

GERMANY

- Not much wine – about 10% of France or Italy.
- National beverage is beer.
- Long history of wines – probably started by the Romans – great fame since Charlemagne's time (800 AD).
- Best vineyards near the 50° line – chances of good wines look slim but when they are good, the style is inimitable.
- In good years the sugar-acid balance is artistic – perfect combination of soil & fruit, of character & interest.
- The finest wines are even enjoyed alone, lest any food should distract them.
- Vineyards are primarily in the valleys of **Rhein** and **Mosel** – most northerly in Europe.
- Steep riverbanks → good sunshine and warmth released by river during the night.
- Short summers – early winters – often frost → early picking = **chaptalisation** is allowed in the poorer years.
- Some best and rare wines are made from over-ripened grapes.
- Degree of ripening, therefore, is a major criterion for grading the wines.
- Labels often name grapes.
- Best wines from the great German grape **Riesling**.
- Price of quality is quantity – yield of Riesling is half of that of commoner Sylvaner.

- Sylvaner is popular in some areas (e.g. Franconia) but lacks the balance and breed of Riesling.
- Müller-Thurgau is a hybrid of Riesling and Sylvaner.
- Spätburgunder & Portugieser – red wine source – the valley of Ahr is the only specialist area for red wines (of course not comparable to the whites).

WINE LAWS OF GERMANY

- Controlled by a series of laws since 1879 – codified in 1930.
- Govt. published new laws on July 19, 1969 – made effective on July 19, 1971 – aligned old laws with prevailing ones, also promulgated laws of other E.E.C. countries.
- Controls and defines very specifically all better wines by different picking times.
- Previously 50,000 named wines – now less than 3,000.
- 1971 laws fixed the minimum area as 5 hectares (13 acres) for a vineyard. Neighbouring smaller ones had to come under one name – only a few of extraordinary fame allowed to retain individual identity.
- 1971 laws – three basic grades of quality.

Deutscher Tafelwein

- Most ordinary – consumed locally – almost no export – only broad regional names (Rhein, Mosel, etc.)
- If only **Tafelwein** – most likely to be blended with cheaper wines from abroad.

Qualitätswein bestimmter Anbaugebiete (QbA)

- Usually referred to just as **Qualitätswein** (a quality wine from a controlled growing district).
- Good quality but natural sugar-content is low (must-weight 65).
- Chaptalisation (for 10% al v/v, minimum must-weight required is 75).
- QbA wines carry a test-number.
- Best had young.

Qualitätswein mit Prädikat (QmP)

- The best wines (a quality wine with special attributes/distinction).
- Chaptalisation not allowed – grapes have to ripe properly – not possible in bad years.
- Minimum must-weight is 75.
- Carries a test-number.
- QmP wines carry degrees of sweetness – previously traditional meanings – now determined by must-weight.

Gradation of QmP wines

- Kabinett: minimum m-w 75 – picked generally in October (later than rest in Europe).
- Spätlese: minimum m-w 80 – 2 to 3 weeks later – sweeter and richer than Kabinett.
- Auslese: minimum m-w 90 – fully ripened grapes handpicked from ripened branches – fuller-bodied and sweeter than Spätlese.

- **Beerenauslese:** minimum m-w 120 – only in very good years.
- **Trockenbeerenauslese:** minimum m-w 150 – highest quality – raisin-like grapes with **edelfäule** – in exceptionally good years only.
- In exceptionally good, sunny years – several pickings from the same vineyard.
- Subsequent pickings are better – each picking costs more = extra labour and higher risks.
- An unusual QmP wine is **Eiswein** – ripened to fullest extent – partially frozen. Typical German wine speciality – once or twice in a decade – very expensive – highly flavoured, sugary, also high in acid – normally consumed at the end of a meal (like liqueurs).

WINE REGIONS OF GERMANY

- 11 regions fall under Qualitätswein.
- Each region has 2 or more districts (total 34).
- Each district has several villages.
- Each village has several vineyards.
- About 1400 wine-villages (Gemeinde).
- About 2600 vineyards (Einzellagen).
- Each of these may appear on the label.

Rhein wines (Hock wines)

- 5 of the 11 wine regions: Rheingau, Rheinhessen, Rheinpfalz, Mittelrhein and Nahe – the first three are important.
- Elegantly light & dry – some slightly sweet.

- Liebfraumilch used to be a wine from Rheinhessen, now a generic term for all Rhein wines.
- The English refer to Rhein wines as **Hock** wines – from Hockheimer, a popular wine.
- Rhein bottles are made of **brown** glass.
- **The better-known wines are:**
- **Rheingau** – Winkeler, Johannesberger, Eltviller
- **Rheinhessen** – Bingener, Oppenheimer, Nackenheimer
- **Rheinpfalz** – Wackenheimer, Ungsteiner, Forster

Mosel wines

- Another major region: Mosel-Saar-Ruwer
- The valleys of the Mosel river and its two tributaries.
- Slightly less sweet than Rhein wines – lower strength.
- High natural acidity but with good balance.
- Mosel bottles are made of green glass.
- **The better-known wines are:**
- **Mosel** – Bernkastler Doktor, Piesporter, Zeltingener
- **Saar** – Ockfeler, Wiltengener, Ayler
- **Ruwer** – Grunhausener, Kaseler, Eitelsbacher

Franken (Franconia) wines

- Much drier – less intense bouquet.

- Referred to as Steinwein.
- Marketed in flagon-shaped bottles – bocksbeutel.
- Some better-known wines: Winterhausener, Kitzingener, Stettener, Randersacker, Eschendorfer

Baden-Württemberg wines

- States of Baden and Württemberg have been merged.
- Baden – rich, fruity & full-bodied whites.
- Württemberg – more reds & rosés but better-known for whites.
- Some better-known wines: Kaiserstuhler, Buehler, Ortenauer
- **Other regions (not much important)**
- **Ahr** – main region for reds.
- **Bergstrasse** – the smallest region.

GERMAN SPARKLING WINES

- Generic term is Schaumwein. Most likely to be made from French/Italian grapes/wines. German grapes are too expensive for making Schaumwein.
- If made from 100% German grapes, its termed as Qualitätsschaumwein.
- If secondary fermentation in bottle, its termed as Sekt.
- German sparkling wines have a stronger bouquet & flavour compared to the French ones.
- More schaumwein is produced than champagne.

Some well-known brands: Rüttgers Club, Deinhard Kabinett, Faber Krünung, Kurpferberg Gold

- **Crackling wine:** Perlwein

GERMAN WINE LABELS

- Seems to be confusing – actually gives very specific and detailed information.

Label Info

- Wine category: QmP, QbA, Tafelwein, etc.
- QmP wines: degree of ripeness.
- Region: Rheingau, Ruwer, etc.
- Village and/or Vineyard: Bernkastler Doktor (village followed by vineyard), Bereich Bernkastler (collective vineyard), etc.
- **Amtliche Prüfungsnummer (AP No.)** – indicates year of examination, community number, examination board number, bottler number, etc.
- Vintage year: 85% grapes from the declared vintage year.
- Alcohol-content
- Content
- Bottler: Abfuller
- Bottled by producer/grower: Erzeugerabfüllung
- From the producer's own harvest: Aus eigenem Lesegut
- Grape name mentioned on most. If not, either an easily recognisable wine from Riesling or the maker does not want attention.