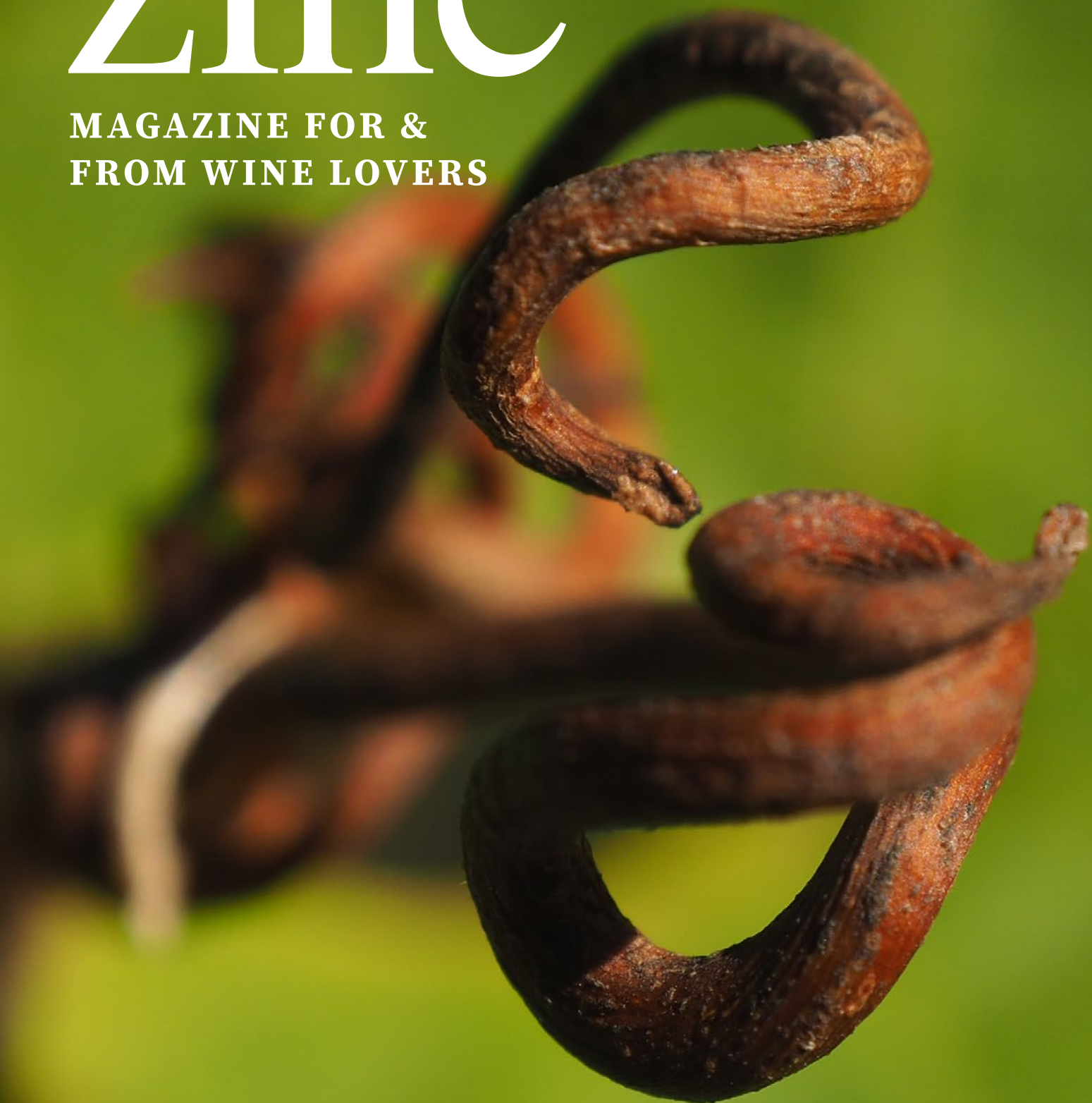


Nō.3

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MAGAZINE FOR &
FROM WINE LOVERS





TOAZine No.3

You probably can't listen to it anymore. The challenging, dark time, 2020 has thrown us into. Covid, of course, lockdowns, quarantine, economic hardship. But we must adapt to new ways of life, change our behaviour, be different. However, our ability to adapt has always been one of our greatest assets. It's what makes us survive and evolve.

Adaptation is also a crucial, if not the most important part of a winegrower's work. Every vintage is different and you only get one chance per year to make the best of it. Experience and trust are adamant. The 2020 vintage has given the growers a lot to think about, a lot to adapt to. Draught during winter, unusually lot of rain in May followed by a couple of very dry months, hail in almost every wine growing region and rain again in the late stage of harvest on top of that.



Already at an early stage, the character of the new vintages shines through: it will be a fine, aromatic one, driven by great acidity levels and low(er) in alcohol. These features will certainly meet the market's desire for fresh, drinkable wines! In order to get you valuable insights first hand, we have interviewed all TOA winegrowers about "their" vintage. Let's see what they've got!

The Winethinker's opinion on the (always hot) topic of pricing and what actually makes up the price of a bottle of wine are likely to offer

Everyone had his own issues to deal with and his own adaptations to make, the goal always being to harvest healthy grapes. The secret to authentic wines does not come with fighting the elements, but to embrace them. It's working with Nature that yields today's fine wines.

you an interesting read as well. Last but not least, Nature and its cycles (Samhain!) are the subject of the newest edition of our "Herb Witch Project" – lean back, burn incense and forget the hard times for a moment!

Enjoy TOAZine No.3!
Yours TOA team!

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THE PRICE OF WINE

In October 2020, the European Parliament discussed the restructuring of subsidies for the agricultural sector. As expected, some parties stood up for linking tax-financed payments to more and stricter conditions, such as sustainability, minimum social standards (illegal migrants are exploited not only in Europe), subsidies for organic farming and similar criteria. The opponents' argument (let's casually call them "industrialists") is always this: low production costs are democratic - they allow every citizen to eat everything at all times.

