christophe Schaefer is another absolutely stellar example of how strong this Prädikat level is in this vintage. The pure and utterly refined nose delivers an elegant aromatic constellation of white cherries, pears, a beautiful base of slate, a youthful hint of petrol, vanilla bean and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full, complex and still youthfully reticent, with lovely detail and depth, bright acids and a long, filigreed and dancing finish. Classic. 2023-2075. **94.**

### **2018 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese AP #5- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

The 2018 Domprobst Spätlese AP #5 is far more reserved out of the blocks than the AP #10 version, and this wine will demand some extended bottle age before it really starts to hit on all cylinders. However, the potential here is outstanding and all that is needed is some patience to outwait the inherent structural reserves of the Domprobst. The bouquet is a fine mix of pear, apple, salty slate minerality, bee pollen, petrol and spring flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very, very precise, with superb cut, a great core and a veritable slate bath of minerality on the long, tightly-knit and focused finish. This is going to be stellar. 2028-2075+. **94+**.

### **2018 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese AP #13 (Auction)- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

The 2018 Auction Spätlese from the Domprobst is even a shade better! The bouquet is pure, precise and absolutely stunning out of the blocks, offering up a youthful blend of pear, delicious apple, bee pollen, slate, a nice touch of salinity, exotic floral tones of violet and lavender and a whisper of honeycomb in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and beautifully structured, with a lovely core, great focus and mineral drive, bright, zesty acids and great complexity and precision on the very, very long, very elegant finish. This is a great, great Spätlese in the making! 2027-2075+. **96**.

### **2018 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese AP #11- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

According to Christophe Schaefer, the 2018 Domprobst Auslese AP #11 has just a tiny touch of botrytis in it, as it has almost exclusively been produced from golden berries. The wine is truly stunning on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet soaring from the glass in a blaze of pear, yellow plum, fresh pineapple, a gorgeous base of slate, citrus blossoms, bee pollen and lilacs. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and zesty, with a lovely core, great backend mineral drive and outstanding complexity and grip on the vibrant, snappy and electric finish. This is just beautiful Auslese! 2026-2085+. **95**.

### **2018 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese AP #18- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

This Auslese was produced from a tiny, new parcel in the Sonnenuhr of eight *ares* that lies right alongside the Schaefer's previous small plot of vines here, and which they planted four years ago. These very young vines produce a special wine their first year that they are old enough to make true wine-quality grapes, and Christophe felt it was sufficiently different from the rest of the parcel here that it merited being bottled on its own, rather than just being blended into the Spätlese from the Sonnenuhr. It is truly a stunning and beautifully pure example of pure, full, transparent and zesty, with marvelous structure and precision, exquisite balance and a very, very long, vibrant and seamless finish. Great juice. 2023-2075+. **95**.

### **2018 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese AP #14- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

The 2018 Domprobst Auslese AP #14 is also an outstanding wine in the making, with just a touch more fruit-driven personality than the AP #11 version. The bouquet is very expressive out of the blocks, offering up a gorgeous mix of pear, *mirabelle*, tangerine, slate, gentle notes of honeycomb and a topnote of citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and absolutely loaded with beautiful fruit on the attack and mid-palate, with a lovely undertow of slate, great focus and grip and a long, zesty and beautifully balanced finish. This is another breathtakingly beautiful Auslese from the estate in 2018! 2026-2085. **96**.

### **2018 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese (Auction) AP #15- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

The Domprobst Auction bottling of Auslese from Weingut Schaefer is even a hair more precise and pure than either of the other two from this vineyard in 2018. The nose soars from the glass in a magical blend of passion fruit, tangerine, yellow plum, honeycomb, a touch of violet, a lovely base of slate and a topnote of apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and filigreed, with great depth and grip, outstanding focus and cut and a long, zesty and hauntingly beautiful finish. A legend in the making. 2026-2085. **97**.

### **2018 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Beerenauslese AP #16- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

There has not been a Beerenauslese in the Schaefer cellars since the beautiful 2015 version, and this 2018 is a marvelous follow-up to that great wine. The bouquet here is beautiful complex and gently tropical in profile, wafting from the glass in a blend of *mirabelle*, mango, fresh pineapple, honey, violets, orange zest and a lovely bass-note of slate. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, zesty and laser-like in its focus, with a bottomless core, great elegance and lift, a creamy attack and a very long, absolutely electric finish. This is stunning. 2024-2100. **97**.