

# VIEW FROM THE CELLAR

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❖ *The 2017 Vintage in Germany- Sun, Measured Ripeness and Beautiful, Bright Acids Produce a Great, Great Classic Year.* (pages 1-92)

## **Weingut Willi Schaefer (Graach)**

*Christophe Schaefer is very, very happy with the quality of his range of 2017ers, but the quantities this year were cut back dramatically by the combination of spring frost, early August hail and then a very, draconian selection in the vineyards. Between the three, the harvest of 2017 ended up producing half of the crop of 2016 at Weingut Schaefer. As Christophe commented, "we wanted to be very strict with our selection of grapes this year, and it was all negative selection- rejecting anything that might be even a bit subpar, and so we ended up using virtually no botrytized grapes in 2017." As I mentioned in the introduction, Christophe's wife Andrea was in charge of the picking teams in the vineyards during the harvest and she recalled "that I do not think I had ever seen a worse harvest, as we kept sorting out so many bunches and leaving them on the ground, but when I asked Christophe what he thought of the grapes coming into the winery, he was very, very happy with the quality of what we had kept and I felt relieved a bit." Christophe remembered that as the back half of September arrived, he was constantly in the vineyards, tasting grapes and for several days, thinking, "they are not quite ready", but as the last week of the month arrived, "everything tasted great and then we were faced with wanting to bring everything in as quickly as possible." Most vintages in Germany will allow for a more leisurely harvest, as parcels are selected and picked for a certain type of wine- this plot for a Kabinett, that for a Spätlese or a further plot for a Grosses Gewächs, but 2017 was quite different, as the rain in late September and then the subsequent warm temperatures started the botrytis rolling and it quickly became less than clean botrytis. So when picking time struck, the Schaeferes were very quick, with Andrea's family coming up from their own vineyards in Baden (where they had just finished their own harvest) to help bring everything in very briskly in Graach.*

*The hustle to bring in the grapes as pristine as possible has been rewarded here in 2017, as the entire range is absolutely stellar, with crystal clear fruit tones, piercingly pure minerality and great, snappy acids that promise very, very long and productive lives for all of the 2017ers from Weingut Schaefer. There are only single cuvées of Kabinett from the Himmelreich and Domprobst this year, one Spätlese each from the Wehlener Sonnenuhr and Himmelreich and three distinct Spätlesen from the Domprobst vineyard, one of which will be auctioned in Trier in September. As I mentioned above, there is a small lot of Auslese from the Domprobst as well, which will also be an auction wine. The 2017ers here had been bottled three weeks before my visit and were still a bit shy on the nose after their recent bottling, but the palates were in fine, fine form and absolutely singing. I can only imagine just how stunning these wines will be*

*showing once the bouquets have also recovered from their bottling! My impression is that these will all want a bit of bottle age to allow some of their secondary layers to emerge and the brisk acidity to bury itself more firmly into the bodies of the wines, but once they start hitting on all cylinders, they are going to be pure magic! The 2017 vintage has produced some great long-distance runners at Weingut Willi Schaefer and this is going to be yet another great, great vintage for Christophe and Andrea Schaefer and will rival the very best of the wines produced here in the last decade or so, which is saying something, as this winery has been on quite a roll since the turn of the new millennium!*



*The last of an early morning fog burning off in the Domprobst vineyard up above the village center of Graach.*

**2017 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Kabinett AP #2- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

The 2017 Himmelreich Kabinett from Christophe Schaefer is emblematic of the entire range this year, with snappy acids giving an electric charge to absolutely beautiful fruit tones and striking minerality. The bouquet offers up a lovely blend of lime, apple, a touch of wild yeasts, salty minerality and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-bodied and filigreed, with lovely intensity of flavor, a classic sense of weightlessness, bright, ripe acids and laser-like focus on the nascently complex finish. 2022-2055. **94.**

**2017 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Kabinett AP #3- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

The 2017 Domprobst Kabinett is again outstanding and utterly classical in profile, with the more reserved youthful profile of the vineyard. The still quite primary nose delivers scents of apple, pear, a touch of bee pollen, stony minerality, citrus zest and a nice touch of lilac in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and very promising, with a very stony personality, a superb core, crisp acids and a very long, racy and youthful finish. This will be excellent, but it will need at least a couple of years more in the cellar than the Himmelreich

