

A Tasting of Fine Mosel Wines

by Ormond Smith

The much awaited “Tasting of Fine Mosel Wines” took place at the Waterside Hotel in Inverness on January 16th with a good attendance of both members and guests, all looking forward to sampling quality products from our two wine producer friends, Leo Kappes (*Weingut Leo Kappes*) and Harald Junglen (*Weingut Ackermann*) from the charming village of Zeltingen-Rachtig, lying a mere 8 kms downstream from its more famous neighbour, Bernkastel. Members of Goustevin Scotland have been fortunate over the years to have visited this scenic region, the extremely steep Himmelreich hillsides being extensively cultivated for vine growing and in this location, south facing slopes getting all available sunlight, which coupled with the slaty soil giving good drainage, creates conditions for the production of extremely fine Riesling. Hugh Johnston, no less, describes the Himmelreich range thus: “*The view from the ruined castle (Schloss Landshut) above Bernkastel is of a green wall of vines, 200 metres high and 8 kilometres long. Only the Douro, in Portugal, in the whole gazetteer of rivers to which the vine is wedded, has anything approaching a comparable sight*”. To see this “wall” in autumn when the leaves are combinations of brown, golden yellows and reds is a sight which will linger in your memory for ever !!



The Rieslings chill.....our expectations rise!

One extremely functional feature of the Riesling grape is that almost regardless of climatic conditions which normally would have an adverse effect on other grape varieties, the Riesling can be produced in many variations from entry level Qba's up to succulent and almost everlasting Trockenbeerenauslesen and for the attendees at the Waterside on the 16th, we were about to indulge in some most tantalising offerings. Following an introduction by Connetable Nicol, the tasting got under way with a pleasant “*Frischling*”

Zeltinger Himmelreich Riesling 2014 from Weingut Ackermann, indeed the first wine made by Harald Junglen's son Marius. “Frischling” is the name of a young wild boar, fresh and wild, and although the wine wasn't wild, it was certainly fresh and light, flowery and with good acidity – a worthy entry to the evening and it would seem that young Marius has acquired his father's ability to make appealing wines! The pourers then dispensed a **2014 “Lucas K” Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Spatlese Trocken** from Weingut Leo Kappes, a Gold Medal winning wine from the steep slate slopes of the Sonnenuhr (sundial clock) vineyard.....a dry wine with a fine mineral structure and finishing with just an appealing hint of sweetness. Interestingly, the third wine was from the same vineyard and demonstrated how the Riesling can be “moulded” into differing degrees of sweetness partly due to climatic conditions affecting acidity and sugar levels and the fermentation process itself whereby the process can be halted at varying stages. Moving on and without getting into detailed technicalities, the **2014 “Niklas K” Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Spatlese** displayed an intense bouquet of pronounced fruitiness, good acidity and balanced sweetness, lingering on the aftertaste, a worthy recipient of a Silver Medal. Incidentally, the names “Lucas K” and “Niklas K” are the two sons of Leo and Dorethee Kappes.....logical !!

Onto an earlier vintage and the **2013 Zeltinger Himmelreich Spatlese Trocken** from Weingut Ackermann displayed typical Himmelreich minerality on the nose (actually rather pleasant), good acidity and balance and a drier rather than sweetish “assault” on the palate. The rising quality of the wines was becoming obvious and most satisfying ! At this stage we were tempted by plates of appetisers, Oriental Prawns lightly spiced with chillies were certainly well received and went well with the Riesling. Staying with the 2013 vintage, we moved on to a different level, a **Zeltinger Himmelreich Auslese**, another offering from Weingut Ackermann, but moving up the sweetness/quality ladder one more rung. Only the best vines from the Ackermann vineyards on the Himmelreich are used for this wine and boy, did it show.....an intense bouquet of fruit, raisins and a touch of honey, on the palate good acidity and well balanced with a rich, lingering finish edging towards sweetness yet clean and not cloying. Certainly, for the writer, the most satisfying wine so far. But, we were yet to ascend to the heady heights of the best of Riesling wine production and boy, oh boy, were we in for an experience.

The penultimate tasting came from the best Mosel wine vintage since 1990, a **2001 Zeltinger Himmelreich Eiswein** with the grapes being picked on December 15th at minus 9C, the grapes harvested when frozen on the vines, resulting in concentrated juice with high sugar levels. With the skills of the winemaker this golden yellow wine with an intense nose, even a slight hint of sherry coming through, rich and satisfying on the palate yet despite the sweetness, the finish was clean, lingering and highly satisfying.....”heaven in a glass!” But wait, yet one more wine to tantalise our already overworked taste buds.....from yet another blindingly excellent vintage, the **2009 Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Trockenbeerenauslese** was more than just an experience, it was double heaven in a glass! Made from grapes affected by Botrytis, or Noble Rot, the juice in the grape dehydrates culminating in natural sugar levels of intense levels.....just don’t tell your dentist!! With a colour intensity approaching sherry (indeed Nicol initially thought that this wine had maderized) and an extremely rich bouquet of rich fruit and raisins, this wine with its concentrated sweetness was anything but cloying, it was very rich on the palate yet clean and complex with a lingering aftertaste that just went on and on!!!! A wine which commanded much work from Harald from very small yields deserves a commensurate pricing.....a hefty £31.90 per 0.375cl bottle, but what an experience!

The evening culminated with a typical Germanic dish although not of Mosel extraction but from Bavaria, a Schweinhaxe (Roasted Pork Knuckle) with lovely crackling, served with red cabbage and potato and having worked collectively through the small residues of tasting wines available, we further enjoyed a small selection of “quaffing” Rieslings from both producers, the repast being completed with Blue Stilton and chocolates which married well with the wine.

That the Tasting was well received was beyond doubt and our thanks both to Nicol for organising the supply of vinous culture and to both Leo and Harald in Zeltingen for their expertise in producing such exceptional wines from one of the best white wine grapes in the world, the Riesling. The resultant and substantial order is certainly testament to the quality of the wines of our friends in the Mosel. Another exemplary Goustevin evening.....good food, good wine and good company !!