As a matter of fact, it would be beneficial for most of us and especially for the environment and for domesticated animals (many of which are still being tortured) if we ate less but higher quality meat. In addition - thank you, Corona! - it seems that people are more and more leaning towards regional and higher quality food. Is this really true? Or are economic problems forcing more people to buy cheap products?

Speaking of wine, I asked myself - and a couple of winegrowers - how they calculate the price of a bottle of wine. How much does it cost to produce wine?

The highly admired Jancis Robinson MW has wondered the same already in 2001 using Bordeaux as an example. The results of her query were quite astonishing: at that time, according to her calculation, it was possible to produce 0.75 litres of must (of classified Bordeaux) for 28 French Francs (approx. € 5). Keep in mind, the must was not yet vinified, packed or shipped. We all know very well that the price increases significantly before we have it in our wine cellar.

Austria is not Bordeaux, for sure, but this figure will not differ vastly from those in our country. Let's have a look at some costs (just to give a few) which arise for vineyard management only, provided by biodynamic growers:

Pruning: one person can manage approx. 0,2 ha per day. If you work 9 hours/day at € 9/hour, you'll have costs of € 450 per pruned hectare - that is, paying family members. If you hire people from outside, feel free to add another 20%.

Canopy management:
100 hours/hectare x € 9/hour = € 900

Plant protection: (moderate) € 900

Oh great! - you might think. So why are many bottles so expensive? What's with these crazy mark-ups?

Take it slow: at € 5, we only got the three quarters of a litre of must, which still has to become wine. This price includes costs for vineyard management (canopy, pruning, plant protection), cover crops, the extremely labour-intensive soil cultivation and the costs for a qualified team of harvest helpers. And most of the work was done by hand.

The must is still to be transferred into the cellar, has not yet seen a tank let alone a wooden barrel, has not been racked, filtered and filled, labelled and packaged. The price does not include any investment costs for the vineyard (the land), the construction of the vineyard trellis (wires, posts), drains, machines and tanks, the cellar equipment, filling equipment, labelling machine...

WHAT'S THE PRICE OF NATURE?

By the way: we are not talking about steep slopes here whose cultivation requires incomparably more man hours. We have still not included the efforts (and expenses) for collecting herbs, producing biodynamic preparations or keeping animals on the estate - which we all find so cute! Just ask Michael Gindl about the costs for keeping his animals, which pave the way for a closed economic cycle. What's more, the grower/winemaker has not yet done any marketing, held presentations, sent samples, attended trade fairs, etc. And they have not yet earned much to be able to enjoy a pension sometime.

We're not done yet: there will never be a guarantee for consistent yields on a yearly basis.

Let's remember 2016 with its spring frosts that reduced the harvest by almost 40%! The loss of market share could only be made up three years later.

This year's weather conditions again caused yields to turn out pretty low in some regions of Austria. Reserves must therefore be built up in the more productive years. The grower also has to pay all kinds of insurance fees (e.g. hail insurance) and costs for anti-hail nets.

Unlike in many countries' state budgets, a prudent businessman is obliged to build up reserves in good times. For sure, prices can drop lower, much lower. We all know wines that are sold in discount stores for € 2.49 (taxes included!) or even less.

And we know that in spending this rather lowish amount, the customer has already paid for agents, bottle manufacturers, printing companies, shippers, distributors and the state.

Of course, flat land regions with soft, fertile soil can be easily planted. The vines are then treated by fully automated machinery controlled by GPS. No human driver wanted. The harvest is fully automated as well, as is the vinification. A human being can produce thousands of hectolitres of wine only by pressing a couple of buttons. More often than not, the few workers still needed are (illegal) immigrants who can be exploited and blackmailed (a widespread problem in agriculture).

It may very well be a little more expensive to produce wines from old vineyards and to mature them in new wooden barrels.

Some wineries are willing to pay for 20 permanent employees at 60 hectares of vineyards. Their biodynamic way of working simply requires a lot of manual labour. These winegrowers won't end up being super rich tycoons. But with all the work and the risk they're taking, they would like to achieve a decent return for themselves and their families. How much are we willing to spend for 20 fairly paid jobs in 2020 Central Europe? Winegrowers are rightly defending themselves against being caught (just like everybody else in agriculture) in the vicious circle of increasing efficiency, keeping costs low and encouraging economies of scale.

Wine should not be part of price wars. Good wine is a product made to be enjoyed and is supposed to trigger emotions. It triggers the best of them when we know and perhaps even like the people behind it, knowing the vineyards, the landscape & the origin - the French like to call this terroir.

What is true luxury? For me, it's time. And beautiful memories. To be able to truly enjoy wine always comes with taking my time. Time for myself and the wine in my glass, for the food on my plate, for the music in the concert hall, for the work of art in the museum. These moments are crucial for maintaining our mental health - now more than ever. How much is that worth? 10, 20, 200, 2000 euros? That depends on what we like and what we can afford. Let's be clear on one thing: low-cost is not a way of protecting a culture, of preserving a landscape for future generations. The only question is: do we want to give our money directly to those who strive for sustainability, or rather pay taxes and fees destined to subsidize the industry and (maybe) restore the environment?

