WEINTRADITION SEIT 1789

KELLER

FLÖRSHEIM-DALSHEIM



NOVEMBER HARVEST 2013

THE BEST COMES AT THE END

'Freshly pressed and damned good! The first drops of the 2013 vintage start to flow.'

Dear Wine Lovers

The last vats of the vintage have finished fermentation, and so begins for us a particularly exciting time. We focus on tasting the fruits of last year's labours and try to get a feel for how this year's wine will develop. You can probably imagine that this is not always easy.

I often have to recall the words Charles Rousseau said to me during my apprenticeship in Burgundy, words which at the time seemed more confusing than helpful.

'Klaus Peter, anyone who thinks he understands his vineyards really doesn't understand them.'

Charles, who at that time already had 40 years' professional experience behind him, was referring to the 1991 harvest, which, after a very mediocre vegetation cycle produced a very small harvest. I don't suppose anyone (except perhaps Charles himself) at the time thought that we would still be raving about this vintage 25 years later.

Recently we had the good fortune to be able to taste almost the entire 1991 vintage from Rousseau and I find it difficult to think of a more perfect and long-lived vintage than this. Even the great and highly praised 1990 vintage is now in its shadow.

Just as our children's development surprises us over and again, so it is for wine-growers with a vintage that was not oustanding from the point of view of the weather but which tastes like one of the really great vintages. Perhaps it is a good thing that we are in constant battle with Nature for sunshine alone is not enough for a multifaceted personality to develop.

Be that as it may – if only I had had the money then. For 30-40 Marks I could have bought 91 Clos St-Jacques, Chambertin, etc.

We had a very similar experience on a recent visit to the Mosel. Shortly before Christmas we took a day's break from snipping off bunches to spend a day tasting 'old wine' with one of our highly valued colleagues from Ürzig. We tasted vintages from highly praised vintages such as 1990, 1976, 1975 and back to the legendary 1959. However, we were most impressed by a wine from an almost forgotten year: 1969.

Delicate greeny-yellow tinges, amazingly youthful, with a very fine acid structure, it reverberated and had great length. 'A wine like the winemaker himself', I noted at the end, for there aren't many in their eighties who look so young and still water-ski on the Mosel in summer.



Why do I recall these events when I want to write about the 2013 vintage?

From the very beginning, vines and wine-growers had a fight on their hands in 2013. As well as needing luck with the weather, we had to make huge efforts in the vineyard throughout the growing season so that we could harvest in November.

'Qualität kommt von sich quälen!', my father used to say during my childhood when the weather in the 1980s was less kind to us than it is today. The play on words is lost in translation but the gist is that you only get quality at great personal cost.



After harvests with Gauby and at Domaine de l'Horizon in the south of France, and now with us on the hillsides: Dennis Wolf.

The cost involves standing in the vines by wind and storm to weave the shoots in by hand to encourage smaller, thicker-skinned and aromatically intense berries; removing leaves so the berries dry out quickly after rain, keeping shoots in an upright position so that no bunch is touching another, allowing the sun to shine on and kiss the berries. Again and again we have to maintain a balance in the vineyard so that competition between the growth of grass, clover and wild plants and the development of the vines enables the latter to produce thick, resilient skins and the most complex possible aromas during a long, slow ripening period.

All that was necessary in 2013 if we were going to make great wines that we would still be raving about in 20 or more years' time.

In this year that has demanded sensitivity and cunning from the wine-growers, there will be, in general, wines that do not attain the excellent quality levels of preceding years. However, at the top there are some masterpieces that have been produced in this 2013 vintage, wines which, thanks to the wonderful interplay of ripe acidity and high levels of dry extract, will last almost for ever.

In 2012 we could not harvest any Trockenbeerenauslesen but in 2013 we will have two: the beguiling pure fruit flavours and explosive acidity of the Trockenbeerenauslesen from Morstein and Abts E are truly impressive. We have a cornucopia of lively Auslesen and Beerenauslesen, playful Kabinetts that dance across the tongue (and which may even in the long term put the successful 2012s into the shade). In addition, there are the characterful top dry wines from small yields with, as a result, great substance, structure and length.

