

Other producers delivering outstanding quality at solid prices include Birgit Eichinger, with the Riesling Kamptal Heiligenstein Reserve 2013 (92, \$35), offering powerful minerality and luscious white fruit flavors; Allram, whose Grüner Veltliner Kamptal Hasel Alte Reben 2012 (92, \$37) shows spicy white fruit flavors, with a finish of cream, lanolin and sage; and Rainer Wess, which made the Riesling Qualitätswein Trocken Kremstal Pfaffenberg Reserve 2013 (91, \$36), with rich flavors of baked apple, peach and melon.

At even lower prices, look for Martin & Anna Arndorfer's Grüner Veltliner Qualitätswein Trocken Kamptal Strasser Weinberge Reserve 2013 (91, \$18), Malat's Grüner Veltliner Qualitätswein Trocken Kremstal Göttweiger Berg 2012 (91, \$20), Nigl's Grüner Veltliner Qualitätswein Trocken Kremstal Freiheit 2013 (89, \$21), Willi Bründlmayer's Riesling Qualitätswein Trocken Kamptal Kamptaler Terrassen 2012 (92, \$25), and Hiedler's Grüner Veltliner Qualitätswein Trocken Kamptal Thal 2013 (91, \$28).

In the Wachau, one of Austria's best winemakers, Toni Bodenstein of Weingut Prager, is also a passionate voice for change. Prager's pride and joy is the Wachstum Bodenstein, the winery's highest vineyard. It rests at 1,500 feet of altitude on terraces that provide a panorama of the well-tended Wachau.

First planted in 1998, the vineyard contains both Grüner and Riesling. For Riesling, Bodenstein draws on 25 cuttings drawn from three sources: two from Alsace, four from the Wachau and the rest from Germany. These are not clones—replicas of successful mother vines bred for specific attributes. Instead, these vines have been propagated directly in the vineyard, and Bodenstein views them as a genetic reservoir of quality and diversity in Austria.

"We have only one rootstock and one clone, and this is dangerous for the next generation," Bodenstein says. "We have no science of rootstocks, so I fight for different selections." His warning of future genetic perils is based on what he sees as industry norms in the country that value productivity and consistency in vine sources over diversity.

Besides dry whites, Austria excels with dessert-style sweet wines from the shores of the shallow Neusiedlersee lake in Burgenland, southeast of Vienna. The leading producer is Kracher, which makes a wide range of botrytis-affected wines that rank among the world's top sweet whites. The best of the current crop is the classic-rated Scheurebe Trockenbeerenauslese Burgenland Zwischen den Seen No. 3 2012 (95, \$111/375ml), which is lush and rich-tasting, with concentrated flavors of pear tart, ripe apple and butterscotch.

Austria also makes red wines, but their production is small compared with that of the country's whites; they represent less than 20



Kamptal winemaker Birgit Eichinger strikes a sweet spot of value and quality with an outstanding Riesling from the Heiligenstein mountain.

percent of the wines tasted in this report. The best come from regions south of Vienna, which benefit from the warm weather that sweeps in from the Pannonian Plain, extending from neighboring Hungary. Pinot Noir from Burgenland can excel, such as with the elegant and refined Höppler Burgenland 2012 (90, \$22). The native Austrian red grape Blaufränkisch delivers solid values as well, such as the Markowitsch Carnuntum 2012 (89, \$17), minerally and robust, with snappy flavors of berry and plum.

Austria faces some challenges ahead. The 2014 vintage started warm and dry, but untimely rains fell during harvest in September and October. Botrytis spread in many vineyards, and winegrowers had to be extremely choosy to harvest quality grapes. Rot reduced yields by up to one-third of normal averages at some estates in the Danube valley.

Despite the hurdles, the best of Austria's vintners seem prepared to deliver many juicy, fruity whites even from this difficult year, aided by the diversity of growing sites they can tap and their own time-honored and well-honed skills.

Managing editor Kim Marcus is Wine Spectator's lead taster on the wines of Austria.

Rating White Wine Vintages in Austria

2013	92	Vintners needed to work hard to overcome a wet harvest. Small crop produced open-textured, powerful and rich-tasting whites from the best vineyard sites	Drink or hold
2012	90	Hard frost in the spring and drought cut yields. Creamy, full-bodied Grüns; well-structured Rieslings	Drink or hold
2011	90	An easy-to-drink vintage with open-knit Gruner Veltliners; Kremstal performs well	Drink or hold
2010	89	A cool, difficult growing season delivered taut Rieslings and plush Gruner Veltliners; extremely low yields	Drink or hold
2009	92	Fresh and pure-tasting Rieslings and Gruner Veltliners that are primed to age well	Drink or hold
2008	94	Cool and wet summer, but ideal weather at harvest. Monumental Rieslings from the Wachau; lean, powerful Gruner Veltliners	Drink or hold

A score range indicates preliminary analysis based on a limited sampling; many wines of the vintage not yet reviewed.

Vintage ratings: 95-100, classic; 90-94, outstanding; 85-89, very good; 80-84, good; 75-79, mediocre; 50-74, not recommended. Drinkability: "NYR" means most of the wines of the vintage are not yet released; "drink" means most of the wines of the vintage are ready to drink; "hold" means most of the ageworthy wines have yet to fully mature.

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