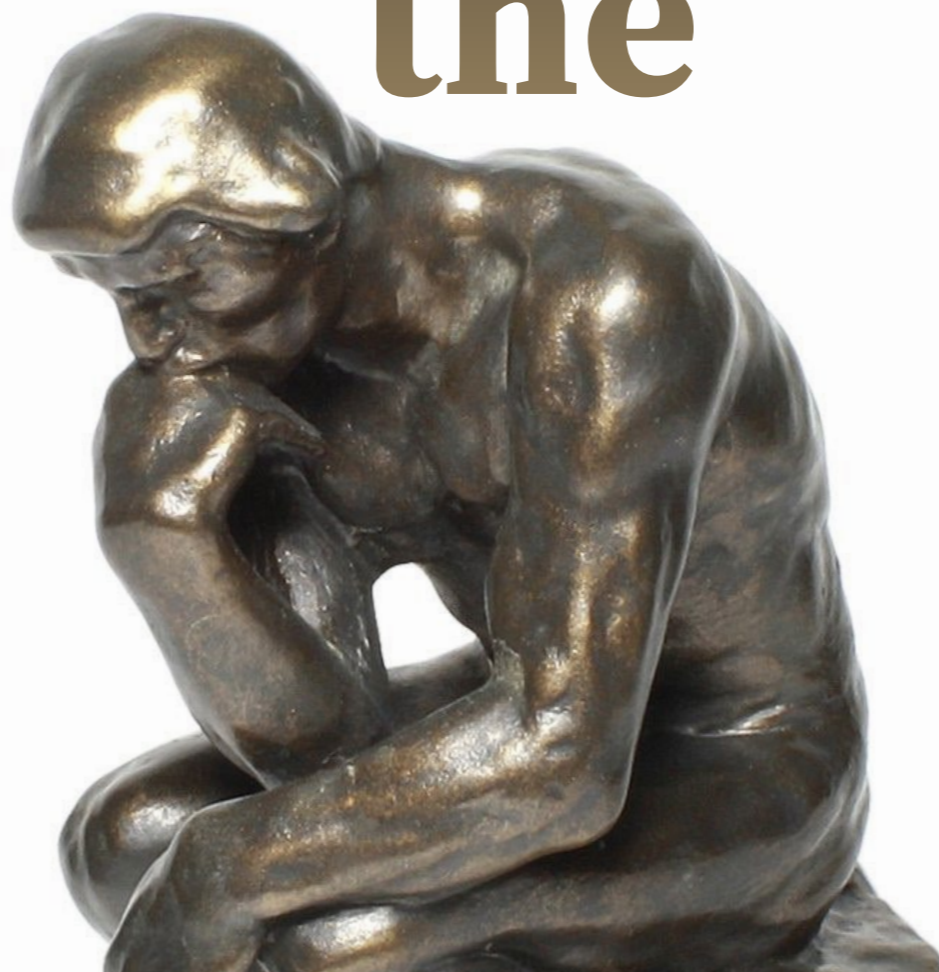
They work for tiny wages and without any insurance. At the end, the public is going to pay for the consequences such as dead soils, troubles with wastewater or chemical residues. That's not the truth about cost we'd like to see.

This is where man and nature are squeezed hard. Such wines can hardly be regarded as created by a cultural technique thousands of years old. Just like breed piglets or chickens, they are not considered individual creatures, but cost and time factors. Is this what we really want?

WHERE DOES LUXURY BEGIN?

Let us assume that by asking a sales price of € 10 per bottle (taxes incl.), a family business can live well off a few hectares of wine, even affording some seasonal staff.

the thinker
wine
the



The Herb Witch Project

SAMHAIN THE NEW CYCLE BEGINS

What we like to call “grey November” is living up to its name. Mother Nature is preparing for a time of rest, for dormancy. The colourful autumn leaves lie on the ground, storms and November frosts are sweeping the last leaves from the branches. Rotting leaves, withered and dead plants, icy cold waters, some already frozen, all of them a symbol for retreat. The earth retires into its innermost being. She takes a deep breath, falls silent and turns solid. We too can now become part of this state and experience its singular power and magic. Mother Nature invites us to follow suit, to relax and to turn our eyes inwards.

Indeed, we are seeing our activities more and more shifting indoors. Our minds feel heavy and less active. We want to rest, slow down and retreat – the natural consciousness we have of our body tells us to do so. I must concede, this is not always easy to accomplish in our modern, dynamic, but ephemeral times. However, this gives us the opportunity to learn how to regain a sense for our innermost self, to listen to it and to change one thing or another in order to reconnect with the forces of nature and to live in harmony with them. After all, we humans are part of nature.

Samhain is a symbol for the very end of summer and at the same time the beginning of the new year. It opens up for us a completely new quality of time. Time for reflection, farewell, transience and our ancestors. The new cycle begins with death: we must let go in order to create something new. We reflect on the profound meaning of death and rebirth. Samhain represents the eternal cycle of passing and becoming, both in nature and in ourselves. The moment has come to take our time, to accept and acknowledge how much certain changes have affected our life in the past months.

We can create our own rituals and meditation techniques. Incense substances such as elderberry, angelica, mugwort, juniper, sage, spruce resin and lavender encourage introspection and self-reflection and have healing effects.

Simply chop the dried herbs of the Samhain incense blend and mix them thoroughly. By breaking them open, the surface of the herbs increases allowing the healing substances to be released even better while burning. During the meditation, it is important to seize the mood of the season and to embrace the moment peacefully.

Burning incense has always been said to have a disinfecting and germicidal effect. Already in early days, substances such as juniper, frankincense or sage were

burned for cleaning purposes in hospital rooms, churches or next to clothes.

Sage is probably the most widely known incense plant in terms of purifying, germicidal, antiviral, antibacterial and anti-inflammatory effects. The Latin name (*Salvia officinalis*) already tells a lot about its great healing powers, the word “salvia” deriving from “salvare” - “to heal”. Its spicy scent banishes all things polluted, old, negative or burdensome and creates space for the new.

As for the smoke, it has a particularly strong disinfecting, cleansing and germicidal impact. It proves to be extremely helpful, especially in challenging times like the ones we are going through right now. Combine it with other herbs such as elecampane, valerian, verbena, angelica, mullein, juniper and spruce resin, and you will have an incense blend which will not only activate your self-healing forces but also disinfect the air you breath.

