

VIEW FROM THE CELLAR

By John Gilman

*May-June 2018
Five*

Number Seventy-

Weingut Max Ferdinand Richter (Mülheim)

Weingut Max Ferdinand Richter was an estate that I really knew next to nothing about prior to this trip in May, as I had tasted a wine of theirs here or there over the last decade or so, 88 but really had never planned to visit the property and had no real sense of where in the firmament of Middle Mosel stars they might fall. However, during one of the early press tastings associated with Mythos Mosel, David Rayer, Jean Fisch and I were chatting and Jean mentioned this estate and said that he felt I would really like the style of the wines here these days. As Jean and David (who write the Mosel Fine Wines report) are about as up to date on goings on in this beautiful wine country as anyone, I took their suggestion seriously and made a note to make sure I visited the winery during the Mythos Mosel tastings over the coming weekend. Happily, they were one of the hosting wineries for the weekend and had a fine range of wines available to sample. The estate is in the midst of a generational change, as long-time proprietor Dirk Richter has been slowly handing over the winemaking reins here to his son, Constantin, and the wines are really excellent examples of the Middle Mosel. The family estate has been in the Richter hands for more than three hundred years now, as an ancestor of the Richters managed somehow to keep Napoleon out of their town of Mülheim during the French conquest of this part of Germany in the early nineteenth century, and consequently, they have been able to keep the family vineyard legacy intact. The Richters farm seventeen and a half hectares of vines here in the heart of the middle Mosel, with vineyards in their home village of Mülheim augmented by fine plots in some of the most famous vineyards in the area: Graacher Himmelreich and Domprobst, Wehlener Sonnenuhr and Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr... Weingut Max Ferdinand Richter is a superb producer of classically filigreed, terroir-driven middle Mosel Rieslings (which I should have known about before) and I can recommend them very highly. From what I have seen of their pricing, they offer up exceptional value! Based on the lovely range I have now tasted of their 2017s, 2016s and 2015s, this is an estate that will definitely be on my regularly-scheduled winery visits in future spring tours of the Middle Mosel.

2017 Mülheimer Sonnenlay “Zeppelin” QbA- Richter AP #14

The Zeppelin label bottling of QbA from the Sonnenlay vineyard is the estate Riesling bottling from Max Ferdinand Richter. The 2017 comes in at ten percent alcohol and is sealed under screwcap. The wine shows a lovely spiciness on the nose, offering up scents of apple, a touch of fresh pineapple, salty minerality and a topnote of lemongrass. On the palate the wine is crisp, medium-full and zesty, with lovely mineral drive, a good core and fine focus and grip on the long and bouncy finish. I would guess the residual sugar here is just over the minimum for Trocken in 2017, but it balances the good acids of the vintage perfectly and the overall impression is of a quite dry wine. Good juice. **(89 points)**

2017 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Kabinett

The 2017 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Kabinett from Dirk and Constantin Richter is utterly classic and will age long and gracefully. The pure and vibrant nose jumps from the glass in a blend of pear, white cherry, a lovely base of slate minerality, a dollop of wild yeasts, incipient notes of vanilla bean and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, medium bodied and light on its feet, with fine filigree and focus, ripe, vibrant acids and a long, complex and weightless finish. Classic Kabinett from one of Germany’s greatest terroirs. **(92+ points)**

2017 Veldenzer Elisenberger Riesling Kabinett

The village of Veldenz lies just a bit back from the river front, behind the villages of Brauneberg and Mülheim. Consequently, the base of soil in the Elisenberger vineyard is quartzite, rather than grey slate. This is a monopole of the Richter family and the vines here are forty to fifty years of age. The vineyard has produced a lovely Kabinett in 2017, offering up a complex aromatic constellation of apple, white cherries, a touch of herb tones, bee pollen and a lovely base of salty minerality. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and flat out delicious out of the blocks, with lovely intensity of flavor, impressive focus and grip and a long, complex and zesty finish. This is a tad more fruit-driven in personality than the Wehlener Sonnenuhr Kabinett, but it too is a lovely example of Kabinett. **(91 points)**

2017 Brauneberg Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese

The estate’s vines in this great vineyard range from forty to fifty years of age and they have produced a fine Spätlese in 2017. The nose is pure and classic in profile, offering up scents of pear, white cherry, a hint of the mirabelle to come, a fine base of salty slate, bee pollen and a nice touch of herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bouncy and classic in flavor profile, with fine depth at the core, ripe acids, impeccable balance and outstanding cut and lift on the long and complex finish. Fine, fine juice. **(93 points)**

