



Riesling - King of the Grape Varieties

Austrian Riesling grows mainly in *Niederösterreich*, or Lower Austria, where it thrives in the crystalline soils of the Wachau, Kremstal and Kamptal regions as well as in the Weinviertel, Wagram and Traisental. Here, it yields intensely attractive fruit-filled aromas and flavors. The wines are medium- to full-bodied, have enormous depth and display an impressive range of fruit tones: apricot, peach and exotic fruit combined with fine mineral notes.

Internationally, this variety has often carried a rather low image, but to connoisseurs, Riesling was - and still is - the most noble of all white wine varieties. Its fine aromatic character is highlighted – without imposing special cellar techniques – simply through vinification in steel tanks or large wooden barrels. The wines are highly elegant and possess outstanding storage potential. It is a variety that is unsuitable for barrique aging, because the potent oak would veil the wonderful Riesling fruitiness. Equally impressive about this variety: it is able to carry from vineyard to bottle the character of the terroir.

Riesling prefers soils that warm easily - as long as they are meager and provide good natural water drainage. Therefore the most elegant Rieslings come from primary rock and slate soils; pebbly gravel or sandy soils tend to produce heavier wines. Loam and loess are not optimal soils for Riesling, because from these, it is high-yielding and demonstrates little varietal typicity.

This late ripening variety requires a long vegetation period for developing its unique aromas and flavors. Because Riesling needs also high humidity in order to ripen well, the river valleys of the Wachau, Kremstal and Kamptal as well as some sites in Vienna prove ideal locations for growth. Humidity and warmth also mean the right conditions for Botrytis – which is itself an ideal condition for the production of premium *Prädikat* wines. Warm days and cool nights give the Riesling's fruity character a final polish.

Riesling is rare. In Austria, it makes up just 2.6% of all vineyards planted. But its significance reaches far beyond the statistics. Riesling is among the varieties that have helped build and strengthen the international standing of Austrian wine. With its river valleys and primary rock soils, Austria offers optimal conditions for the production of sterling class Rieslings – widely considered to be among the best in the world.

Riesling has a long tradition, and not only in Austria. The original home for this grape is Germany, where its growth was authenticated in 1435. And until the 18th century, it was generally planted in vineyards comprising several other varieties as well. But only then was its true varietal character understood. Today, Riesling is found in many countries. The best and most elegant Rieslings, however, generally hail from cooler climate zones such as Austria, Germany, and the Alsace.