

# WINE News

*Aromatic Whites Are  
Sunshine for the Winter  
Weary*



## FEBRUARY 28, 2022 FEATURES

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## Overlooked Wine Regions of Europe

By Alex Pross, K&L Alsace, Austria, and Germany Buyer



Bordeaux, Burgundy, Champagne, Italy, and Spain may grab the wine headlines much more frequently but you would be doing yourself a disservice to overlook the wines of Alsace, Austria, and Germany. These three “under-the-radar” wine regions are currently fashioning some of the greatest white wines in the world—especially if you factor in pricing.

Fans of the organic wine movement need to take a closer look at Austria in particular, where most producers are small family-run operations farming at least organically if not biodynamically. Their crisp Grüner Veltliners are exceptional, and their Rieslings, world class.

Germany is in the midst of a three-year hot streak of great-to-greater vintages that it has rarely—if ever—seen. Rieslings of depth, power, and

poise abound, with your choice of the regally dry Grosses Gewächs or the sweeter Kabintett, Spatlese, or Auslese styles. The extraordinary run of great wines coming out of Germany means you can find a wine that will blow your mind at a price that won't hurt your wallet.

Old and venerable, the wines of Alsace continue to stun and surprise me with elegance, refinement, and amazing structure. The classically styled Rieslings and pretty Gewürztraminers continually display a consistently high quality almost unparalleled in the world.

These regions offer an array of fun and affordable offerings that give you a great alternative to Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. Aromatic whites match most cuisines and can easily elevate a dish to otherworldly levels. Producers like Trimbach in Alsace; Dönnhoff and Joh. Jos. Prüm in Germany; and Brundlmayer, Hirsch, Nigl, and Nikolaihof in Austria have given us an embarrassment of riches for you to buy and learn more about their styles. In stock and ready to go, these wines offer a great daily drinking experience for both the wine novice or aficionado.



**2016 Trimbach “Cuvée du Troiscentquatrevingtdixième (390th Anniversary)” Riesling Alsace**  
**\$49.99 95WE 94VN** In his book *Best White Wine on Earth: The Riesling Story*, Stuart Pigott says, “Nobody has been doing high-quality dry Riesling longer and more consistently than

the Trimbach family.” This bottle is a testament to that history, made from the family's very best holdings, and an ode to the family's epic, multi-generational tradition of excellence. It's a little bit of history in the glass, marking Trimbach's 390th anniversary! From the first taste, you'll agree that this is truly a

celebratory wine. The nose is beautiful, with aromatics of petrol, spice, nut skin and iodine giving way to a vibrant palate of citrus, apricot, dried hay, and ginger notes. It is a full-bodied and deeply powerful Riesling. It displays impressive complexity and unfolding layers on the palate from start to finish.





## Trimbach: Transcending Time

You cannot have a conversation about the history of winemaking in Alsace without discussing the impact Domaine Trimbach has had on the region. Its history goes back to 1626, and it is now under the direction of the thirteenth generation. Domaine Trimbach is an example of longevity meeting greatness. With a lineup that goes from impressive execution at a humble price point to the regal heights of arguably the greatest wine in Alsace, Trimbach hits high note after high note. We are lucky enough to have both an enviable in-stock array as well as wonderful, hard-to-find wines on pre-arrival. With some of the best pricing you'll find anywhere, you owe it to yourself to grab a few. And if you haven't had the opportunity to try many of these wines, now's the time to see what all the fuss is about.



One of the factors that makes Trimbach so wonderful is the quality of their entry-level offerings. For example, the **2018 Trimbach Pinot Blanc** at **\$18.99** is a bright, refreshing, delicious white wine loaded with notes of orchard fruits, white flowers, and subtle minerality.

Next up in the category of reasonably priced and ridiculously delicious is their bread-and-butter wine, the **2018 Trimbach Riesling** for **\$23.99 92WE**

**91WS**. It is a great Riesling with classic notes of petrol, wet stone, almonds, and orchard fruits. The palate is pure, with nice length and balance between the tannins and acidity that seamlessly leads to a clean, mouthwatering finish.



Easily one of my favorite Gewürztraminers, the **2017 Trimbach Gewürztraminer** **\$27.99 91VN 91JS 91WS** has beautiful aromas of peach blossoms and fresh apricots while the palate is awash in fresh peach flavors sprinkled with nutmeg and mineral notes. This is a beautiful Gewürztraminer. The **2017 Trimbach "Sélection de Vieilles Vignes"**

**Riesling** **\$42.99 96WE 95JS** comes from two rigorously selected plots of very old Riesling vines in Hunawir by



Pierre Trimbach. It feels like a shimmering version of the entry-level Riesling on steroids. Dry, crisp, layered with power and depth, this is a fantastic Riesling that absolutely dazzles.

