ROOTED IN QUALITY
WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO
What is the VDP?

Germany's elite estates

200 Wine Growers 13 Wine Regions

VDP.GROSSE LAGE® Authentic Wines

Varietal Eagle and Grapes Bottle Capsule

Origin Passion Site Classification

13 Wine Regions Handmade in Germany

VDP.GROSSES GEWÄCHS® High Quality Standards

VDP.ERSTE LAGE® Innovative Wines

200 Wine GROWERS VDP.ORTSWEIN

INDIVIDUALISTS ORIGIN ASSOCIATION FOUNDED 1910

TRADITION Eagle and Grapes Bottle Capsule

VDP.GUTSWEIN Artisanal
The VDP Traubenadler logo (a stylized eagle bearing a cluster of grapes) on the bottle capsule is the seal of approval for VDP wines. It stands for artisanal wine production from excellent vineyards.

**PREREQUISITES FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE VDP**

- Only estate owners are eligible to become members. They must possess appropriate winegrowing and cellar facilities
- Viticulture, viniculture and marketing are all managed and executed in-house by qualified professional personnel
- Cultivation of the finest vineyards, as determined by soil topography and microclimate
- Reduced harvest yields to boost quality (max. 75 hl/ha* for the estate average)
- Production of traditional varieties typical for the region, especially Riesling, Silvaner and the Pinot family
- Focus on natural techniques to promote greater distinctiveness in the wines
- Mandatory manual harvest for VDP.ERSTE LAGE® and VDP.GROSSE LAGE® classifications as well as for wines at Prädikat levels from Auslese to Eiswein.

**ROUTINE AUDIT OF OPERATIONS...**

...to ensure compliance with VDP statutes. Operations at each member estate are audited beginning when they are first admitted into the VDP and at 5 year intervals thereafter.

* We work in and with nature and are often left captive to the whims of the weather. For this reason, we do upon occasion allow vintage-specific regional exceptions to our statutes if the conditions demand it. Among the factors taken into account are the steepness of the vineyards and the number of planted vines.

Read more at: www.vdp.de/en/vdp
## DATES – FACTS – FIGURES

### YEAR OF FOUNDING
1910

### MEMBERS
197 winegrowing estates from each of Germany’s winegrowing regions

### POSITIONING
- Harvest yields: approx. 3% of the German wine harvest
- Vineyard holdings: approx. 5% of Germany’s land under vine (5,260 ha)
- Revenue: approx. 7.5% of total German wine sales

### STATISTICAL AVERAGES FOR VDP.ESTATES
- Land under vine: 26.5 hectares
- Bottles / year: 171,000
- Revenues / year: approx. €1.63 mn

### RIESLING EXPERTISE
- 23% of Germany’s hectares under vine are planted with Riesling
- Within the VDP, 55% of all vineyards are planted with Riesling
- These 2,893 ha correspond to 5% of the global Riesling production and 12% of Germany’s Riesling vineyards

### ABOVE-AVERAGE SHARE OF ORGANIC VINICULTURE
- Germany boasts 8,100 ha of organic agriculture: 22% of that area belong to VDP estates
- Within the VDP, approx. 1,116 ha of organically tended vineyards are spread across 50 estates (some currently still transitioning).
- One quarter of VDP estates follow organic guidelines, and the trend is increasing.
  
  **Source:** Statistisches Bundesamt March 2014

### GROWTH
- 1990: VDP counts 161 estate members
- Since then: 128 new members and 92 departures
- 2017: 197 estates are members of the VDP

### SALES FIGURES
- Revenue volumes for all VDP. estates totalled roughly €323 mn, on sales of approx. 34 mn bottles
- 42% of VDP wines are marketed directly to consumers
- Another 35% are sold via specialized retailers
- Restaurants represent the remaining 17%
- 77% of VDP wines are sold domestically, with the remaining 23% exported
- Half of those exports are dry wines

### VDP.GROSSES GEWÄCHS® / 2015 VINTAGE (RED: 2014):
- Approx. 5% of VDP production, approx. 1,700,000 bottles
- Average price € 32.00 per bottle

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**Read more at:**  [www.vdp.de/en/vdp/zahlen-daten-fakten](http://www.vdp.de/en/vdp/zahlen-daten-fakten)
THE FOUR TIERS OF VDP.CLASSIFICATION

The VDP.Classification system is based on the association’s statutes. A wine’s quality is defined based on its terroir, here meant as its specific origins as linked to a tightly defined set of quality criteria.

