



ALOIS KRACHER
SWEET WINE MAKER OF THE YEAR

Sweet wine aficionados are used to seeing this name in lights – 2001 has Alois Kracher collecting his fifth wine maker of the year award in less than a decade (white wine maker of the year 1994; late harvest wine maker of the year 1997 and 1998; sweet wine maker of the year 2000).

Kracher has never been shy of breaking convention. He began with only a part-time interest, maintaining a full-time job in the pharmaceutical industry while taking over from his father in the vineyard in 1981. Unbelievably, given his current domination of this category, he didn't commit himself fully to life as a dessert wine maker until 1991. Not bad progress.

Kracher also wins accolades for his red and white wines, and has recently established a joint venture with Manfred Krankl in California to experiment with Eiswein, among other things. At the moment, though, he still receives the loudest applause for his unctuous, botrytised Beerenauslese and Trockenbeerenauslese sweeties. He modestly attributes his success to the location and climate of his vineyards, and to having the benefit of his father's wine making expertise.

Situated in eastern Austria near Hungary, Kracher's vineyards lie close to the banks of the shallow Lake

PHOTOGRAPH: Herbert Lehmann/CEPHAS

Neusiedl, one of a series of 40-odd lakes in the region which provide the long, humid autumnal conditions ideal for noble rot, or the fungus *botrytis cinerea*. During cool autumn evenings, evaporation from the lakes creates a heavy fog, which covers the area until midday when the strong sunlight burns through. This 'annual gift' as he calls it, gives the region a unique microclimate that is ideal for the production of botrytis.

It takes rather more than good growing conditions to produce wines of this quality, however, and Kracher is not afraid to experiment. He blends Chardonnay and Welschriesling to create his 'Nouvelle Vague' (new wave) wines, which are fermented in new oak and based on aged varieties, while his 'Zwischen den Seen' (between the lakes) wines are more traditional,

vinified in old casks, designed to express the singularity of grapes such as Scheurebe and Traminer. The last category in his range is the 'Grand Cuvée', produced in the best vintages to represent the winery and the vintage as a wine with optimal concentration and balance.

Kracher is renowned for maintaining tight control over every step of his wine making process. He decides on a case-by-case basis which wines are suited to fermentation in which barrels, how much time

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each should spend on the lees, and whether wines should be racked into more new oak or stainless steel tanks.

His fans are just lucky that he didn't pay this same degree of attention to early critics, who in 1981 wrongly doubted the young Kracher's claims that one day his sweet wines would be among the best in the world. Critics are singing another tune now: Pierre-Antoine Rovani in Robert Parker's *Wine Buyer's Guide* cries: 'A few years ago, Alois Kracher burst into my life like an air-raid siren during a peaceful nap.' Quite...

SUCCESSES 2001

GOLD

Kracher Chardonnay
 Welschriesling TBA No.7

SILVER

Kracher Grand Cuvée TBA
 No.10 Nouvelle Vague 1998
 Kracher Traminer TBA No.8
 Nouvelle Vague 1998
 Kracher Welschriesling TBA
 No.11 Zwischen Den Seen
 Kracher Welschriesling TBA
 No.4 Nouvelle Vague 1998
 Kracher Welschriesling TBA
 No.6 Zwischen Den Seen
 Kracher Zweigelt Rosé TBA
 No.1 Nouvelle Vague 1998

BRONZE

Kracher Chardonnay TBA
 No.2 Nouvelle Vague 1998
 Kracher Muscat Ottonel TBA
 No.5 Zwischen Den Seen
 Kracher Scheurebe TBA
 No.12 Zwischen Den Seen
 Kracher Scheurebe TBA No.3
 Zwischen Den Seen 1998

SEAL OF APPROVAL

Kracher Chardonnay TBA
 No.13 Zwischen Den Seen
 Kracher Chardonnay TBA
 No.9 Nouvelle Vague 1998