



AUSTRIA'S TRIPLE THREAT

Current releases include muscular dry whites, elegant sweet whites and ripe reds by Bruce Sanderson

When I visited Austria in June 2000, it was hot and dry, and the growing season was already three to four weeks ahead of normal. The pattern held, resulting in ripe, muscular dry whites in 2000. Add to this the host of excellent reds and elegant dessert wines made in Burgenland in 1999, and wine lovers have excellent choices from three distinct Austrian wine styles among the country's current releases. Austria's dry whites, the country's most important wines, offer fine depth of flavor, power and length in 2000. At this youthful stage, they also exhibit a dense fleshiness that dominates the structure and obscures the differences among vineyard sites. As a

Opposite: Restaurant Danube in New York offers Austrian wines that are representative of the high quality and diversity found in recent vintages (from left): a dry Riesling from Kroll, a dry Grüner Veltliner from Nigl, a dessert wine from Kracher and Kracher's flagship red.

IF YOU ARE NEW TO THE FLAVORS OF AUSTRIAN WINES, THE RANGE OF STYLES AND QUALITY CURRENTLY AVAILABLE IS BETTER THAN EVER, SO THERE'S PLENTY TO TRY.

group, they are ripe and full-bodied, with the Rieslings showing a bit more definition than do the Grüner Veltliners.

"The wines from 2000 are soot and very concentrated, like the 1997s. The aging potential is about 15 to 20 years for [my] Riesling and Veltliner Privat," says Martin Nigl, winemaker at Weingut Familie Nigl, in Kremstal. Nigl's Riesling Kremstal Privat 2000 (94 points, \$52) was the top dry white in my tasting, and its Grüner Veltliner Kremstal Privat 2000 (93, \$37) is also a beauty. It is multidimensional, with power and concentration, but it needs time to show its stuff.

Joining Nigl in the top ranks is Knoll's sleek Riesling Smaragd Trocken Wachau Ried Lobenberg 2000 (92, \$50), which bursts with peach and mineral flavors. Hitzberger's Riesling Smaragd Trocken Wachau Spitzberg 2000 (92, \$75) exhibits elegance, harmony and exotic fruit, and FX Pichler's Riesling Smaragd Trocken Wachau Dürnsteiner Kellerberg 2000 (92, \$90) packs intensity. Pichler also fields a pair of outstanding Grüner Veltliners: Both the Smaragd Wachau Dürnsteiner Kellerberg 2000 (93, \$60) and Smaragd Wachau Lobner Berg 2000 (92, \$53) display the power and elegance typical of the Pichler style.

These are just a few of the highlights of more than 285 Austrian wines blind-tasted in Wine Spectator's New York office during the past year. Dry whites, at 195 tasted, comprise the bulk of the samples.

Of those, 81 are Grüner Veltliners and 62 are Rieslings. Sweet dessert wines, which represent an important component of Austrian wine, number 56, leaving 35 reds to make up the remaining wines.

Prices have held steady for the 2000s. Austria's fourth excellent vintage in a row. The best Riesling and Grüner Veltliner Smaragds (the ripest level in the dry style) and their equivalents cost, on average, from \$40 to \$75 (but can command nearly \$100). Fine Austrian reds generally fall into the \$15 to \$45 range, while the sweet elixirs begin as low as \$10 for a 375ml bottle, but can reach the \$75 to \$100 level.

Austria's four wine regions cover the eastern portion of the country. Most of the regions are within a few hours' drive from Vienna, and a wine region whose suburbs contain more than 1,800 acres of vineyards. The largest region is Niederösterreich, which surrounds Vienna. It contains the important appellations of Wachau, rising steeply from the banks of the river Danube west of Vienna, Kremstal to its east, and nearby Kamptal, Langenloiser Kellerberg 2000 (91, \$18), which comes from a mix of less and clay over primary rock, shows more elegance, yet exhibits power and intensity, too.

