

RIESLING INTERNATIONAL

Germany, Austria and Alsace are the cradles of the Riesling culture. But the newcomers of the New World are getting better and better and produce Riesling at ever more exotic places.

Riesling from the USA has no acid, and Australian specimens smell of petrol station: Prejudices such as these have long been widespread, and occasionally they have been confirmed by some wine sold in Europe. But the last few years seem to have opened new chapters in the Riesling history of our planet - At once, as from nowhere, originators and winemakers enter the stage, which have only recently begun to produce Riesling. After only a few years, some of these wines show that the winegrowers have come across real goldmines here and there: to new, completely independent originals. If Riesling had so far been understood as a European phenomenon, it is now clear that our image of the variety facets of a global nature can be added.

Stereotypes refuted

At the "International Riesling Symposium" recently held in the Eberbach-Rheingau Monastery, some of these new local and stylistic archetypes were tasted, like that of Neil Pike from the Clare Valley in South Australia. Pike's "The Merle" -Riesling was a refutation of all Australian stereotypes with his delicate, tender and fresh flavor. "We do not see any petrol tones in our wines," Pike says. "When they ripen, I find rather flavors that I would describe with lemon butter, honey, toast, or quincegelée." Petrol tones only occur when the grapes are intensively exposed to the sun. He therefore preferred a partial shading of the grapes through the foliage, and the defoliation in the grape-zone is only very restrained. In addition, it has proved useful to apply the rows of vines in the east-west direction, so that the rows of vines at the time of the midday-sun (which at the southern hemisphere means direction to the north) give shade to each other. The grapes were then harvested at an alcohol potential of 11.5 to 12% by volume (about 85 to 90 Oechsle), with a most acid of eight grams and with a pH value of 3.0. These are ideal values, which are very similar to those of German Rieslings, except for the somewhat deeper acidity.



Made in 2015 on the 'Roten Hang' (Red slope) the best dry Riesling in Germany: Carolin Spanier-Gillot



The red slope in Germany.

Slate

In the Clare Valley slate dominates the ground, also this is a common ground, which connects the Pikes Riesling (and also those of the Australian Riesling pioneer Jeffrey Grosset) with German terroir types. It was also slate that brought Ernie Loosen to the US and his commitment to Washington State, where he produces since 1999 at Château Ste. Michelle in the Columbia Valley a round, fruit-grown and medium-dry Riesling: "Eroica" showed itself in Eberbach in the current year 2015 in best form, with high-ripe fruit after nectarine and red apple and with silky melt on the palate. And slate is also the ground on which grows one of the most unusual Rieslings in the United States - in the state of Pennsylvania, which has not been known as a wine-growing region. The slate known as "Berks Shale" comes from the period of the Silur and is thus an earth age older than the Devon shale of the Moselle.



In Australia's Clare Valley (pictured here: Pikes Wines) slate dominates the soil - a common feature of Germany's most famous Riesling from the Rhine and Moselle.

As a further special feature, the Berks Shale contains fossil sea lilies and thus a source of lime released during weathering. On these very unusual soils, which are also superimposed by moraine gravel from the last ice age, Galen and Sarah Troxell cultivate Riesling. "We have numerous layers of ground, every few meters the ground changes. We are still in the process of getting to know our country," says Sarah Troxell, who just recently changed her life as a pharmacist against a winegrower: After a stay in Germany she and her husband Galen decided - a former mechanical engineer - to give up her learned professions and take over the estate already owned by the family. That was in 1995. The dairy cattle, which had previously been the business field of the estate, was sold. Instead, the couple planted vines - first fungus-resistant hybrid varieties, because the annual precipitation is in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley with 1,100 millimeters quite high. Meanwhile, European varieties are also growing on »Galen Glen«. Just how exciting the Lehigh Valley for Riesling is, implies the "Fossil Vineyard" Riesling of the year 2015, which would hardly be noticed as a pirate in a Mosel blind test, at least not if he were compared to the Moselle wines of a slightly warmer vintage. In that way coming to the taste, the Troxell couple has already carried on the cultivation of another Mediterranean-European variety with 'cult potential': the Grüner Veltliner.



Newcomer in the US state of Pennsylvania: Sarah and Galen Troxell.

Riesling means craftsmanship

In the monastery Eberbach there also shone some noblesweet wines from the New World. In addition to the deliberate sweet »Auslese F« of the Framingham vineyard in Marlborough, New Zealand, also the "Cordon Cut" Riesling from the Mount Horrocks Winery from the Australian Clare Valley had been noted: Owner Stephanie Toole in the autumn sets a cut on the fruit-bearing canes of the vines. Since the fluid and nutrient supply in that way is severed, the berries slowly and naturally shrivel on the plant. The resulting wine has the extract and the delicacy of a 'Goldkaspel'-selection, although it is produced largely without Botrytis. A wine that can easily assert itself in the top field of noblesweet Riesling from Europe. In this case, the soils do not consist of slate, but from Terra Rossa over limestone.