For the VDP.estates, the vineyard is the definitive quality criterion. Classification is made based on the principle: "The narrower the origin, the higher the quality."

A SYSTEM FOR WINE CULTURE DEFINED BY ORIGIN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VDP.GROSSE LAGE®</th>
<th>DRY: VDP.GROSSES GEWÄCHS®</th>
<th>NATURALLY &amp; NOBLY SWEET: Classic Prädikat levels*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VDP.ERSTE LAGE®</td>
<td>DRY: Qualitatswein</td>
<td>NATURALLY &amp; NOBLY SWEET: Classic Prädikat levels*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VDP.ORTSWEIN</td>
<td>DRY: Qualitatswein**</td>
<td>NATURALLY &amp; NOBLY SWEET: Qualitätswein &amp; classic Prädikat levels*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VDP.GUTSWEIN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The classic Prädikat levels are: Kabinett, Spätlese, Auslese, Beerenauslese, Trockenbeerenauslese, Eiswein
** During a transition period, the Gutswein level may also be labelled as Kabinett trocken or Spätlese trocken.

The VDP.philosophy combines the best components of the Bordeaux and Burgundy classification systems. Bordeaux classifies its estates; Burgundy classifies each vineyard’s specific sites. The classification process within the VDP is conducted as part of a strict operational audit performed when an estate is accepted as a member and every 5 years thereafter. The classification of origins, namely as VDP.GUTSWEIN, VDP.ORTSWEIN, VDP.ERSTE LAGE® or VDP.GROSSE LAGE®, reflects an assessment of the quality of the terroir following the internationally accepted motto "the narrower the origin, the higher the quality".

MODEL CONSUMER-FRIENDLY DESCRIPTIONS OF THE CLASSIFICATION TIERS

VDP.GUTSWEIN - versatile handcrafted estate wines for everyday enjoyment
Light, refreshing and fruit-forward wines that showcase the winegrower’s distinctive style. Uncomplicated and approachable — wines for nearly every gathering and occasion. Comparable with a regional wine in Burgundy.

VDP.ORTSWEIN - wines with regional roots
Accessible wines that highlight a village’s singular "taste of place". Food friendly, with the charm to appeal to a wide variety of palates. Comparable with "Village" in Burgundy.

VDP.ERSTE LAGE® - premium German wine
Sophisticated, terroir-influenced wines with significant ageing potential. Their finesse and complexity turn any occasion into a celebration for casual drinker and connoisseur alike. Comparable to Premier Cru in Burgundy.

VDP. GROSSE LAGE® - grand wines from great vineyards
These wines are the flagships of the VDP collection. Each bottle contains the quintessential expression of a singular site. Nuanced, complex wines with enormous ageing potential. Comparable to a Grand Cru in Burgundy.

Read more at: www.vdp.de/en/vdp/klassifikation
VDP.GUTSWEIN - GOOD FROM THE GROUND UP
VDP.GUTSWEIN - GOOD FROM THE GROUND UP

VDP. GUTSWEIN (comparable with regional wines in Burgundy) represents the first tier and foundation of the VDP’s quality pyramid.

These wines are in many ways the winegrower’s calling cards. Each wine originates from the estate’s own vineyards and corresponds to the VDP’s strict criteria standards.

The estate name and region are the only indicators on the label of the wine’s origin. The term VDP.GUTSWEIN can be implemented as a circumferential band on the capsule below the VDP.Traubenadler logo.

Classic Prädikat classifications may be used in dry, naturally and nobly sweet wines.
VDP.ORTSWEIN - SOURCED FROM SUPERIOR SOILS
VDP.ORTSWEIN - SOURCED FROM SUPERIOR SOILS

VDP.ORTSWEIN originate from the finest vineyards within a village. They are the ambassadors for that terroir. Only varieties typical for a region are eligible for this classification and yields must be restricted.