Meditation, rituals and celebrations help me shape transitions, perform changes and go through the annual cycle fully aware of myself. Hopefully, I have given you a little inspiration to go your own way, back to the rhythms of life.

HARVEST SPECIAL

2020



GRUBER RÖSCHITZ WEINVIERTEL

How do you manage a rather big organic operation at harvest times – the busiest of them all? Simply, by being well organized and sharing the workload between siblings, as is the case with the Gruber family. Let's hear them out:

During harvest time, there is a lot going on at our winery, no surprise. We manage the many plots of our 80 hectares with a team of up to 30 people per day picking the grapes. The grape varieties are harvested separately, brought to the cellar and, for

the entry level wines, pressed immediately. With two presses we can process up to 30 tons of grapes per day. This year we have done some preliminary work in order to make things go smoothly: we have removed a part of the leaves in all our vineyards before harvest. This allowed us to save time, prevent rot and the compact grapes could be harvested quickly. Cool temperatures during the night also helped us to proceed with the harvest without any major hiccups. Plus, we did not need to cool down the incoming grapes.

Despite the repeatedly wet weather, we are very happy with the 2020 harvest!

Low pH-values (which are very important for a good fermentation), cool grapes and top motivated employees, that was our recipe for this year's success. We especially like how the Riesling turned out (there will most probably be another "Black Vintage" edition), which came in healthy and super aromatic, but also the Veltliners delight us with their acidity, structure and juicy freshness. Maybe it did rain a bit too much this year, but we're not complaining because our soils could finally refill their water reserves. Like this, they won't fear a possibly dry 2021. Nor do we!

WINZERHOF HOCH (PETER & PAUL) HOLLENBURG, KREMSTAL

The organic Winzerhof Hoch combines 2 philosophies ("Peter & Paul"): the fruity and fresh classical approach as well as a "natural", low sulphite, barrel vinification approach. In spite of high workload, Harald Hoch is expecting beautiful wines from 2020.

It does not have to be hot and dry every year. We certainly appreciate also the "more difficult" vintages, in which the winegrower can show his skill and

knowledge, vintages he can learn from. 2020 will be a fresh vintage with palpable acidity. The alcohol levels are low but that's exactly what we're looking for. The fruit expression, the aromas, they are indeed beautiful, something we cherish a lot in our style of wine, for our whites as well as reds.

Looking at the varieties, Riesling turned out especially beautiful this year. We have done some selection work already on the vines and removed everything that did not meet our expectations. Consequently, we were able to pick wonderfully ripe and on spot grapes at harvest time. We picked

our Rieslings in the last week of September and the first week of October, just before rainfall would have affected the level of ripeness. We are also highly satisfied with our reds which came in in great shape. Having been picked early, these will be light, cool climate reds but with a remarkable juiciness. We are convinced that every vintage has its merits – the winegrower simply needs to make the best out of it!



MARTIN OBENAU GLAUBENDORF, WEINVIERTEL

Martin Obenaus is our newcomer, having joined the TOA family in crazy 2020. Following biodyn principles, this young guy exactly knows what he wants: producing pristine, fresh and drinkable wines with as much footprint by nature as possible. So, how was his year?

I am super satisfied with 2020 and in retrospect very happy that we started harvesting so early, on September 3. The rain had little effect on our harvest except for a short interruption of about 4 days.

We did have some hail (as many colleagues) which led to more work in sorting out affected berries but compared to my neighbours, it was once again obvious to me that our grapes were healthier although the others had treated their vines more often. Working my land following biodynamics absolutely makes sense for me. My vines look great and the berries taste great, year after year. What's important to me is that also my employees become aware of this development, not only myself. My main red varieties absolutely stood out this year. We were able to harvest them in great health and with beautiful aromas. I picked Zweigelt in several intervals to have different styles at hand and to be able to use them as I need it.

Also my Rösler (a breed I love for its nice fruit and liveliness) showed beautifully and in general, this vintage will be about freshness and fruit! As for the whites, Riesling looks fabulous – I wish it would turn out like this every time! By the way, I like to be inventive in the processing of the grapes. For example, I use an old truck for grape transports for starting my fermentations. I fill it with the mash, add some whole bunches and the cap can't float on top of the must because of the conical shape of this "device". This way, I have some intracellular fermentation and don't need to move or pump the wine! The must then keeps on fermenting between 3-7 days before it's transferred into steel tanks or barrels. That worked pretty well this year!

KARL FRITSCH KIRCHBERG AM WAGRAM, WAGRAM

Biodynamics is all about balance and encouraging nature to take care for itself. Karl Fritsch deeply trusts in his soils and plants, something he has done for decades and has built his reputation upon. What does he think about 2020?

The 2020 vintage has once again turned out to be a challenging year in our region: in spring, we have had high precipitations and thus pressure due to peronospora. This was followed by a very nice, sunny period. Harvest time was again a difficult

one due to further rainfall. Consequently, our yields will be about 20% lower than last year. The key parameters (ripeness, rot, need for selection) were pretty different depending on how much the grapes were affected by the rain. Our loess soils are of great benefit however because they absorb water very well and store it equally well in dry periods. Quite particular for this vintage was the fact that the younger vines were often healthier than older plots. The reason for that, we simply do not know – that's what nature is about!

The fermentations went very smoothly and quick compared to other years, for sure thanks to great pH-levels. In general,

the 2020 wines will have refreshing acidity levels, but we don't mind that, since the wines undergo a malolactic fermentation anyway - this always reduces the acidity. One of the Wagram gems, Roter Veltliner, once again showed his diva-like spirit requiring lot of effort in the vineyard. As in the last couple of years, we split the bunches before harvest to reduce rotting and we decided to harvest it quite early. This year's edition might turn out a bit more lean mer, but it's certainly going to be very aromatic and elegant. We are actually fans of the cooler vintages! Again and again we find that although they do need more time, the wines show great potential and wonderful finesse!