What more could my wine-grower's heart wish for?

When we review the 2013 season, we see there was some good luck alongside all that enormous effort to bring a successful harvest into the cellar. 2013 got going with difficulty. After a cool and dark spring with few hours of sunshine, came a really wet May, which was anything but the blissful month we had hoped for. Flowering began late in June, making it clear that harvest was unlikely to start before the second half of October – very similar to how it was in 2002, 2004 and 2008.

The mood among the wine-growers improved only in July when a stable area of high pressure banished the sight of waterproofs from the vineyards. The gentle signs of Nature's kindness in the the shape of light and warmth, in combination with a good supply of water in the soil, led to swift new growth in the vineyard. This was when we saw the benefit of the fact that my father and my grandfather had always seen old vines and dense planting as important quality factors. (Completely the opposite of the wide, 2-metre rows and large gaps between the vines encouraged by the EU.)

Young vines have greater physical capacity; as they age – like humans – they become more experienced, more deeply rooted, so that the most exciting material from deeper underground can be transported to the plant.

To preserve such old sites is important to us even if it is not always easy. Let me give you one example: today's tractors are getting bigger, heavier, more powerful. And the vineyards are supposed to fit in with the tractors. Ever wider spacing, ever fewer vines per hectare, making them more efficient and simple to run, of course. We take time and trouble to buy our machinery and tractors so that we can continue to work our vineyard rows, some of which are just 1.35 metres wide. So we buy a 'new' 40-year-old trailer or we carry out all the work in the vineyard by hand.

This means spending more care and time but we are rewarded with excellent quality every year, because old vines are less vigorous than young ones, they take up water slowly when the natural competition is well balanced.

An August that was pleasantly warm for people and vines, not too hot, allowed growth to catch up further on the earlier delays and in September came the first suggestion that a high-flying vintage was in the making. Even the popular newspaper *Bild* was sure about this and as early as 15 July predicted that 2013 would be a top vintage.

What followed was a long, cool autumn with changeable weather.

Once again our lucky charm was the almost 700-metre Donnersberg, about 20 km to the west, which shielded us from numerous showers and saw to it that the Wonnegau was one of the driest spots in Germany during the ripening and harvest periods in 2013. The amount of rainfall was similar to that of 2008 and 2004 (see table below), vintages that we personally rate very highly.

If the Donnersberg had not prevented or weakened numerous cloudbursts, 2013 would literally have fallen in the water.

Rainfall from August to October, measured at Dalsheimer Hubacker:
2013: 186 mm
2012: 142 mm
2011: 129 mm
2010: 217 mm
2008: 184 mm
2006: 284 mm
2004: 178 mm

The 2013 harvest began with the Pinot Noir at the start of October, roughly 10 days later than in 2012. Healthy, small, open bunches – just what we would have wished for. We continued in the same vein with the Weissburgunder and Grauburgunder, both of which suffered slightly from coulure during flowering and now bore open bunches of golden



The Donnersberg – our lucky charm.

yellow grapes. Silvaner, too, both looked and tasted absolutely beautiful and pure. Biting into the fully ripe Silvaner berries was a huge pleasure.

The Scheurebe offered a similar picture. We had removed leaves early and reduced the crop by half to improve light penetration and ventilation. Nevertheless we had to harvest more selectively than with the Burgundy grapes because alongside the healthy berries there were others shrivelled with botrytis. We are more than happy with the results: alongside the fine cassis-scented dry estate wine there will again be a fantastic Scheurebe Beerenauslese from the old vines in Morstein, with thrilling aromas of pink grapefruit and redcurrants and dazzling acidity to guarantee a cellaring potential of many decades.

Riesling in 2013 again called for more patience. By the middle of October, many vineyards still did not have the intense, piercing aromas that we looked for – something still needed to happen.