The VDP.Traubenadler insignia on the bottle capsule in connection with the village name promises a distinctive wine shaped by its origin.

REGIONAL CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA

VDP.ORTSWEINE come from high-quality parcels of distinctive character and located within a village's traditional vineyards. In many cases, Ortswein are created from grapes gathered during the selection process for the VDP. ERSTE LAGEN® and VDP.GROSSE LAGEN® or from berries from young blocks within the very best vineyards.

MAXIMUM YIELDS

Yield volumes are restricted to a maximum of 75 hl/ha (*see page 3).

TASTE PROFILES

The dry VDP.ORTSWEIN is labelled as "Qualitätswein trocken". Prädikat classifications are no longer assigned to dry wines. Naturally sweet VDP.ORTSWEINE are labelled according to the classic Prädikat levels (Kabinett, Spätlese, Auslese, Beerenauslese, Trockenbeerenauslese and Eiswein).

LABELLING

The label indicates the wine's origin in the form of the village name. The term VDP.ORTSWEIN can be applied as a circumferential band on the capsule below the VDP.Traubenadler insignia (or as a banderole on the label).

RELEASE DATES

It is recommended that the wines not be released prior to 1 March of the year following the harvest.

Some regions have placed a special priority on the VDP.ORTSWEIN classification, and as a result do not use the VDP.ERSTE LAGE® at all (as of 2016: Rheinhessen and Mosel).
VDP.ERSTE LAGE® - FIRST CLASS!

Gimmeldingen

Biengarten
The VDP.ERSTE LAGE® classification designates a first-class vineyard site with a distinct profile and optimal growing conditions. These vineyards are reserved solely for varieties ideally suited to them. Yield volumes are heavily restricted to promote quality. History has shown that VDP.ERSTE LAGEN® produce wines of extraordinary quality.

SITE CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA
Eligibility for the VDP.ERSTE LAGE® classification is limited to previously classified sites as well as the very good parcels close to but separated from world-class VDP.GROSSE LAGE® sites.

GRAPE VARIETIES
Restricted to varieties defined by the regional association as suitable for the specific vineyard. A chart with details for each region can be found elsewhere in this document.

MAXIMUM YIELDS
Yield volumes are restricted to a maximum of 60 hl/ha (*see page 3).

HARVEST
Grapes are harvested selectively by hand. The harvest fruit must be physiologically fully ripe.

VINIFICATION
The wines are produced exclusively using traditional methods and techniques.

CERTIFICATION
Beyond the routine operations audit of all VDP.members, extra monitoring of vineyard maintenance is conducted for VDP.ERSTE LAGE® sites to ensure strict quality standards. Beyond this, a testing commission following regional statutes must also officially certify each wine.

TASTE PROFILES
Dry VDP.ERSTE LAGE® wines are labelled as "Qualitätswein trocken." Labelling as dry (trocken) is mandatory. Prädikat classifications are not assigned to dry wines. Wines falling under the legal classification of halbtrocken (semi-dry) do not receive additional labelling. Wines with higher levels of residual sugar are classified based on the Prädikats ranging from Kabinett to Trockenbeerenauslese. Spätlese wines must have at least 18 g/L of residual sugar. The precise definition of taste corridors for Prädikat wines is handled at the regional level.

LABELLING
The site and village name must be written on the label. The term VDP.ERSTE LAGE® must be applied as a circumferential band on the capsule below the VDP.Traubenadler insignia (or alternatively as a banderole on the label).

RELEASE DATES
VDP.ERSTE LAGE® wines are released onto the market following the annual VDP.Weinbörse in late April.

USE OF THE SITE NAME
All wines from a VDP.ERSTE LAGE® to be marketed with site names must fulfil the criteria for this quality tier. No estate may produce more than one dry Qualitätswein per site and variety.