**CHRISTOPH HOCH
HOLLENBURG, KREMSTAL**

Christoph Hoch has firm convictions and ideas despite (or thanks to?) his relative youth. He doesn't mind when a vintage turns out rather demanding. Christoph blends wines from different years and thus has the opportunity to pursue his style without compromise.

We are fine! The year has certainly given us a little bit of headache and it was challenging at times. Some hail made us replan the harvest in a number of vineyards, that is, we had to pick the affected

vineyards earlier. However, the main statement for 2020 is that despite all the difficulties, we were still able to do our thing and to carry out our projects such as to work some plots only with the horse and then study the results.

I think that 2020 is a vintage that required the winegrower to work as precisely as possible with little margin of error. In this regard, I would compare it to the 2012 vintage. To give an example, we have to work super clean when it comes to Pet Nat, one of our key styles of wine. As for Grüner Veltliner, that one was certainly quite a challenge this year. With Grüner,

we strive for a higher level of ripeness (compared to the still wines for Pet Nat) and it was a struggle to achieve that in 2020. However, my approach of blending vintages in order to create a complex, multi-layered wine allows me to embrace also a more acidity driven, lean raw material. Blending it with reserve wines, we can maintain our style and philosophy over the years without the necessity to "fine" and "manipulate" the wines in the cellar.

**HOCHDEUTSCH WEIN
HOLLENBURG, KREMSTAL**

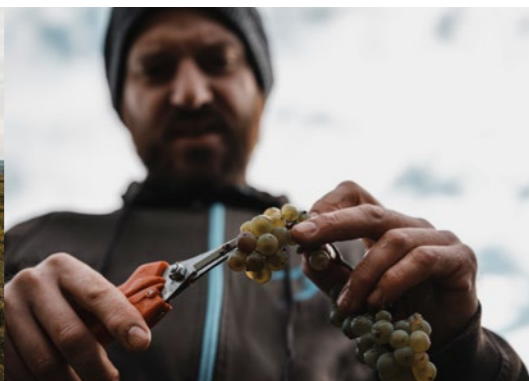
Julie-Ann Hoch is an exception to the rule. Her products, known as MEA, are made not only using (biodynamic) grapes but also herbs and flowers. With a new-born baby girl in her arms, Julie recounts her 2020.

Things are looking good for my MEA's, everything is going as planned, so I'm happy. We have readjusted and changed some things, such as the techniques for preparing the teas (which are later blended with the wine). I have also further

enhanced the quality of the herbs, for example with regard to harvesting times. Thanks to the long summer, I was able to harvest herbs twice this year (by hand, of course), which is good for the quantity. The herbs and flowers (elderflower, roses, for example) do not only grow in biodynamically cultivated vineyards, but are also harvested following the lunar cycle: at increasing moon and in the morning, when the powers are rising and the aromatic compounds are particularly well preserved. It is like breathing in and breathing out.

The most important step is of course the

drying of the herbs. This should be done as quickly as possible in order to preserve the essential oils in the best possible way. I have my own drying cabinet for this purpose (his name is Herbert, no joke!), which dries the herbs very gently. Another of its unique features is that it does not destroy the capillary structure of the herbs (and thus their aromatic substances). This cabinet even collects the water contained in the herbs. I then use this water for my MEA's. By the way, there will be new products in the MEA line soon. I can disclose one thing by now: herbs will be included!



**MICHAEL GINDL
HOHENRUPPERSDORF,
WEINVIERTEL**

Michael Gindl is relaxed. He is relaxed when he's with his animals but also when it comes to his winery. The reason? He has trust in the balance in his vineyards. The rest is virtually self-evident.

Due to some issues with Corona (no worries, I'm healthy!), I have left most of the work in the cellar to my interns but since they have done a great job so far, I'm perfectly fine with that. Anyway, the most important things happen outside, in the vineyards. By my standards, I'm

satisfied with the levels of ripeness as well as fruit expression and acidity. Thanks to biodynamic practices, my vineyards have reached a level of balance that allows them to easily absorb and compensate for climatic extremes. Consequently, I expect a good year also in terms of quantity, the cellar is full. Yes, I have to wait and see how the fermentations proceed, but I am very confident.

Perhaps we have picked the grapes a bit later compared to my biodyn colleagues. It wouldn't have worked any other way for me because the acidity would have been too high otherwise. I use a lot of cover crops in my vineyards and I wrap

the shoots consistently instead of cutting them. The effect of this only sets in after years. The physiological ripening does not occur later (which can be seen looking at the seeds), but the sugars are built up much later and the acidity starts to decrease later as well. Therefore, I had to wait a little bit longer this year. At the same time the musts have very low pH-values, which is a big plus. Generally speaking, I'm very optimistic. I expect to make all the wines I usually make and I'm confident they will be balanced and tasty!

**REINHOLD KRUTZLER
DEUTSCH SCHÜTZEN,
SOUTHERN BURGENLAND**

Rheinhold Krutzler has been around for a long time. He knows his vines, his soils, his region. He knows how to deal with conditions given by nature. Bottom line: there will be fine Krutzler wine from 2020!

It's a wrap, we're done with 2020! Just like for everyone at Eisenberg, we did lose quite some grapes to hail, and had a lot of extra work separating the "good from the bad" with up to 20 helpers but I'm very satisfied with the quality even though there will be less Perwolff this

year. Well, every year is different, that's the only thing that never changes. The wines will be fine and elegant, not too opulent and with medium alcohol levels (around 12-12.5% for entry level, maximum 13.5 for the reserves), a little bit higher in acidity but that doesn't bother me. After all, my main variety Blaufränkisch needs acidity, especially if the wine is to taste exciting even after 10-20 years.