To sit it out and wait longer to harvest during this period is always risky. You need strong nerves. Huge swarms of birds are tempted by the almost-ripe grapes. They target the best and the sweetest bunches and within minutes turn a potential Grosses Gewächs into bare bones on the cane. That's why it is an enormous advantage and at the same time a lovely feeling to be able to make a decision about delaying harvest (which entails a serious economic risk) within the family and not to have to ask permission from a third party – which is what many famous producers around the world have to do if they are owned by luxury goods or insurance companies.

When a powerful autumn storm swept through the vineyards in the last week of October and many bunches fell to the ground, we almost regretted our decision a little. But the quality of the bunches that remained made us proud and happy.

Small beautiful bunches from Morstein, Abts E, Kirchspiel and Hubacker were harvested for Von der Fels. Already in cask, it is again one of our favourite wines. Eric Asimov (*New York Times*) is correct when he writes: 'In Von der Fels I find the mineral soul of the Riesling grape. A Riesling to fall in love with!'

The days that followed gave us yields of between 25 and 35 hl/ha and wonderful musts for the Grosse Gewächse and two brilliant Trockenbeerenauslesen from Morstein and Abts E. Even in 2012 we did not achieve that. The best came – once again – only right at the end.

We are delighted by the many young wines in the cellar in which moderate alcohol and finely balanced body give great pleasure. Even now one sip makes you thirsty for the next.

My thanks go to the whole team, the many friends, helpers and of course our family. Together everyone played a part in bringing only the very best fruit into the cellar.

THE GROSSE GEWÄCHSE

'Keller's collection of six superb single-vineyard wines as well as the majestic G-Max is breathtaking. No other producer here or probably anywhere else in the world offers a spectrum like this.' *Gault Millau, 2014*

Selected as 'The line-up of the year for the best dry white wines'.
Eichelmanns Weinführer 2014

'If I had to choose one wine to show how great dry German Riesling can be I would choose a Keller Riesling. Those wines are the German Montrachets.'
Jancis Robinson MW, the Grande Dame of wine journalists



Old, mossy vines, narrow alleys – Grosse Gewächse.

WESTHOFEN KIRCHSPIEL
Herbal, spiced finesse

'This German Chassagne Montrachet brings tears to my eyes.'
Julia Harding; MW, www.Jancis Robinson.com

In two passes through the vineyard we harvested the grapes for our 2013 Kirchspiel GG. The yields were small – but such terrific quality! This young wine, whose heart comes from vines planted in 1954, has a finely spiced herbal aroma, a light note of flint and mint, and is playful, extremely elegant and precise. Once again a filigree dancer across the palate.

A wonderful view of 2013 – a great year for Hubacker.



DALSHEIM HUBACKER
Exotic complexity from a yellow limestone slope

'Outstanding GG from Hubacker!'
Hugh Johnson, iconic wine writer

'The highest-scoring Grosses Gewächs of 2012: Hubacker GG 96/100P.'
Falstaff 2014

'The nucleus of Rheinhessen's upturn.'
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

'Hubacker has never been better!'
Marcus Hofschuster, Wein-Plus

The main harvest from this vineyard, which has been owned by our family since 1789, yielded 30 hl/ha with a must weight of 94-98° Oechsle. The young wine has finely integrated, playful acidity, which complements the extract well.

WESTHOFEN MORSTEIN
The cool seducer

Our Morstein parcel produces characterful wines of origin which bring together the deep minerality of the site and highly complex body. A little while ago we were lucky to be able to exchange some of our own vines for some old Morstein vines (a small parcel of 0.67 ha), planted half with Riesling and half with Pinot Noir. The rows are just 1.35 m wide and 1.5 m high (a high level of competition for the roots, promising the best quality). The subsoil is rich in heavy clay and limestone..

The grapes from the Morstein parcel were thick-skinned and intensely aromatic. The November sunshine shone during the harvest and we knew that with this level of fruit quality on the vine, little could go wrong.

