

## **Wine vintage 2016 in Weinviertel – wild start, perfect end**

*Mother Nature proved to be a powerful goddess in 2016 and she didn't make things easy for Weinviertel vintners, especially in the spring. Frost damage at the end of April was significant, yet varied greatly between locations. In contrast, the wine year came to a conciliatory end with outstanding harvest weather conditions throughout the Weinviertel.*

The 2016 growing season began successfully. Winter precipitation provided soils with sufficient moisture and left them perfectly prepared for budbreak, which occurred quite normally. Then frost hit at the end of April. For three consecutive days, temperatures dropped to -6 °C (21 °F). Wind came and dispersed the frost so that it didn't remain collected in deep areas and at least vines on slopes were spared. To mitigate frost damage, straw bales and paraffin were burned in many vineyards to envelope vines in a protective cloud of smoke. Despite these measures, it was not always possible to prevent damage to the abundant young shoots present at this time. A fruit loss of up to 30 percent or even more in affected vineyards was unavoidable.

Subsequent rains continued into the summer, but vine flowering, the decisive phase for fruit set, occurred in pleasant weather conditions. A damp spring naturally has its advantages, because areas that have little precipitation benefit from good water availability. One example of this is the area surrounding Ziersdorf, a place within the Weinviertel that is normally quite dry. The disadvantage is that the probability of fungal disease, in particular peronospora (downy mildew), increases rapidly. Plant protection measures were eminently important under these circumstances.

Well-planned and meticulous leaf plucking was essential to keep the vine canopy well aerated so that it dried easier, thus preventing fungal infection.

After the disastrous frost, hail followed in June and brought further reductions in fruit volume in the vicinity of Röschitz and the area between Poysdorf and Herrenbaumgarten. Fortunately, hail caused no more big problems in the remaining period before harvest.

The weather became increasingly drier as the growing season progressed. From September onwards, Mother Nature showed her friendliest face. Grapes ripened wonderfully in ideal dry conditions and could be picked in leisure with no time pressure. The temperatures were high enough at the end of September that many vintners decided to protect fruit by picking in the cool morning hours. When it became wetter toward the end of October, the harvest was largely completed. After a series of low volume years, the harvest brought around 88 million litres, which is close to average for the Weinviertel. Despite this, there are huge regional differences due to losses from frost and significant hail in some areas.

The wine quality of the 2016 vintage is tremendously satisfying and very promising. The wines that are now finished are well balanced and are notable for their harmonious acidity and ripe tannins. At a 50 percent share, Grüner Veltliner is the predominant variety in the region. It requires good access to nutrients to bring high quality and these conditions were outstanding. Expectations are accordingly very high for Grüner Veltliner and Burgundian varieties like Chardonnay and Weißburgunder (Pinot Blanc). The broad array of Weinviertel grape varieties excels with varietal character and typical, crisp Austrian fruitiness. The red wine varieties, in particular Pinot Noir and St. Laurent from the cooler parts of the Weinviertel, are superb thanks to the ideal autumn weather in 2016.

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