

Back to the future?

2021 - a Riesling vintage as we know it from the past

After three sun-drenched vintages - 2018, 2019 and 2020 - the 2021 vintage gave us reason to think back to times gone by. In terms of weather conditions, 2021 can best be compared to the 2002 vintage, which also produced magnificent Riesling qualities, but which were only possible through intensive manual work and nerve-racking waiting. In 2021, the harvest dragged on well into November before the window of opportunity for healthy grapes for dry wines closed again in Rheinhessen.

All over Europe, May 2021 initially showed warm late spring days until the infamous May frosts struck. Fortunately, we in Rheinhessen were largely spared hard frost damage, but as a result of the cold temperatures in May, the shoot was delayed and the wine year got off to a late start.



The late shoot was then followed by extensive periods of rain with rather cool temperatures in June and July. The peronospora pressure on the grapes was enormous, and to counter it, an immense amount of care and attention was needed in the vineyards. By the time the harvest began at the end of September, our winery alone had put in an additional six thousand hours of work in the vineyards, and that in a year in which many cycles were not yet running smoothly due to the pandemic.

As an organic farm, we can only use very few aids in such demanding years and have to rely solely on manual work in the vineyard.



In cold and wet periods, defoliation of the grape zone is essential, but can lead to the grapes getting sunburnt in subsequent hot periods with direct sunlight. However, heat periods were largely absent in 2021, so that foliage work and defoliation by hand were the decisive steps to be able to harvest healthy and aroma-rich grape material. Extremely hard yield reduction at the beginning of August did the rest to lead the grapes to a late but then nevertheless intense ripeness.



Harvesting began on 20 September with the early-ripening varieties, but had to be interrupted several times due to extended periods of rain. It was not until October that the overall situation began to ease and a fantastic late autumn allowed the Rieslings in particular to catch up in terms of ripeness. Chardonnay and Pinot Noir also benefited from warm and dry autumn days. With pH values between 3.0 and 3.2, we are more than satisfied, the acidity in the grapes is nevertheless somewhat higher than average in 2021.



The classic Riesling vintages such as 2002 and 2004 are quite comparable to the weather pattern of 2021. They produced extremely long-lived and lively Rieslings that were able to develop a very elegant and classic aroma profile due to the long ripening period on the vine. What is currently maturing in the 2021 barrels makes the comparison with 2002 seem quite apt.