Some regions have placed a special priority on the VDP.ORTSWEIN classification, and as a result do not use the VDP.ERSTE LAGE® at all (as of 2017: Rheinhessen and Mosel).
The VDP.GROSSE LAGE® designation is reserved for top parcels in the very best German vineyards. The first-class wines grown here present a singular sense of place, complex taste profile and remarkable ageing potential. They are planted solely with varieties tightly linked with the region and suitable for that specific vineyard. Strict production criteria ensure that these bottles stand at the peak of the VDP.classification pyramid.

Dry wines from a VDP.GROSSE LAGE® are labeled as VDP.GROSSES GEWÄCHS®.
SITE CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA
In 2012, a procedure was ratified for determining eligibility for potential VDP.GROSSE LAGE® sites. It called for an in-depth review of all existing Erste Lage sites. The new VDP.GROSSE LAGEN® sites can be carved out of larger vineyards that had been drawn overly broad or which were topographically heterogeneous. They can now also be registered by their geographical designations of origin (geographische Ursprungsbezeichnung or g.u.) or, thanks to a modification to wine law, by their lieu-dit. This process remains a work in progress, as the list of sites can be expected to change periodically through new members and changes in ownership.

GRAPE VARIETIES
Restricted to varieties defined by the regional association as suitable for the specific vineyard.

MAXIMUM YIELDS
Yield volumes are restricted to a maximum of 50 hl/ha (*see page 3).

HARVEST
Grapes are harvested selectively, by hand. The harvest fruit must be physiologically fully ripe.

VINIFICATION
The wines are produced exclusively using traditional methods and techniques.

CERTIFICATION
Beyond the standard operations audits for VDP.members, wines from VDP.GROSSE LAGEN® are also subject to additional inspections and monitoring: quality-oriented work in the vineyard and, in particular, yield volumes are monitored for each vineyard throughout the entire growing season and in the weeks prior to harvest. The wines are audited and certified by a testing commission before and after bottling.

TASTE PROFILES
Wines meeting the legal criteria for dry are designated as VDP.GROSSES GEWÄCHS®. Labelling as "trocken" (dry) is mandatory. Wines that are legally classified as halbtrocken (semi-dry) and feinherb (off-dry) do not receive additional labelling. Wines with higher levels of residual sugar are classified based on the classic Prädikat categories: Kabinett, Spätlese, Auslese, Beerenauslese, Trockenbeerenauslese and Eiswein. The regional associations bear responsibility for establishing appropriate taste profiles, although Spätlese wines must have at least 18 g/L of residual sugar.

LABELLING
The site — without the name of the village — is indicated on the front and decorative label in capital letters. The term VDP.GROSSE LAGE® must be implemented as a circumferential band on the capsule below the VDP.Traubenadler logo. VDP.GROSSE GEWÄCHSE® wines are filled in special bottles with the “GG Grape Cluster” logo embossed on the glass. In exceptional cases, the “GG Grape Cluster” logo and the term VDP.GROSSE LAGE® can be placed on the label.

RELEASE DATES
Naturally and nobly sweet wines from VDP.GROSSE LAGEN® are released onto the market on 1 May. VDP.GROSSES GEWÄCHS® wines are not to be marketed before 1 September of the year following the harvest. Red wines mature for at least 12 months in wood casks and are released one year later on 1 September.

USE OF THE SITE NAME
All wines from a VDP.GROSSE LAGE® to be marketed with site names must fulfill the criteria for this quality tier. No estate may produce more than one VDP.GROSSES GEWÄCHS® per site and variety.
# PERMISSIBLE VARIETIES FOR VDP.GROSSE LAGE® AND VDP.ERSTE LAGE®