Also in the cellar, we adapt our measures in vinifying the musts and wines to the character of the vintage: the wines are macerated on the skins for a little shorter period of time so that their tannins remain smooth and balanced. This

applies especially for wines that are bottled earlier and can be drunk in 2-3 years. We also reduce the use of wood - this has been the case for a couple of years now. We use more 500-litre barrels (their age depending on the particular wine) and less barriques - except for my Merlot, where I like to use new barriques. The most important thing for me is balance and this can only be achieved when taking many little but important steps along the way of the vintage.



**ERICH MACHHERNDL
WÖSENDORF, WACHAU**

In the Wachau region, the amount of work can be particularly high in a challenging vintage. Luckily, an organic winemaker like Erich Machherndl is used to challenges. He will never back down when it comes to harvesting grapes that will soon turn into his “other Wachau”-wines.

Our 2020 was characterized by an excess of precipitation – something we have not had for a long time! While normally we see about 380 - 450 mm of precipitation

during the entire year, up until the time of this year’s harvest we have had 500 mm already, most of those occurring during flowering. The vineyards were therefore exposed to high pressure from peronospora and oidium, which made plant protection a real challenge! The rain was responsible for a certain amount of rot causing some loss in yield but luckily, loose berry varieties were much better off than Grüner Veltliner, for example. Fortunately we were spared from hail!

We started to harvest on September 15th - in the first two weeks we did a first round of harvesting in order to discard the

rotten grapes, in week 3 we focused on some single vineyard sites and Veltliner (in order to preserve acidity and good pH-values). After that we put our emphasis on “all-except-Veltliner” (Chardonnay, Pinot gris, etc.). At the end we got the Riesling and the remaining single vineyards of Grüner. When it comes to the style wines are going to display, we’re expecting low alcohol (as usual at Machherndl’s) and a palpable acidity, also für Grüner Veltliner which I think will even top my beloved 2014 vintage! And the Rieslings already show fantastic aromatics. Get ready, friends!

**RUDI RABL
LANGENLOIS, KAMPTAL**

Rudi Rabl’s estate in the well-known Kamptal boast many of the region’s top vineyards. Meticulous work and selective picking are essential in order to get make them shine brightly, even more so in challenging vintages. For Rudi, every cloud has a silver lining.

Just like for all my colleagues, 2020 was a very busy year in Langenlois. We did have some weather extremes such as hail, but this did not cause any major damage. Especially in October, we also had to

deal with rot caused by rainfalls, but the difficulty was rather one of managing the harvest: when to harvest which vineyard and so on. We had to select grapes very carefully in our top vineyards - more work for less grapes, if you like. We want to pick perfect and healthy grapes, that is an essential part of our philosophy!

Hard work pays off, so I’m very satisfied with the quality! It might sound strange but according to what we have experienced in the past, it’s the years with rather mixed summers that produce particularly fine and long-lived wines. At the end of the day, the wines display great

acidity which supports and lifts their fruitiness. Our 2020s will have this kind of “acidic thrill”, something we have already missed in the last couple of years! There is another highly positive feature of this demanding vintage: after those hot years like 2018 and 2019 and their extremely dry winters, the soils were finally able to replenish their water reserves. This is going to have beneficial effects at least up until next spring. Tu sum it up, we are expecting very fine and aromatic wines from 2020 and we are looking forward to 2021!



**THOMAS STRAKA
RECHNITZ, SOUTHERN
BURGENLAND**

Thomas Straka’s winery is a Welschriesling stronghold, not only in Southern Burgenland but in the entire Austrian winelands. For a small winery, 5 weeks of harvest are a tough one. However, his “Welsch” did not fail to fulfil expectations.

As in many Austrian wine regions, 2020 was not an easy year here in Rechnitz. Winter and spring were very dry. Then, an astounding amount of 550 liters of rain came down during the vegetation period.

To make matters more complicated, 3 hailstorms at the end of August hit almost every vineyard of mine. Although the yield loss caused by the hail was small, the damaged berries had to be discarded thus requiring a lot of selection work during harvest. Harvesting for consecutive 5 weeks, that really is a challenge for a relatively small estate like ours! But it is what it is. In any case, this year perfectly meets the trend for wines with low alcohol. To give an example, this year’s alcohol levels in Blaufränkisch, even for the top batches, rarely exceed 12-12.5%. The acidity is very good, the aroma excellent, and we will see a more lightfooted style. For the Southern Burgenland, such a style

is perhaps not a bad idea. If you compare it with 2014 (which was similar), I’m sure that my Blaufränkisch will stay in great shape for a long time, showing freshness and finesse. For Welschriesling, 2020 will certainly be a great year! We were able to harvest all vineyards in great quality and sufficient quantity and also to vinify them in different styles, with or without maceration, whole bunch pressed or “classic”. I’m convinced that this variety is perfectly suited for Austria. Whereas neighbouring vineyards struggled with rot, Welschriesling kept its composure, crisp, with firm skins, beautiful aroma and lots of taste. “Welsch” truly is our hero!

**CLAUS PREISINGER
GOLS, BURGENLAND**

Claus Preisinger has been working his land in agreement with nature for many years. Some years are easier, some more demanding. Claus has learned to accept what his vines give him – and to make the best of it.

This year’s harvest took a long time, about 6 weeks, and besides drought and rain we also had some stress with hail, especially in my top locations in Weiden. However, we are getting used to extreme weather conditions here in Gols. When you work with nature, you have to

accept that. Of course, it was a year that required a lot of selective picking but there’s no reason to complain! Basically, 2020 suits my style well, being more light-footed and displaying more acidity. I feel more comfortable with such a year than with a super ripe one. It’s gonna be a joy drinking these superbly fresh wines!

