

# THE BUYER

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## One day all wine tastings will be as efficient as the VDP's GG tasting

It was a day of firsts. It was the first time that the VDP Grosses Gewächs 2019 tasting had been held outside Germany. It was the first time that this 'Sneak Preview' of the dry wines of the new vintage had been hosted by the Institute of Masters of Wine. But, most importantly, it was the first time that us British wine hacks had been subjected on our home turf to the process and efficiency of the VDP's brilliant tasting procedures. Peter Dean was there to experience a little welcome Vorsprung Durch Technik being injected into the wine tasting system and gives a few pointers as to which wines were firing on all cylinders.



By [Peter Dean](#) October 27, 2019

**Bad vintages hit Germany as often as football defeats to England and 2018 is no exception, this is a truly exceptional vintage offering a wide spectrum for the wine lover. Yields were also up compared to 2017 in all regions, with the percentage increase as high as 45% in some.**

“Welcome to the first VDP ‘sneak preview’ tasting to be held outside Germany,” Richard Bampfield MW began, “and welcome to see how a wine tasting could be put on... with real German process and efficiency.”

Although most racial stereotypes now remain unspoken, the one equating Germany with efficiency, congratulatory as it is, will continue unabated for some time one imagines. It certainly ought to be based on the experience of the VDP Grosses Gewächs 2019 tasting.

Never before have I been to a wine tasting where it is possible to concentrate 100% on the wines themselves and not have to use elbows, queue, or dodge the wine-spitting of those hacks who think it is big and clever to hit the spittoon from two metres away; although let's be fair it is quite big and clever.

## We have ways of making you taste



So how did it work? Well we were all given our tasting booklet and Tasting Procedures sheet on entering the room at the Army & Navy Club, a brave military choice of venue methought. We were allocated a number, an order pad and a tasting booklet in which the 125 wines were ordered into 25 flights according to vineyard site. All regions and varieties were covered in a most intuitive fashion *natürlich*.

To order a flight one simply had to write your seat number and flight number on a sheet from the pad, hold it aloft as if you were playing Bingo and one of about 20 waiters would whisk it away only to return seconds later with your perfectly-prepared wines in a bottle carrier, pour them in exact tasting amounts, in order, and silently disappear, with great speed and efficiency. It was like being in a sommelier-style competition for milkmen.



“Four bottles of Kabinett for No.5. And a packet of Water Biscuits.”

I managed to get through the wines in two and a half silent, studied hours, write my notes, press flesh on the way in and out. Perfect. It was like sitting your Finals but with more alcohol.

## Scores on the doors



VDP managing director Hilke Nagel at the London tasting

I confess to being a huge fan of German wine and the German people. I own more German wine than I can safely consume in this life, and possibly the next, so it is no surprise to find that I thought the wines were of a very high rank... or standard. After all, bad vintages hit Germany as often as football defeats to England.

2018 has been a truly exceptional vintage for German wine with the drought not causing too many issues, except a slight lessening of acidity. The quality offers a wide spectrum for the wine lover, from very promising sparkling base wines to fabulous Beeren- and Trockenbeerenauslese wines. Yields were also up compared to 2017 in all regions, with the percentage increase as high as 45% in some. In the Mosel yields were up 30% and the quality is fabulous with rich aroma, harmonious structure with moderate acidity levels and elegant, juicy fruitiness.

The (dry) wines at the tasting, then, from the 200 elite vintners of the VDP were pretty much all outstanding, making this a vintage buyers should 'go long' on. All wines we tasted were true of their variety and region, the only possible disappointment being the Spätburgunders which were uneven as a group and whose youth gave rise, in some wines, to some unattractiveness on the palate, although those could well disappear with time. The best one showing was from 2015.

So here's my Top 10 VDP Grosses Gewächs 2019 (in no particular order)

All wines are dry, and all wines are Riesling unless mentioned.

**Fritz Haag, Brauneberg Juffer-Sonnenuhr, Mosel, 2018**  
**Maximin Grünhaus von Schubert, Mertesdorf, Abtsberg, Mosel 2018**  
**Maximin Grünhaus von Schubert, Mertesdorf, Herrenberg, Mosel 2018**  
**Peter Lauer, Ayl Kupp, Mosel, 2018**  
**Robert Weil, Kiedrich Gräfenberg, Rheingau, 2018**  
**Dönnhoff, Niederhausen Hermannshöhle, Nahe, 2018**  
**Emrich-Schönleber, Monzingen Halenberg, Nahe, 2018**  
**Philipp Kuhn, Laumersheim Kirschgarten, Pfalz, 2018**  
**Dr. Bürklin-Wolf, Forst Ungeheuer G.C., Pfalz, 2017**  
**Siegrist, Leinsweller Sonnenberg, Pfalz, 2015, *Spätburgunder***

The VDP promised us that if this tasting was a success then the experiment would be repeated next year. I don't think I am the only at the event who has already marked it in their diary.