



Decanter EXPERT'S CHOICE

German Riesling 2011

An Indian summer rescued this vintage, which is bigger and less concentrated than 2010 but which growers are still rating 'good' to 'outstanding', says Anthony Rose



AMONG THE WINNERS and losers in the climate change stakes, Germany has been *über alles* with its fair share of warmer weather over the past few years. So much so that good to great vintages have become the norm. But appearances can deceive, and if climate change is a reality, the advantages of riper Riesling

may well be cancelled out in the long run should Germany lose the thrilling tongue-tingling acidity on which its great calling card relies so heavily for its distinctive style.

It was Eiswein, not global warming, that was on German minds on the night of 3 May 2011 when temperatures dipped as low as -5°C in much of the country after April's fine spring awakening. Fears of another small vintage after 2010 soon dissipated, however, as warm, humid summer weather took over in August. An Indian summer rescued the vintage, giving growers the chance to select and pick their Riesling grapes untroubled.

Growers are generally happy with the results even if the

'There's a new quality spirit afoot in Germany'

The wines below are a selection of those tasted, non-blind, at the Prowein trade fair in Düsseldorf in March 2012. In 2013 the fair will be held from 24-26 March. See www.prowein.com for more details

final result is a little more varied than the official reports suggest. It's bigger than 2010, without perhaps the concentration of that vintage's best wines, and it remains to be seen whether it will reach the heights of the excellent 2005 and 2007 vintages. Some, like Schäfer-Fröhlich in the Nahe, are proclaiming 2011 outstanding; others, such as the Rheingau's Peter Bernhardt Kühn, suggest it's a very good vintage that falls just short of being great.

Vintage issues apart, what's clear is that German winemakers are starting to tackle the problems of reduced vines per hectare and higher yields in earnest. Invoking a spirit of tradition and the potential to raise the reputation of Riesling to the world-class status it enjoyed 100 years ago, growers are questioning what their parents' generation took for granted. Changing back from stainless steel to big oak vats, planting at higher density, harvesting the grapes ripe, and expanding drier styles are just a handful of the manifestations of a new quality spirit afoot in Germany, often led by the young generation of German wineries now keen to make their mark.

Anthony Rose is wine correspondent for UK newspaper The Independent

Rose's highly recommended wines

Dry



Von Winning, Grainhübel, Deidesheim, Rheinpfalz (barrel sample) 17.5 (91)

N/A UK www.von-winning.de

Made in older, lightly toasted 500-litre French oak barrels. Hint of spicy oak doesn't mask the zesty citrus fruit but adds structure and ageability. **Drink 2012-2018 Alc 12.5%**