The Grosses Gewächs shows fine seasoning from the limestone, and a firm, dynamic presence with a long minerally finish.



WESTHOFEN ABTS E
The prima ballerina

In the last three years, our AbtsE GG has been awarded the highest score for a dry German Riesling by Robert Parker's German specialist David Schildknecht.

His conclusion: 'The ABTS E GG plays in a different league.'

A dry-stone wall protects our legendary site, documented as far back as 1280, from the north. Underground streams provide it with water. No other site in Westhofen has such a high proportion of active lime. These conditions allow the berries to remain small and intensely flavoured. A magical patch of dirt.

The 2013 main harvest took place in four passes through the vineyards up to the beginning of November. First we harvested the desiccated bunches that had the level of concentration of Auslese, Beerenauslese and Trockenbeerenaulese. Then it was the healthy bunches for the Grosse Gewäsche, with yields 15% lower than in 2012. The result is a truly great, majestic wine from this fantastic site that will give us pleasure for many, many years. It has a finely smoky minerality, terrifically refined spice, both intense and full of life and energy. Just as we would want a great single-vineyard wine to be. 2013 shows just how extraordinary is the quality from this site.

OUR SITES IN NIERSTEIN

Now after five harvests in Pettenthal and three in Hipping, we are gaining an increasingly sensitive feel for these wonderful steep slopes and their idiosyncracies. The delicately herbal refined style of Pettenthal and the exotically complex slate notes of Hipping have found their enthusiastic fans. The unique character of these red clay-slate slopes, up to 80% steep, is revealed not only in the dry wines but also in the off-dry styles (maybe even especially in them).

The grapes radiate the November sunshine.



Majestically located: Pettenthal.

NIERSTEIN PETTENTHAL
The one that dances on slate

'96 points for the 2012, making it the second-highest score of the entire vintage for dry Riesling.'
Marcus Hofschuster, Wein-Plus

'The highest score for dry Riesling in the 2011 vintage.'
VINUM

Delicately smoky flinty notes, precise minerality, great elegance and nobility. Unfortunately there are once again few bottles from our 0.29 ha.

NIERSTEIN HIPPING
Hip, Hipping, hurray!

'The wine drunk by the queen of England.' *Süddeutsche Zeitung, November 2013*

The highest score for dry Riesling in 2012: 19/20 points. *Jancis Robinson*

98/100 points, the best dry Riesling of the 2012 vintage in Germany
James Suckling (Marie von Ahm)

Our small parcel of Hippimg is a real jewel in the Roter Hang. Here, in late-harvest years such as 2013, wonderfully filigree wines are created that have only moderate alcohol and are bursting with minerality and a sense of place. They are wines whose evolution can be followed over many years.

The house of Windsor was aware of this many years ago. As far back as 1953, the palace ordered wine from this parcel (at that time owned by Weingut Franz Karl Schmitt).

We are proud that now, 60 years later, this tradition of having a fine Riesling for a special event has been taken up again and our 2012 Hipping has been chosen for Queen Elizabeth II's diamond jubilee. (At the beginning of the last century Riesling was not only perhaps the most noble variety in the world but also the most sought after.)

In March we were able to present this wine personally in the context of an invitation to lunch at Buckingham Palace. We are thrilled by this great honour, which will also spur us on to take care of this wonderful vineyard parcel with love and passion.

Simply fabulous – the 2013 bunches in Niersteiner Hipping.



G-MAX RIESLING AND THE KELLER GREAT VINEYARDS CASE 2013

'Many wines, even good ones, are like tasting noise. Only the very best allow you to taste peace. This afternoon I tasted peace.'
M. Quentel, Der WeinWisser (after the G-Max 10-year vertical)

Our dry G-Max Riesling came out as the top mature, dry Riesling in comparative tastings held by *Vinum*, *Weinwisser* and *Gault Millau*.