From Kremstal, if you can't find Nigl, both the E. & M. Berger Riesling Kremstal Gledersdorfer Steingasse 2000 (91, \$22) and Mantler's Grüner Veltliner Kremstal Gledersdorfer Weingasse 2000

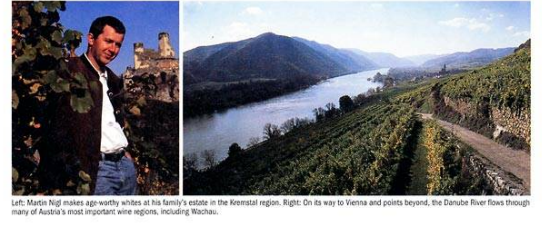
pick, veal and poultry, but also work well with rich seafood dishes. Grüner Veltliner's attractive herbaceousness is able to hold its own with herb-infused cuisine.

I was also impressed with the wines of Schloss Gobelsburg, a property on the pulse thanks to its Grüner Veltliner Kamptal Kammerer Renner 2000 (90, \$23), an elegant display of grapefruit and lemon flavors, and the silky, mineral- and licorice-laden Riesling Kamptal Kammerer Gaisberg 2000 (90, \$25).

Also from Kamptal, Willi Brundlmayer works his magic, crafting a dense and monolithic Grüner Veltliner Kamptal Ahe Reben 2000 (91, \$40) and mineral-infused Riesling Kamptal Zobingener Heiligenstein Layer 2000 (91, \$46). Lira denotes use of the lyre trellis system, which utilizes a double-foliage curtain that is open in the center to sunlight.

Loener delivers a one-two punch with a Riesling and a Grüner Veltliner. Its Riesling Kamptal Langenloiser Seebach 2000 (91, \$19) derives its firm structure from the vineyard's primary rocky soils, while the Grüner Veltliner Kamptal Langenloiser Kellerberg 2000 (91, \$18), which comes from a mix of less and clay over primary rock, shows more elegance, yet exhibits power and intensity, too.

From Kremstal, if you can't find Nigl, both the E. & M. Berger Riesling Kremstal Gledersdorfer Steingasse 2000 (91, \$22) and Mantler's Grüner Veltliner Kremstal Gledersdorfer Weingasse 2000



Left: Martin Nigl makes age-worthy whites at his family's estate in the Kremstal region. Right: On its way to Vienna and points beyond, the Danube River flows through many of Austria's most important wine regions, including Wachau.

Bruce Sanderson's Top-Scoring Wines From Austria

For complete reviews, see this and previous Buying Guides or our Web site at www.winespectator.com. An alphabetical listing of all wines tasted for this report begins on page 103 of this issue's Buying Guide.

WINE	SCORE	PRICE	WINE	SCORE	PRICE
KRACHER Trockenbeerenauslese Neudesselfence	98	\$55	WILLI OPITZ Gewürztraminer Trockenbeerenauslese	93	\$65
Grande Cuvée Novelle Vague No. 10 1998		/\$375ml	Neudesselfence 1999		/\$375ml
Concentrated, yet ethereal, with apricot, caramel, vanilla flavors, velvety texture, vibrant acidity. Smoky finish.			Rich, with nuances of honey and citrus, plus smoke and crème brûlée. Its lushness is balanced by starchy acidity.		
KRACHER Chardonnay Trockenbeerenauslese	97	\$75	F.X. PICHLER Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Trocken	93	\$60
Neudesselfence Novelle Vague No. 13 1998		/\$375ml	Wachau Dürnsteiner Kellerberg 2000		
Concentrated, yet ethereal, with apricot, caramel, vanilla flavors, velvety texture, vibrant acidity. Smoky finish.			Subtle character of crushed citrus, pineapple and mineral, with moderately firm structure and creamy texture. Powerful.		
KRACHER Weissriesling Trockenbeerenauslese	96	\$70	FRANZ HIRTZBERGER Riesling Smaragd Trocken	92	\$75
Neudesselfence Zischauer Ort 11 1998		/\$275ml	Wachau Spitzberg 2000		
Combines sweetness, uncanny texture, racy structure with dried apricot, caramel, orange marmalade, Indian spices.			Rich, ripe and fleshy, with apricot, orange and stone notes in a full-bodied frame. Good acidity undercools all.		
KNOLL Grüner Veltliner Trockenbeerenauslese	94	\$115	KNOLL Riesling Smaragd Trocken Wachau	92	\$50
Wachau Lobner 1999		/\$300ml	Ried Lobenberg 2000		
Racy in structure, with intense apricot and passion fruit flavors, but balance, class and length. Silky texture.			Ripe, aromatic, with peach, smoke and mineral building to a lingering finish. Sleek structure melds with dense texture.		
KNOLL Riesling Qualitätswein Trocken	94	\$52	BRÜTLER Qualitätswein Trocken	92	\$45
Kremstal Privat 2000			Perwé 1999		
Youthful, yet with ripe peach, apricot, citrus, steely structure has a raw edge, but also concentration. Needs only time.			Fine flavors of raspberry and citrus, with underlying meat and mineral notes. Firm structure. Vanilla finish.		
KNOLL Grüner Veltliner Qualitätswein Trocken	93	\$37	F.X. PICHLER Riesling Smaragd Trocken Wachau	92	\$90
Kremstal Privat 2000			Dürnsteiner Kellerberg 2000		
Round and rich, with peach, lanolin and grapefruit on a creamy, well-defined structure. Powerful and concentrated.			Smells great, with hot stone, peach and spice on a rich, firm frame. Powerful, with a remarkable note near the finish.		
NITTAUS Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese	93	\$31			
Burgenland 1998		/\$375ml			
Appealing vegetal aroma, with grape and citrus. High-toned, yet intense and focused. Terebic, citrus aftertaste.					