I am sometimes asked about parameters for ripeness. In the past, people used to look closely at things like tannin or sugar. I don’t do that at all anymore. I don’t even check the pH-values and simply rely on my experience. In the cellar, I don’t make much of a fuss either. I macerate the wines carefully so I’m not forced to

shorten their time on skins if the vintage is a bit leaner. I use all kinds of vessels for fermentation and aging: steel, wood (but no small barrels), concrete eggs or tulips, amphoras from several countries... “Dope”, for example, is put into amphoras and I would like to vinify Chardonnay in concrete someday, because it keeps the temperature very well. When it comes to wooden barrels, I like the large ones. I can keep the wines in these for a longer period of time and the influence of the wood remains low. This gives me more straight forward, puristic wines. Just the way I like them!



HANNES SABATHI GAMLITZ, SOUTHERN STYRIA

Styria is always a bit different from the rest of wine-growing Austria. The Styrians, they are used to a lot of rainfall, for example, and they are used to working in steep vineyards. The Sabathi's did not have much to complain about in 2020, quite the opposite!

Unlike in past years, April and May were really cold in our region, leading up to a delay in flowering of roughly 2 weeks. When it comes to rain, the precipitations

were pretty much as always. It simply rains a lot in Styria and we have learned to live with it. A cooler period in summer delayed the harvest a bit so we started on September 26th, about 2 weeks later than last year. Also, we are very glad that for a fourth consecutive year, we have had a vintage without any hail!

We are very satisfied with both the quality and quantity of this year's grapes, it will be a beautiful vintage, across all parameters! We did not experience major setbacks during harvest. That's a good thing, given that our team is composed of up to 70 helpers during peak times, so

we want them happy! In order to study and get to know our vineyards even better every year, we have started to pick not only according to the age of vines but also respecting various soil types (such as sand or gravel), i.e. not only horizontally, but also vertically (looking at the profile of our slopes). It's fascinating to see the differences, e.g. the colour of the leaves is different depending on the soil type. Later on, it is just as exciting to observe the distinctive taste of these particular batches! In a nutshell: we expect fine and expressive wines from the 2020, from regional wines to "Kranachberg", from Sauvignon to Grauburgunder!

ERWIN TINHOF EISENSTADT, BURGENLAND (LEITHABERG)

The Tinhof estate is famous for its Neuburger and although the wines will need their time before entering the markets, Erwin is extremely happy with this year's outcome. St. Laurent and Blaufränkisch are equally looking more than promising!

In terms of quality, we have had a very good harvest, and we are also satisfied with the quantity – there is no reason to complain about the yields. Initially, many

growers had expected a large harvest but this did not happen. After the rainy May we experienced a pretty dry period so the berries did not take in an excess of water. Some rainfalls in August did not change this at all since the grapes were "done" ripening, so to say. The ripening process progressed at a fast rate after that, that's why we were able to pick at an early stage. We cultivate our vineyards anyway with the aim to harvest early. There's no need for us to leave the grapes hanging for too long.

As for the reds, St. Laurent is a variety that stays low in alcohol anyway and we

did not exceed 13% alc. for our whites either. We do not strive for 14,5%, finesse and elegance being our key priorities. We are extremely satisfied with our favourite, the Neuburger. We were able to harvest it in perfect health and expect especially fine wines from all our plots dedicated to this unique variety. By the way: our new Neuburger vineyard (in the "Feuersteig" site) saw its first harvest this year! We could not be more happy with the quality and character of these young vines!



TEGERNSEERHOF DÜRNSTEIN, WACHAU

The vintage 2020 was not quite the easiest one in the Wachau. However, great estates are able to adapt to all conditions and adjust their actions. Once again, one thing becomes obvious: efforts in the vineyard do pay off, Martin Mittelbach & team are convinced!

The weather was extremely dry, warm & sunny in March and April compared to other years. May however, showed a completely different face, being very cool and wet! The summer was pretty unstable too and on top of that the region was struck by

some severe hail especially in the western part. Our vineyards were hit but did not suffer full damage. Nonetheless, came harvest, we had to pick even more carefully, sorting out damaged berries.

For us, the work in the vineyards is what counts the most. We spend enormous amounts of time outside. In order to react to the diverse weather conditions we fine tune the canopy management, aerating the grape growing zone to prevent an excess of humidity but also to provide for shadow where it's necessary. In addition, we never stop maintaining our precious stone terraces! We simply want to keep our "wine gardens" in the best possible shape so they can express their true character!

For those asking what we do in the cellar, well, it's pretty simple. Our musts are left to clarify naturally for about 36 hours and we limit the temperature during fermentation to roughly 23 °C in order to preserve the fruit character. The Smaragd wines undergo an even more meticulous selection. The Veltliner is destemmed and lightly crushed, macerate for a couple of hours, then they're pressed and cool fermented in stainless steel. No magic there – that happens in the vineyard! Overall, we are looking forward to superbly aromatic and wonderfully fresh whites. Time will tell!

JOHANNES TRAPL STIXNEUSIEDL, CARNUNTUM

Johannes Trapl is considered by some as an alien in his home region of Carnuntum. While many winegrowers still wait for their whites to be ready, he has already harvested the red ones. Rest assured: the reason for this is not madness but his deeply rooted trust in nature.

I'm happy to say that this vintage was a good one for us. At the beginning it looked like an early vintage due to the drought, but at the end, the ripeness has been delayed due to the rainfall. In total,

the harvest took place about 10-14 days later than 2019 and despite the frequent rain, the risk of disease was low. The only thing we were afraid of was that our harvest helpers would not be allowed to cross borders because of Corona. Fortunately, this has proven to be wrong.