One of the most original dry wines recently came from the US state of Michigan. The Riesling »Scriptorium Jamieson Vineyard« of the Mari Vineyards was fascinating by its complex spice: Aniseed, fennel seeds, iodine and liquorice. Mari Winemaker Sean O'Keefe returns the special spice to the spontaneous fermentation which came to the Rieslingmust of the year 2015 nolens volens: because on the night after the last harvesting day and the cellar was filled it did snow and therefor the cellar remained inaccessible for days. In the meantime, the must was left to itself and to the ground-borne yeasts. And so is cleared up with another overseas cliché: that the wines are all produced industrially and with high technical effort. A good Riesling, it seems, has a built-in-warranty to be originated with manual work. Wherever on this planet.



Riesling-guardian-of-the-Grail from the Old World: F.X. Pichler and family from Oberloiben in the Wachau.



Schloss Neuweier near Baden-Baden: also in Germany there still are Riesling-regions with potential for surprises - such as Ortenau.

<https://www.falstaff.at/sd/t/best-of-riesling/>

2016

»Unendlich« Riesling Smaragd

99 points

Light yellow-green, silver reflexes. A touch of orange zest, yellow tropical fruit, a touch of blossom honey, mineral nuances. Very complex, fine peach nuances, delicate structure, delicate honeysuckle, very harmonious, has an enormous length, mineral, very complex, salty finish, a wine for many decades.

www.fx-pichler.at

2015

Nackenheim Rothenberg Riesling Alte Reben GG

98 points

The fragrance is floral and spicy, rosemary, iron, on the palate subtle, vibrant, fine acid curve, great tension without great gestures, deep mineral, nuanced, salty, dense, with great length and potential for years and decades. The yield of root-like vines on red clay slate.

www.kuehling-gillot.de

2016

Singerriedel Riesling Smaragd

97 points

Medium green yellow, silver reflexes. Fresh peach, yellow tropical fruit, mineral touch, a touch of apricot in the background. Elegant, silky texture, pleasant fruitiness, fine acid curve, already well developed, delicate and seductive, unfortunately only available in limited quantity.

www.hirtzberger.com

2

2016

Kamptal DAC Reserve Zöbinger Heiligenstein Riesling Alte Reben

97 points

Medium yellow, silver reflexes. Featuring delicate orange blossoms, yellow tropical fruit, delicate minerality, complex bouquet. Juicy, elegant, fine vinegarden peach, vibrant acid structure, finesse and persistence, mineral reverberation, great maturity potential.

www.bruendlmayer.at

2015

»Aus dem Cabinetkeller« Steinberger Riesling Trocken

95 points

In the scent Plum, Gravensteiner, creamy and silky on the palate, great suppleness, and richly subdued, mild acidity, powerful mineral notes, firm and dense, while remaining quite relaxed, with anticipations of the coming seasoning.

www.weingut-kloster-eberbach.de

2015

Schwarzhofberger Riesling GG

95 points

Lemon blossom, blood orange, but also location typical balsamic-terroir spicy with reductive undertones. Strong acidity, then phenolic, ever more pronounced condensation in the course of the palate, enormous substance, terpene tone. Very young.

www.vanvolxem.com

2013

Kastelberg Alsace Riesling Grand Cru

95 points

Mineral scent, white peach, fire stone. On the palate complex layered, a trace of creamy, a trace phenols, subtle but still retaining acid, supple and at the same time structured. An almost Burgundian style, subtle and mineral, but also with a lot of strength and substance. Balsamic spice in the finish, a real Terroir wine from the slate.

www.gresser.fr

2015

»Fossil Vineyard« Lehigh Valley Riesling

94 points

Smoky-mineral in the scent, peppery, one could blindly consider a Moselle. Viscous, mild and supple, light sweetness (9 grams) in the style of dry spätlese (late harvest), rather soft acidity, yet kept under tension by mineral notes, creamy elegance.

www.galenglen.com

2016

»The Merle« Polish Hill Riesling

94 points

Dried lemon peel, rosemary blossom, mineral notes, with air contact balsamic, delicate and straightforward on the palate, silky palate center and a subtly persistent, fininnervige acid, which nevertheless gives freshness and length. Very much substance, finely packaged.

www.pikeswines.com/au