Kabinett before it starts to blossom. It should prove to a very ageworthy Kabinett. 2024-2060+. **94.**

**2017 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Spätlese AP #8- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

This is the only Himmelreich Spätlese this year and it is a beauty. The wine has eleven grams per liter of acidity, sixty-five grams per liter of residual sugar and comes in at a cool seven percent alcohol. The bouquet is pure and will probably be quite extroverted once it has recovered from the recent bottling, offering up scents of pear, orange zest, salty minerality, bee pollen and a topnote of lime blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-full, vibrant and focused, with a lovely core of fruit, superb focus and cut, a long, perfectly balanced and electric finish. Fine, fine juice. 2025-2075. **93+.**

**2017 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese AP #10- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

The 2017 Domprobst Spätlese AP #10 is a superb wine in the making, but like all of the wines here in this vintage, a bit of cellaring is going to be very richly rewarded. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a nascently complex constellation of apple, pear, a fine base of slate, orange zest, a touch of iris blossom and citrus flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and shows lovely fruit on the attack, with a fine core, racy acids and a long, mineral-driven and snappy finish. This will be outstanding when it has started to show some secondary layers of complexity. It will be drinkable earlier, but I would try to leave this alone in the cellar for seven or eight years before drinking it in earnest, as there is an awful lot here lying below the surface. 2025-2075. **94.**

**2017 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese AP #- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

The sole Wehlener Sonnenuhr bottling from the Schaefer's this year is a Spätlese, and what a Spätlese it is! The numbers here are seventy grams per liter of residual sugar to buffer 11.5 grams per liter of acidity and seven percent alcohol, with the wine as seamless and vibrant as one can imagine. The wine offers up a beautiful and classic nose of pear, delicious apple, vanilla bean, white flowers, bee pollen and a marvelous base of slate. On the palate the wine is medium-full, vibrant and laser-like in its focus, with great purity of fruit, salty minerality and great grip and bounce on the very long, perfectly balanced finish. A great bottle in the making. 2022-2075. **95.**

**2017 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese AP #5- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

The AP #5 Spätlese from the Domprobst vineyard is another great wine in the making. The acidity here is a tad higher than in the Wehlener Sonnenuhr Spätlese, coming in at 11.9 grams per liter, which is perfectly balanced with seventy-five grams per liter of residual sugar. The acids here are so beautifully ripe and the sense of extract in the wine so evident that the overall impression is of complete seamlessness on the palate and a very classic profile. The bouquet delivers scents of apple, tangerine, salty slate minerality, floral tones, bee pollen and a lovely topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and utterly refined, with bright acids, a juicy core and superb backend mineral drive on the very long and dancing finish. This is an absolute charmer for a young Domprobst Spätlese, which can often produce wines that are a bit more bound up in their structure than utterly tempting out of the blocks, but this is not the case with the AP #5 in the 2017 vintage. Stellar juice. 2023-2075. **95+.**

**2017 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese AP #13 (Auction)- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

The 2017 Auction Spätlese from the Domprobst is going to be very special this year, but this has been true for many years now and there is a very good reason this is one of the most popular bottlings in Trier every year. The wine's technical details are very similar to the wine above, with 11.8 grams per liter of acidity and eighty grams per liter of residual sugar. The wine

is a tad more reserved in profile today than the AP #5, offering up a very pure and classical bouquet of apple, pear, bee pollen, orange blossoms, crystalline minerality and a nice touch of iris blossoms in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and supremely elegant, with great complexity and grip, a fine core, laser-like focus and a very, very long, poised and electric finish. Magical Spätlese in the making. 2024-2075+. 96+.



*A very content Christophe Schaefer standing in front of his grandfather's roses at the winery in Graach.*

**2017 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese (Auction)- Weingut Willi Schaefer**

The 2017 Domprobst Auslese is a non-botrytis bottling, made from golden berries and desiccated bunches and is a paradigm of purity and precision. The nose wafts from the glass in a pristine blend of yellow plum, clementines, crystalline minerality, citrus blossoms, bee pollen and lilacs. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and very racy and focused, with a lovely core, impeccable balance and a very, very long, nascently complex and beautifully vibrant finish. I love non-botrytized Auslesen, as I find they age amazingly well, and this is one of the best of its genre to be found in the stellar 2017 vintage. 2027-2090. 97.