A very special cuvée, the **2016 Trimbach "Cuvée du Troiscentsquatrevingtdixième (390th Anniversary)" Riesling** **\$49.99 94VN**, is a celebration of Trimbach's longevity and is sourced from a collection of great plots throughout Alsace. Incredibly complex and deep, this



wine slowly unfurls to reveal beautiful notes of petrol, iodine, orchard fruits, and citrus. A literal celebration in a glass!

Lastly, we have the **2011 Trimbach "Cuvée Frédéric Émile" Riesling** **\$69.99 94JS 93WS 93WA 92VN**, which I think the critics have underrated! This is a fascinating wine. Designed to be aged, it perfectly showcases a benchmark aged Alsatian Riesling with notes of petrol, almond skins, and an intriguing oxidative sherry note.

There is wonderful acidity and a tightly wound core of orchard fruits and citrus notes that mingle with the hint of oxidative notes. This is the quintessential example of an age-worthy Alsatian Riesling.

We also have two very special pre-arrival offerings that are due to arrive in July 2022. Both of these wines are scarce in quantity and sure to sell out. The **2014 Trimbach "Cuvée Frédéric Émile" Riesling** **\$89.99 96JS 94WA 94VN** is another stunning offering and the latest in a long line of must-have Cuvée Frédéric Émiles. There is no other wine in Alsace that quite showcases the greatness of Alsatian Riesling quite like Trimbach Clos Ste-Hune. It ages both glacially and gracefully and takes on attributes often associated with great white Burgundies and fine white Bordeaux.



The **2017 Trimbach "Clos Ste-Hune" Riesling** **\$249.99 97WE 96VN** is the latest and greatest Clos Ste-Hune offering from Trimbach.



## The Pure Artistry of the 2020s from Nahe's Dönnhoff Family

The winemaking team at Dönnhoff features the third- and fourth-generation father-and-son duo of Helmut and Cornelius Dönnhoff, who are arguably fashioning the best dry Rieslings to come out of the Nahe region in Germany—some say they are responsible for putting Nahe on the winemaking map. The family has a deep history there that can be traced back over 200 years, beginning with livestock and vegetable farming until they finally turned their attention full-time to grape growing and winemaking. The wines of Dönnhoff have reached their greatest heights ever since Helmut Dönnhoff took the reins in 1966.



Today he works in tandem with his son Cornelius to produce wines that showcase the marvelous terroir of Nahe. Dry- and organically farmed and hand-harvested, the wines are a true representation of their bucolic estate—25 hectares of steep hillside Grand Cru vineyards. Known primarily for making Trocken (dry) and GGs (Grosses Gewächs) grown from Grosse Lage (Grand Cru) vineyards in a dry style, the wines of Dönnhoff compete with the very best dry Rieslings of not just Germany but of the world.

The 2020 vintage is now the third strong vintage in a row that Germany has enjoyed. It's a true rarity to string consecutively this many good-to-great vintages. The 2020 vintage has power, depth, complexity, yet astonishingly bright and vivacious fruit notes. You'll also find ample acidity even though this was once again a "solar" vintage.

Along with Max Ferdinand Richter, the wines of Dönnhoff, in my humble opinion, represent the best values today in German Riesling, especially dry German Riesling. Cornelius, who has been in charge since 2007, puts it this way: "The basic wines are the wines that most people will taste first, so we have to make them as good as they can possibly be." A great place to start is the **2020 Dönnhoff "Estate" Riesling Nahe \$19.99 92WA 92JS**, which presents as slightly off-dry with gorgeous notes of orchard fruits, wet stone, and subtle petrol. Bright, zesty, and pure, this wine is lively and delicious and easily a daily drinker at this price point.

Going a step up the price ladder, we have the **2020 Dönnhoff "Estate" Riesling Trocken (dry) Nahe \$22.99 92WA 92JS** shares many similarities with the Estate Riesling but with a slightly drier and sleeker packaging. It is perfect for those who prefer a drier German Riesling.

The **2020 Dönnhoff Oberhäuser Leistenberg Riesling Kabinett Nahe \$26.99 94JS 93WA** is such a great Kabinett with pure, clean fruit flavors and aromas all seamlessly blended into a perfectly balanced Riesling.