2016 Brauneberg Juffer Riesling Kabinett Trocken

The 2016 Juffer Kabinett Trocken from the Richter family is a lovely, delicate wine, coming in at eleven percent octane and carrying seven grams per liter of residual sugar. It offers up a fine bouquet of lime, apple, a fine base of slate, a touch of Brauneberg’s gentle herb tones and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is crisp, fullish and nicely focused, with a good core, fine balance and grip, bright acids and excellent grip on the long and nascently complex finish. Good juice. **(90+ points)**

2016 Graacher Domprobst “Alte Reben”

Constantin Richter raises ferments and raises his Alte Reben dry bottlings all in fuder and the 2016ers were bottled in September of 2017, after an extended elevage. The 2016 from the Domprobst vineyard in Graach finished at twelve percent alcohol and five percent residual sugar and is a lovely wine in the making. The nose wafts from the glass in a fine mix of blood orange, apple, citrus peel, wild yeasts and a fine base of slate minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and youthfully complex, with a good core, fine focus and grip, zesty acids and a long, pure and still fairly youthful finish. This was tasted at Mythos Mosel on a steamy afternoon, and perhaps I have underrated it just a tad under the less than ideal conditions. But, there is depth and promise here and I would not be surprised if the wine ends up a point or so higher down the road. A fine bottle. **(92 points)**

2016 Mülheimer Sonnenlay “Alte Reben” Feinherb

The Sonnenlay is the top vineyard site in the village of Mülheim, which lies next door to Brauneberg. The 2016 Alte Reben from this vineyard was best balanced with just a touch over Trocken levels of residual sugar, hence its Feinherb designation, but it is essentially still a dry Riesling and a lovely bottle in the making. The bouquet delivers a fine blend of tart orange, apple, a bit of wild yeasts, a lovely base of slate and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and shows just a blush of sweetness on the attack, with a fine core, zesty acids and excellent focus and balance on the long and promising finish. As was the case with the above wine, this was tasted at Mythos Mosel and it may be even a shade better than my score. It is a bit more open out of the blocks than the Domprobst Alte Reben bottling, and every bit as promising. **(91+ points)**

2016 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Kabinett AP #24

The 2016 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Kabinett from Max Ferdinand Richter is a lovely example of the vintage and its Prädikat, offering up a complex nose of apple, a touch of wild yeasts, vanilla bean, slate, spring flowers and a bit of petrol in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, crisp and juicy at the core, with lovely lightness of step, bright acids and fine backend mineral drive on the long, well-balanced and complex finish. This has the focus and filigree of classic Kabinett and is already a pleasure to drink, but it will age very nicely and probably be even better six to ten years down the road. **(90 points)**

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2016 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Auslese AP #7

The 2016 Himmelreich Auslese from Max Ferdinand Richter is excellent on both the nose and palate. The classic bouquet jumps from the glass in a blend of pineapple, apple, a nice touch of honeycomb, orange zest, a nice touch of minerality and a topnote of lilac blossoms. On the

palate the wine is pure, fullish and filigreed, with a lovely glossiness of sweet fruit on the attack, a good core, bright, zesty acids and fine focus and grip on the long, complex and dancing finish. This is a lovely, quite delicately styled bottle of Auslese. **(93 points)**

2015 Graacher Domprobst “Alte Reben” AP #35

The 2015 version of Domprobst “Alte Reben” from the Richter family tips the scales at eleven percent alcohol, so it is a touch leaner than the lovely 2016 version. The wine delivers a complex aromatic constellation of peach, hints of mirabelle, lovely smokiness, a fine base of slate, dried flowers and a hint of the beeswax tones to come with further bottle age. On the palate the wine is crisp, fullish and beautifully balanced, with a fine core of fruit, excellent soil signature, bright, ripe acids and a long, complex and perfectly focused finish. This is a superb bottle of dry Riesling that is already starting to drink nicely, but clearly will age long and gracefully. **(93 points)**

2015 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Kabinett-

The lovely 2015 Himmelreich Kabinett from Max Ferdinand Richter was served from magnum for the opening night festivities of Mythos Mosel, amongst dozens and dozens of superb magnums supplied by all of the participating wineries in the weekend festival. This wine was showing just beautifully out of magnum, offering up an excellent and utterly classic bouquet of lime, apple, a lovely base of minerality, orange zest and a topnote of fruit blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, pure and filigreed, with crisp acids, excellent focus and grip and a long, crystalline and classy finish. Classic Kabinett. **(92+ points)**