In addition, the 2012 G-Max won best dry Riesling of the current vintage in one of Gault Millau's major categories and was described as 'the Montrachet among Rieslings'.

'KP Keller has never made a greater wine than the 2012 G-Max. I am absolutely in love with this magically complex wine.' 100/100 points for the 2012 G-Max
John Gilman, View from the Cellar, New York (this is the first time he has awarded a perfect score for a German Riesling)

'The G-Max is a Riesling that flies above the clouds.'
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung



Glorious fruit for the 2013 G-Max. This parcel consistently delivers the very finest grapes, surely making it unique. Smoky, mineral nose, forceful, racy at its core, with wonderful balance on the long finish. As in previous years, the 2012 G-Max will be available in the Keller Great Vineyards case.

It's all hands on deck – Felix screws down the Keller cases.



Julia and Klaus Peter are happy to bring the first boxes personally to the Royal Cellar / Buckingham Palace.

SILVANER FEUERVOGEL

'Feuervogel is a high flyer in the land of a thousand hills.' *Vivart*

'The Feuervogel Silvaner leads the pack of Rheinhessen Silvaner.'
Gault Millau 2014

A passion for great Silvaner burns within our Rheinhessen hearts. Over a century ago more than half of the vineyard was planted with this variety, which perhaps more than any other reflects the soul of Rheinhessen. Our passion becomes a burning flame in years such as 2013 when we can leave our bunches of Silvaner on our oldest vines until the the very last days of October. They turn a beautiful golden yellow, with little brown cheeks and you can taste and feel the aromas becoming more and more intense. The 2013 Feuervogel captivates you in with its cool, delicately smoky notes, fine herby spice and long, deep aftertaste. A handsome young thing!







SPÄTBURGUNDER 2012

'Red burgundy is the wine of the moment and Pinot Noir the grape du jour.'
Hugh Johnson

Ever since I did my work experience in Burgundy I have loved this variety, which can be anything but easy. It is thin-skinned, sensitive to rot and very demanding. It takes hundreds of hours just to get all the shoots vertical so that every leaf is perfectly aligned to the sun and not a single berry is touching another. And even that is not enough.

In order to handle the vines even more sensitively, to aim for quality, in 2012 we started to weave the canopy into the wires rather than cutting it off. This very laborious process leads to even smaller berries that have extremely thick skins and particularly intense aromas.

In the last few years we have invested much time and effort to go further with our Pinot Noir. My ideal Pinot was always a 'red Riesling': elegant, precise and with the courage to have high acidity (and sometimes a light colour); a wine that shows that sometimes less is more and that new oak does not necessarily mean quality. We are delighted that many of you, our wine friends, are enthusiastic and interested enough to follow us on this path.

Hugh Johnson included us in his Who's Who of Pinot Noir in his 2014 wine guide, a list of just six producers around the world. To stand side by side with such great producers as Aubert de Villaine (Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, Burgundy), Véronique Drouhin (Domaine Drouhin, Oregon und Burgundy) and Nigel Greening (Felton Road, New Zealand) is a little bit embarrassing but also makes us proud and spurs us on to future quality, to go just one notch higher.

2012 is a terrific Pinot vintage with juicy fruit and glorious body, fine minerality and outstanding aromas. Pinot at its best!

Above: Small, thick-skinned Pinot Noir fresh from the vine.
Below: Hand destemmed, the berries drop into the wooden fermentation vat.

2012 FLÖRSHEIM FRAUENBERG PINOT NOIR

'Klaus Peter, many winemakers in Burgundy would be happy to have such red wine in their cellar.'
Hugh Johnson, legendary wine writer

'The stunning quality of the best German Pinots is one of the world's best kept secrets.'
Jancis Robinson, MW

The Frauenberg has benefited from climate change over the last few decades. Thirty years ago, Pinot would reach perfect ripeness in only one harvest out of two. Today it is actually an advantage when ripeness comes slowly and the bunches stay longer on the vine in order to accumulate more complex aromas.