If you want to compare this vintage with others, it was not as hot as the last years. When it comes to style, we always focus on elegance and precision, and 2020 has turned out to be a touch cooler, even more refined. The first wines having finished fermentation give a proof of that. They are all very much on spot, not over-ripe, that's extremely cool! Just to give

an example: we started harvesting our single vineyard "Blaufränkisch Spitzerberg" while my fellow winegrowers had not even thought about harvesting their white varieties! In the vinification, we didn't really change a thing. We keep on using a fair amount of stems but we do proceed very carefully in doing so. This year, we decided to foot stomp the mash a little shorter than in the last years in order to preserve the finesse. We have also added a little bit more of whole berries into the must in order to gain some aromas from intercellular fermentation. I'm very confident the wines will show beautifully for many years!



**CHRISTOPH WACHTER-WIESLER
DEUTSCH SCHÜTZEN,
SOUTHERN BURGENLAND**

The Southern Burgenland is one of those Austrian wine regions that are often affected by climate's caprices. 2016 was such a year and also 2020. The wine-makers - Christoph Wachter-Wiesler is one of their best - have learned to adapt. The motto reads quality first!

Yes, the Eisenberg was hit by hail in mid-August (so, unfortunately, there won't be much wine from site like

"Reihburg" or "Saybritz"). However, this did not affect wines I produce in my vineyards in Deutsch-Schützen like "Weinberg" and "Ratschen". For my entry level Blaufränkisch "Bela Joska", the majority of the grapes stem from Deutsch-Schützen anyway and I'm going to add the "survivors" from Eisenberg to the blend.

I embrace the reality of vintage variation. One cannot count on warm and sunny weather all the time. The nature is our boss and that's the way it should be! 2020 has given us wines which are rather cool with lots of freshness and low alcohol levels - most of my wines will display great

drinkability at around 12.5% alc. The crucial parameter for us is always how they taste. If you look at the older vintages from the 80's and 90's, many wines had hardly more than 11.5% alc. Still, they showed great potential and could be enjoyed for many years. So I cannot but like the 2020s which present themselves as lively, light footed and with a beautiful acidity. I don't worry about the reduction of yield - we are used to tough years here in Southern Burgenland anyway. My white wines, such as Welschriesling, are also giving me lot of joy! They ferment slowly but steadily; the alcohol is low and they taste amazing!

WABI-SABI

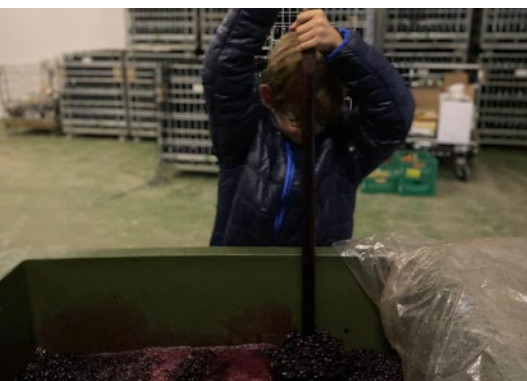
The Wabi-Sabi labels are wines Franz & team source in a couple of vineyards near Dürnstein as well as in famous sites such as "Achleiten" near Weissenkirchen in the Wachau. The approach is a completely different one.

Wabi-Sabi derives from the Buddhist teaching of the three marks of existence (impermanence, suffering and emptiness) and describes a world where beauty can be defined by imperfection. Asymmetry, roughness or simplicity are further attributes of this idea. To translate this

into wine reality, this means for us that the wines do not need to be super polished, overtly smooth or perfectly fruity. They are supposed to display their true character. We are not afraid of "edgy", demanding vintages, we take them as they are.

Unlike many other growers in the Wachau we started to harvest our plots early (end of September) in order to avoid rot (which was a problem this year due to reoccurring rain). Some people might think we're crazy but we rather have higher acidity than botrytis. We like our wines fresh. As for the vinification, we pressed the grapes swiftly

without macerating the skins. We will add whole berries into the barrels anyway in order to extract more (and different) aromas while the wines are maturing. We are especially looking forward to seeing how the "796 vines" and the "aqualeiten" wines are going to turn out. It's like with children: a lot of work but the future will - hopefully - reward us.



**JOHANNES ZILLINGER
VELM-GÖTZENDORF,
WEINVIERTEL**

What's the secret behind Johannes Zillinger's rather relaxed approach to 2020? Is it the lack of tropical nights? And why did Sauvignon Blanc turn out so great this year? Let's listen to Johannes!

In a way, 2020 reminded me of vintages from 20 years ago, years when harvesting in October was very common. We started picking relatively early - not as early as in the last (hot) years but still on September 3rd. The grapes in my vineyards looked beautifully up until the end. Rot was only

an issue in some areas affected by hail (a couple of hectares especially in "Kellerberg") - the consequence being that we've had to pick more carefully there. Just to give you an idea: during harvest season, my team was picking for 21 days in total, with up to 30 helpers per day!

I'd say that the incredibly expressive aromatics are a real standout of this vintage. I have noticed this particularly in Sauvignon blanc, one of my favourites. The last time it showed such pungent aromas, that was in 2012. As usual, I fermented some batches on their skins and did some cold macerations for others and I was really surprised to see this kind

of aromas again! We removed the leaves in the Sauvignon vines pretty early, thus avoiding "green" aromas and enhancing the ripe, almost exotic fruit. Another reason for this were the many cool nights. We did not have a single "tropical night" (i.e. nights over 25° C) this year so we could pick grapes with low pH-values, great acidity and physiological ripeness. Canopy management rocks! I am equally satisfied with the reds. Acidity may be a bit lower than in 2019 but it's because we harvested the red varieties rather in the afternoon. However, I have enough stuff with a lot of acidity in my solera system, so that's perfectly fine!



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