

Some German style in a bottle

GERMANY is often one of the wine world's most overlooked regions. Producing still, sparkling, sweet, red and white varieties, it rarely gets recognition for more than the latter, of which it makes to an incredible standard. A landlocked country in a constant battle against the elements and yet still manages to create one of the most unique wines of them all from one of the world's greatest grapes – Riesling, but despite this remains highly unfashionable in the general spectrum of wine trends. This week I decided to try what Majorca has to offer in terms of German-made Rieslings and see if it could be a grape that could indeed be made more a la mode here.

Apart from the aforementioned struggle against some of the most uncompromising “terroirs”, (being one of the most northerly wine producing countries in Europe – exposure to sun and protection from the high winds and rain, and snow is key but by no means

easy -) there is one other major flaw that comes with German wine for the average consumer and that is their wine labels.

Often painted with garish gothic scripts and words that are only intelligible to those who have a grasp of either wine or the German language, it makes buying German wine a difficult task to say the least, and especially if you don't know exactly what you're after. A Riesling on its own can be dry, semi-dry or sweet, and then there is the question of what quality of wine you are to be drinking tafelwein (tablewine), or something infinitely better. Germany does not make it easy on its consumers choosing to classify its wines not according to regions like France, or Spain, but instead according to the ripeness of the grapes. Without wanting to get too technical, Landwein is the equivalent of France's Vin de Pays and is not terribly exciting, anything with QbA (Qualitätswein Bestimmter Anbaugebiete) on the label means it is quality wine from a designated region,

and QmP (Qualitätswein mit Prädikat) are wines where no sugar is allowed to be added. These can then be further divided into 6 Prädikats or special attributes according to ripeness levels in the vineyard, and depending on which Prädikat is mentioned, generally get more rarer more expensive.

This week I have chosen a wine from the Pfalz, the most southerly of the Rhine regions. Here some of the warmest vineyards in Germany can be found, kindly sheltered by the Haardt mountains to the west which run in a line continuous with the Vosges, the mountains that define Alsace, directly to the south. The wine is a dry (trochen) Riesling, and even though the Mosel on the Westerly edge of German wine country is more famed for producing this style of wine, the Winery particularly interested me with its bold logo which asserts that they are “praised by the present, and convinced of the future”. It is a family winery and judging by the history each member has played an important part in keep-

This week's wine Riesling Von Buhl 2010

Shop: Isla Catavinos
Price: 12 euros



ing the winery at the forefront of quality production. Even the labels themselves, although reminiscent of medieval drawings are designed for specific concepts and by members of the clan. This particular vintage has been awarded a gold award (although it must be said that it seems to be by a third party or even internal analysis and not by a renowned competition.)

The other wonderful answer that dry Riesling, can give the wine enthusiast, is what to drink with an oriental or aromatic dish. The high acidity that the Riesling grape contributes to a wine makes it a perfect partner to Thai food for example, or as my German colleagues told me today the white asparagus that is grown in Germany and generally celebrated with this wine at this time of year. I was eager to try the wine, as Riesling when made well, can be such a fascinating grape and the producer of this week's wine, Von Buhl has been cited by Oz Clarke as being one of the greats of the region

In the glass the wine is a very pale lemon colour, classic for a dry Riesling, and unlike many other white wines I have tasted for these articles does not have overly evident legs. –The alcoholic content is also much lower than other white wines at a so-

bering 11.5%. – Although I was expecting a more dry, acidic nose, there is actually a reasonable amount of floral aromas and tropical fruits, (surely influenced by the warm climate of the Pfalz) but also showing the versatility of the Riesling grape. Whether or not the wine would be able to achieve a good balance and length would be its real test for me. Once on the palate the wine certainly had the “spritzeness” of a well-made Riesling, but was combined with a softness from the tropical fruit that gave it fantastic balance and an impressive length. The lively balancing acidity that should come with any Riesling was certainly present and created a very rounded, light wine whose delicacy could compete with those from the more well-known Rheingau region. More than anything the value for money of this wine, and the fact you can drink glass after glass without it losing its buzz or distinct personality (and without you keeling over from the alcohol) makes it a very attractive companion with aromatic foods or simply just on its own. It is one example of what Germany can offer in terms of style and I have no doubt in my mind that with a bit more label explanation and guidance, that it could become far more fashionable.