

Summary of Feedback from IMW/VDP Grosses Gewächs Tasting October 17th, 2019

This was the first time that the VDP organisation had presented this tasting outside Germany. 125 of Germany's top dry wines were presented, divided into 25 different flights. Reaction to the format, whereby individual, seated tasters can select exactly which flights they would like to taste, was universally positive: one taster was delighted by the "concentrated and uninterrupted focus" afforded by this format and another called the "organisation flawless". All were most grateful to the VDP for providing this wonderful tasting opportunity - over 70 people attended the event, including importers, merchants, sommeliers and press.

All tasters found much to like and admire. Most of the wines were from the 2018 vintage (whites) or 2017 vintage (reds) but the presence of one or two other vintages provided useful comparison. Mosel was the region most often highlighted as excelling, closely followed by Nahe and Rheingau. Not surprisingly, Riesling received high praise, but there were also highly positive comments about the other grapes presented, including Sylvaner, Weissburgunder, Grauburgunder, Spätburgunder and Lemberger. Over and over again, tasters commented enthusiastically on the privilege of being able to compare the same grape not only from different regions but also from different, often neighbouring sites. As one participant stated, "Burgundy is often touted as being the place one thinks of as terroir focussed, however it seems Germany is king of terroir!"

Not surprisingly given the number of MW's and MW students attending, there were critical notes too. Amongst the whites, the main topic of debate was the level of reduction in some of the wines, what the producers often call "sponti". Some tasters were clearly in favour whereas others saw it as an obstacle to expression of site personality. Certainly, as with so many of wine's stylistic quirks, some tasters have a greater tolerance for reduction than others. One taster commented on the varying levels of ripeness and botrytis on the wines and concluded, whilst admitting to misquoting Ecclesiastes: "To every Riesling there is a season: a time for crystalline citric purity, and a time for luscious peachy richness."

All tasters commented favourably on the "world-class" Spätburgunders, with some stunning examples from Baden, Franken and Württemberg. The only reservation here was the level of oakiness, with some finding it too intrusive on certain wines. Mind you, these are still young wines.

It was impressive to see that three VDP producers had come over to support the event, one of whom (Carl Von Schubert from the Maximin Grünhaus estate) eagerly took the opportunity to join the tasting. Thanks too to Steffen Christmann, President of the VDP, for hosting an evening reception for MW's and other guests. Overall, an extremely well received tasting which all would very much like to see become a more regular, even annual event.