

The 2023 vintage: turbulent weather, very good wines

The 2023 vintage certainly put Austrian winemakers through their paces. Dry spells, challenging damp periods and, in some places, severe storms meant that a lot of painstaking work was required in the country's vineyards. However, all the hard work was rewarded with a glorious autumn. Expressive, dense and well-balanced white wines can be expected, as well as the next brilliant red-wine vintage. Furthermore, winemakers were once again able to produce significant volumes of Eiswein.

Following an extremely dry winter, the much-needed precipitation arrived in abundance in April and May. Late budding was generally viewed positively as it avoided damage from the dreaded late frosts. However, frequent coulure caused yield losses, while the early outbreak of *Peronospora* required careful and diligent plant protection measures. The summer was characterised by hot spells again, which, however, in contrast to the previous year, hardly caused any drought damage. Almost all wine-growing regions were hit locally by hailstorms at some point. Precipitation in August, as well as just before harvesting began, triggered another strong spurt in the ripening process. As a result, the main harvest was started early and progressed rapidly.

White wines with powerful fruit and harmony

In the vineyards of Niederösterreich (Lower Austria), Wien (Vienna) and Burgenland, winemakers were able to harvest very ripe, healthy berries, yielding powerful, juicy white wines with pronounced fruit aromas and good varietal typicity. In many regions, although not all, acidity was somewhat lower than in previous years, whereas the alcohol content was somewhat higher. Overall, we can expect juicy wines with remarkable density and early harmony. This vintage will probably see Grüner Veltliner displaying stronger grapy aromas and notes of pome fruit, rather than a peppery, tobaccoey spiciness. Rieslings and Pinot varieties can be expected to produce well-balanced and fruit-led wines, while this vintage will give the aromatic varieties and Austria's native grapes yet another opportunity to show their unique varietal characteristics.

Steiermark (Styria): distinctive, harmonious wines with moderate alcohol

Conditions differed somewhat in Steiermark, where there was no shortage of rain. This has resulted in cool, fresh white wines with marked precision and elegance – dense on the palate, with a moderate alcohol content. Sauvignon Blanc and Gelber Muskateller display a distinct piquancy and intense fruit aromas. The vineyards in the warmer regions of Vulkanland Steiermark and the cooler vine-covered hills of Weststeiermark have also yielded wonderful results: remarkable Pinots and delicate, crisp Schilchers.

Excellent red wines are expected

Winemakers are rejoicing in Burgenland's red-wine-producing areas, as well as in Niederösterreich's main red-wine growing regions, Carnuntum and the Thermenregion. Here, they were able to harvest fully ripe, perfectly healthy grapes with a high sugar content and mature tannins. This applies equally to all varieties. We can therefore expect concentrated yet harmonious, well-structured wines with strong tension, which will clearly hold their own against the outstanding 2019 and 2021 vintages.

Eiswein harvested again at last

Frosts in early December in Niederösterreich and Burgenland enabled a significant volume of high-quality Eiswein to be harvested. Due to the particularly early harvest of this speciality, the wines should be characterised by clear fruit aromas and strong vibrancy. In addition, a very clean Botrytis infection around Lake Neusiedl provided for high-quality sweet wines with great promise.

Bergland: the best vintage ever in Oberösterreich (Upper Austria), robust wines in Kärnten (Carinthia)

The still young wine-growing areas of Oberösterreich can report their best vintage to date with exceptionally ripe, aromatic and round wines. In Kärnten, conditions were somewhat more difficult. Here, lighter, robust wines displaying good varietal typicity are expected. Tirol (Tyrol) and Vorarlberg have both produced ripe, rich wines, albeit in smaller volumes.

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