The limestone slope of the Frauenberg gives us deeply mineral wines that combine the finest of fruit with lovely freshness. Our vision of 'red Riesling' is alive and well!



Magnificent grapes for fruit sweetness



Burgel's dream location is just in front of the famous surrounding wall of Dalsheim.

2012 DALSHEIM BÜRGEL PINOT NOIR

The clayey shell-limestone soil in Bürgel gives us the best conditions to make the highest quality Pinot. In the last few years we have been spoilt by top Pinot vintages – and 2012 falls easily into line behind them. The 2012 Pinot is a subtle pleasure with terrific complexity and length – a wine that will reward long ageing.

FRUITY AND NOBLY SWEET WINES
From Kabinett to noble drops

'Fantastically good but very rare' – that's our assessment of the 2012 sweet wines. Happily, many of you, dear wine lovers, and all the wine guides agree.

Both our Kabinetts were classed among the four best wines of the year within their category in Gault Millau. Similarly, our Auslesen and Beerenauslesn were in the top 10 for the vintage.

We confidently hope that the 2013 will continue in the same fashion. Thanks to its excellent acid structure, 2013 is a vintage destined to make wines with a decent amount of residual sugar. Nowhere else on earth can you find this taste experience – this lightness, this playful dance that just makes you want the next sip.

The P(ettenthal) Kabinett is once again like a little 'Lionel Messi' on the tongue – light as a feather and highly elegant. Our H(ipping) Kabinett is more like a Ribery (staying with the football metaphor): really marked by the site, with bite and a wonderful determination to get to the goal.

The cool and deeply mineral Auslese from Morstein has a secret raciness and elegance, the Abts E Auslese is one of the best wines ever to have come from this site. Very fine notes of herbs, lime and white pepper on the nose, with a dancing lightness across the palate. The exotic Auslese*** from Hubacker, seductively scented with vineyard peach and passionfruit, completes the Auslese trio.

The Trockenbeerenauslesen from Morstein and Abts E are rare masterpieces. The raisins were perfectly shrivelled, the unbelievably pure, radiant acidity together with the high levels of dry extract promises a particularly long life. We were happy and grateful to be able to crown the harvest with these two sensational wines.

Hard work is rewarded.



Done!



A SUMMARY OF THE 2013 HARVEST

2013 has produced extremely tense and long-lived wines. The really good 2013s will be long-distance runners. A barrel sample from the 2013 Hipping Kabinett, tasted after two weeks in a half-filled bottle, was even more expressive and multilayered than two weeks earlier. That shows the great potential of the vintage. The extract balances the acidity, guaranteeing both freshness and longevity.

With very well structured dry wines (similar in style to 2008 and 2004) and the minerally, explosive fruit-sweet wines, which have an amazing fruit-acid interplay, we have a vintage in the cellar whose high quality more than makes up for the small volume.

In the Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris, we are enveloped by intense melon fruit and the aroma of brioche. These may be the best Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris of the last few years.

We are already looking forward to presenting these wines to you.

With very best wishes from our house to yours.

Ihre Familie Keller

There are many reasons we are so happy to be wine-growers

Working with nature, our superb sites, but especially because of the lovely people that we get to know through our wines.

We'd like to show you in this picture a representative of these people: Gerd Ludwig. He was the senior consultant in the Frankfurt city hospital and always a lover of good wine. In addition, he is a passionate photographer of animals and landscapes and a very good guitar player.

In the autumn of 2013 he spent a week with us, 'Because I have always wanted to know what harvest was like with you.'

Dear Gerd, you were a real help during the harvest and we look forward to many more convivial wine evenings with you.



'Today we are harvesting the world-famous Von der Fels Riesling, a Riesling that is precisely to my taste: mineral, fresh, also elegant and upright. A great Riesling with perfect balance between fruit and acidity. Almost reverently I walk upon the soil under which lime-stone dominates, giving the vines their minerality.'
Prof. Gerd Ludwig

VDP. Die Prädikatsweingüter

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