Drier and crisper, the **2020 Dönnhoff "Tonschiefer" Riesling Trocken (dry) Nahe \$27.99 93WA 93JS** crackles from the glass with tension and verve as well as beautiful tangerine and citrus flavors. Wonderfully dry and complex, this is a benchmark example of a Trocken Riesling.



Where Dönnhoff really excels is Grosses Gewächs, which are dry, Alsatian-style Rieslings made from Grosse Lage (Grand Cru) vineyard-sites. These wines represent the best of the best that Germany makes, and we have a wonderful trio of wines. The **2020 Dönnhoff Krottenpfuhl Riesling Grosses Gewächs Nahe \$69.99 95JS 93WA 92MFW** is gorgeously structured with firm tannins and lively acidity that showcases the pure citrus, spice, and pear notes. Firm and complex, this is a fantastic introduction to the GG genre.



A bit more complex is the **2020 Dönnhoff Felsenberg "Felsentürmchen" Riesling Grosses Gewächs Nahe \$79.99 98JS 95WA**. It is powerful and layered with grapefruit, saline, and mineral notes.

The last of our trio of GGs, the **2020 Dönnhoff Höllenfad Riesling im Mühlenberg Grosses Gewächs Nahe \$79.99 97JS 94WA** is extremely zesty with mineral notes and fresh aromas of herbs with a touch of pineapple. A young wine that is just scratching the surface of its potential, it is a prime candidate for a 5+-year nap in your cellar.



# King of the Mosel: Joh. Jos. Prüm



**The Prüm family has been in Germany's Mosel region for over 400 years.** The Joh. Jos. Prüm winery was established in 1911 when Johan Josef Prüm split from his family winery, S.A. Prüm. In the 1930s and 1940s, the winery's reputation and style were largely established by Johan's son, Sebastian Prüm, who directed the winery until his death in 1969. His sons Manfred and Wolfgang

then took over, and today Manfred runs the winery with his daughter Katharina, making some of the most iconic, age-worthy, and expressive German Rieslings around. These terroir-driven wines showcase the heights that German Rieslings can achieve.

## Kabinett



The wines of Joh. Jos. Prüm go from strength to strength, and the Kabinetts are fantastic. The **2020 Joh. Jos. Prüm Bernkasteler Badstube Riesling Kabinett Mosel \$39.99** comes from a vineyard that borders the Graacher Himmelreich vineyard on the southern slope, with deep soils and a western exposure that provides longer access to the sun. The wines of Bernkasteler Badstube are lighter and more elegant in style than their counterparts in Graacher Himmelreich and Wehlener Sonnenuhr.

Easily one of my favorites year in and year out, the **2020 Joh. Jos. Prüm Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Kabinett Mosel \$49.99**. From a vineyard bordering the southern edge of Wehlener Sonnenuhr that is known for producing incredible wines, especially in hot years like 2020. This boasts characteristics of racy minerality, crushed rock, and citrus-leaning fruit flavors.



The last of our amazing trio of Kabinetts is the **2020 Joh. Jos. Prüm Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Kabinett Mosel \$49.99**. It comes from one of Mosel's most famous vineyards, which routinely produces some of the greatest wines in all of Germany. The 2020 is a great vehicle for fruit from this stellar site, showing excellent structure, depth, length, plus gorgeous stone fruit accents. The Wehlener Sonnenuhr vineyard has once again excelled.

## Spätlese

For those who prefer more powerful and richly textured wines, we have a quartet of amazing Spätleses. The **2020 Joh. Jos. Prüm Bernkasteler Badstube Riesling Spätlese Mosel \$44.99** echoes all the hallmarks of its Kabinett counterpart, but is more focused and concentrated with intense fruit notes.



The **2020 Joh. Jos. Prüm Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese Mosel \$44.99** showcases the first and only appearance of the Zeltinger Sonnenuhr vineyard, which is the most northern of Joh. Jos. Prüm's vineyards, lying on the northern border of Wehlener Sonnenuhr. From vines 60–70 years of age this wine displays incredible complexity with earthy, rocky, smoky notes. Though it perhaps lacks the finesse of wines from Wehlener Sonnenuhr, Zeltinger Sonnenuhr wines make up for it in complexity and slightly lower acidity.

The **2020 Joh. Jos. Prüm Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Spätlese Mosel \$49.99** shimmers with beautifully complex fruit, gorgeous notes of minerality and a velvety mouthfeel. We conclude our trip down Spätlese lane with the **2020 Joh. Jos. Prüm Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese Mosel \$54.99**. A regal rendition with layered fruit, a seductive nose, and a palate that slowly unfurls to reveal one of the best 2002 Spätleses I have tasted.