Bruce Sanderson's Best-Value Wines From Austria

For complete reviews, see this and previous Buying Guides or our Web site at www.winespectator.com. An alphabetical listing of all wines tasted for this report begins on page 103 of this issue's Buying Guide.

WINE	SCORE	PRICE	WINE	SCORE	PRICE
MANTLERHOF Grüner Veltliner Qualitätswein	90	\$13	MALAT Grüner Veltliner Qualitätswein	87	\$10
Trocken Kremstal Gledersdorfer Weingasse 2000			Trocken Kremstal Weingasse 2000		
Cool and reserved on the nose, with floral, mint, apple notes on a crest of acidity to a lingering finish. Dense and long.			Very young and fresh, with floral, peach and mineral flavors on a saucy, starchy structure.		
GERNET HENRICH Zweigelt Qualitätswein	89	\$15	WOHLMUTH Pinot Gris Qualitätswein Trocken	87	\$14
Trocken Neudesselfence 2000			Süddeutscher Gammes 2000		
Flooding yet velvety, with blackberry and raspberry in a bright structure. Sweet, mouthcoating texture, long finish.			Juicy apple and pear flavors on a rich yet finely structured frame. Fine intensity from start to finish.		
WIENINGER Grüner Veltliner Qualitätswein	89	\$13	HÖPLER Grüner Veltliner Qualitätswein	86	\$10
Trocken Wien Heerenholz 2000			Trocken Burgenland 2000		
Elegant, showing grapefruit, spice, licorice and mineral on a finely structured, rich frame.			Aromatic, smoldering of flowers and grass. Crisp and juicy, on a light-bodied frame. Good length.		
WEINBERGHOF FRITSCH Zweigelt Qualitätswein	88	\$15	DINNSTIGL LOIBEN Grüner Veltliner Kabinett	86	\$13
Trocken Donaudorf Classic 2000			Trocken Wachau Lobner Schütz 2000		
Young, lithe cherry and plum flavors supported by vibrant acidity and firm, chewy texture. Earthy and mineral finish.			Elegant and balanced, with a cool, minty nose. Tobacco and almond play supporting roles.		
W. GLATZER Grüner Veltliner Qualitätswein	87	\$15	ERICH SALOMONWEINGUT UNDHOFF Grüner Veltliner	86	\$11
Trocken Carnuntum Domestvogel 2000			Qualitätswein Trocken Kremstal Hochstrassen 2000		
Stoic, with apple, peach and grapefruit flavors veined in by racy acidity at the end.			Dense, tauting of herbs and grapefruit, supported by racy acidity. Has the structure for light dishes.		
HÖPLER Riesling Qualitätswein Trocken Burgenland 2000	87	\$11	WOHLMUTH Chardonnay Qualitätswein	86	\$15
Trocken Süsselturm Sammus 2000			Trocken Süddeutscher Sammus 2000		
Smells of citrus, settling down on the palate with apple, peach and mineral on a racy structure.			Crisp, clean, classic Chardonnay with apple and lemon flavors on a firm, light-bodied frame.		