## Auslese



The incredibly complex Ausleses from Joh. Jos. Prüm can age gracefully for decades and reveal an unparalleled depth and complexity. The amazing versatility of these wines is they can be both enjoyed in their youth, where they feel much like a young Sauternes, or aged, when they become complexed and nuanced. The **2020 Joh. Jos. Prüm Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Auslese Mosel \$59.99** feels like the Graacher Himmelreich Spätlese on steroids—more vivid and structured with an unctuous feel and richness that never veers too sweet.

Not to be outdone the **2020 Joh. Jos. Prüm Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese Mosel \$69.99** is a monumental wine that showcases the incredible terroir of Wehlener Sonnenuhr in a richly textured opulence that unfolds ever so slowly on the palate. A stunner that you'll regret not owning.





# The Austria Dilemma: Why Aren't You Drinking These Wines?!



Austria has a long and impressive history for fashioning amazing wines—that many people have unfortunately never tasted. Sometimes erroneously lumped together with German wines, the wines of Austria tend to resemble those of Alsace more closely. Further, Austria easily boasts one of the most impressive organic and biodynamic resumes in the world. Gifted with rocky soils of gneiss, quartz, gravel, loess, and sand on hilly, terraced vineyards, it is the perfect place to grow stunning Riesling and Grüner Veltliner grapes. Austria is dominated by small, family-run wineries instead of large corporate entities, which have overrun many other wine regions.

There is no other grape more associated with Austria than Grüner Veltliner. Fun to say and even more fun to drink, Grüner Veltliners are incredibly versatile and can pair with almost any cuisine thanks to their acidity and structure. If you're looking for an alternative to Chardonnay or Sauvignon Blanc, Grüner Veltliner is affordable and delicious. As wine values go, the **2019 Hirsch "Hirschvergnügen" Grüner Veltliner Kamptal \$17.99** is pretty spectacular. Certified organic, this wine is light on the palate with juicy fruit and a white peppery finish.

One of my personal favorites and easily one of the best values I think we have at K&L, the **2020 Nigl "Freiheit" Grüner Veltliner Kremstal Niederösterreich \$17.99 91JS** is sourced from four different vineyards from the hills above the city of Krems. The wine is fermented in stainless steel and displays a stunning amount of complexity for its humble price point. Aromas of white flowers, fresh herbs, and a hint of orchard fruits

greet the nose with a richly textured palate of almonds, stone fruits, iodine, and mineral notes. A great introduction to the wonderful value Grüner Veltliner represents.

One of Austria's most famous producers is Bründlmayer, and their entry-level offering the **2019 Bründlmayer "Kamptaler Terrassen" Grüner Veltliner Kamptal \$19.99 93JS 90WE 90DC** comes from organically farmed vineyards and has a round, ripe mouthfeel with green nuts, zest, and apple peel notes. This wine is delicious and easy drinking.



One of Austria's oldest wineries, Nikolaihof, has embraced biodynamic farming, and they are one of the most recognizable vintners in Austria. The **2020 Nikolaihof Hefebzug Grüner Veltliner Wachau \$25.99 91WA 90JS** has a peppery nose with subtle notes of wet stone and smoke, while the palate has great energy with pithy notes and orchard fruits. This is a beautifully elegant wine.

As important as Grüner Veltliner is to Austria's wine industry, their Rieslings may be their greater wine. With arguably a climate and terroir more ideally suited to growing great Riesling than any other place in the world, Austria is just scratching the surface with its potential for making world-class Riesling. There are a ton of Rieslings available in the \$50–\$100 range but I would rather focus on two of the best values I have found.

The **2020 Bründlmayer "Kamptaler Terrassen" Riesling Kamptal \$22.99 93JS** is a worthy successor to the stunning 2019. White pepper, petrol, and orchard fruit notes greet the nose while the palate is awash in wet stone, orchard fruits, crisp tannins, and zesty acidity leading to a long, vibrant finish. If there is a better Riesling for the price out there, I would welcome someone showing me it!

The **2019 Hirsch Zöbinger Riesling Kamptal \$27.99 91JS 91DC** is certified organic with apricot and lemongrass aromas. Notes of citrus and fresh nuts zoom across the palate with vibrancy and energy. Great complexity and harmony make this a wonderful entry-level offering.

Lastly, we have some very allocated wines from coveted producers soon to arrive, but, because of the scarcity, I have not written about them in detail. Nevertheless, please be sure to look for the 2019s arriving soon from F.X. Pichler, Pichler-Krutzler, and Hirtzberger.

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