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WINEGROWING</th>
<th>VDP.GROSSE LAGE® VARIETIES</th>
<th>VDP.ERSTE LAGE® VARIETIES (PLUS THOSE IN VDP.GROSSE LAGE®)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AHR</td>
<td>Spätburgunder, Frühburgunder; Nobly sweet only: Riesling</td>
<td>No definition of VDP.ERSTE LAGE® for this region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BADEN</td>
<td>Weißburgunder, Grauburgunder, Spätburgunder, Riesling, Chardonnay, Lemberger (Kráichgau and Badische Bergstraße only)</td>
<td>Silvaner, Scheurebe, Gewürztraminer, Muskateller, Sauvignon Blanc, Auxerrois, Schwarzriesling; Nobly sweet only: Rieslaner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRANKEN</td>
<td>Riesling, Silvaner, Weißburgunder, Spätburgunder</td>
<td>Grauburgunder, Scheurebe, Rieslaner, Traminer, Frühburgunder; Other permissible varieties (require approval): Müller-Thurgau, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Muskateller, Lemberger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HESSISCHER BERGSTRASSE</td>
<td>Riesling, Weißburgunder, Grauburgunder, Spätburgunder</td>
<td>Same as VDP.GROSSE LAGE®</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MITTELRHEIN</td>
<td>Riesling, Spätburgunder</td>
<td>Same as VDP.GROSSE LAGE®</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOSEL-SAAR- RUWER</td>
<td>Riesling</td>
<td>No definition of VDP.ERSTE LAGE® for this region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAHE</td>
<td>Riesling</td>
<td>Same as VDP.GROSSE LAGE®</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFALZ</td>
<td>Riesling, Weißburgunder, Spätburgunder</td>
<td>Grauburgunder, Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer; Nobly sweet only: Scheurebe, Muskateller, Rieslaner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHEINGAU</td>
<td>Riesling, Spätburgunder</td>
<td>Same as VDP.GROSSE LAGE®</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHEINHESSEN</td>
<td>Riesling, Spätburgunder</td>
<td>No definition of VDP.ERSTE LAGE® for this region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAALE-UNSTRUT</td>
<td>Riesling, Weißburgunder, Grauburgunder, Spätburgunder, Frühburgunder, Traminer, Silvaner</td>
<td>Blauer Zweigelt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SACHSEN</td>
<td>Riesling, Weißburgunder, Grauburgunder, Spätburgunder, Frühburgunder, Traminer</td>
<td>Same as VDP.GROSSE LAGE®</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WÜRTTEMBERG</td>
<td>Riesling, Weißburgunder, Grauburgunder, Spätburgunder, Lemberger</td>
<td>Silvaner, Chardonnay, Muskatrollinger, Gewürztraminer, Muskateller, Sauvignon Blanc, Samtrot, Schwarzriesling, Trollinger, Zweigelt, Merlot, Frühburgunder</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HISTORICAL VINEYARD MAPS

The oldest known vineyard classification maps (circa 1867) offer detailed insights into the official 19th century assessment of viticulture along the Rhine and Moselle rivers. These maps addressed not only wine quality, but also which vineyards could be expected to produce wines that achieve the highest prices on the market and thus accordingly taxed at a higher rate. These maps represent a Bonitierungs-Kataster, a process that was undertaken with the first cadastral surveys and classified vineyards according to taxable income from estimated yield values. The vineyards were grouped according to comprehensive tax assessments and displayed on the maps in graded colour zones. The maps of the Prussian vineyard classification continue to be a unique model to this day. Next to documentation of better and superior vineyards for purpose of land tax, they are also historic documentation of these vineyards as a cultural good.
# CHRONOLOGY

## 1910 | Founding: Verband Deutscher Naturweinversteigerer e.V.

(*'Naturweine', or natural wines, at that time reflected an absolute ban on chaptalization, i.e. the addition of sugar to fermenting must to increase its natural alcohol content. Today's unchaptalized wines made to that standard are Prädikat wines.) Founding associations: Rheingau (est. 1897), Rheinhessen (est. probably 1910), Mosel, Saar, Ruwer (est. 1910) and Rheinpfalz (est. 1908).

## 1926 | Entry into the Registry of Associations; VDP Traubenadler insignia registered as protected logo

## 1935 | New Statutes

After being incorporated into the Reichsnährstand, the association was tasked with preserving and promoting the interests of auctioneers of German Naturwein in coordination with the Reichsnährstand, an umbrella association that was responsible for the interests and activities of all agricultural producers. Its main responsibilities involved:

- Organization of auction conditions and appointments
- Joint marketing | exhibitions within Germany and abroad
- All other questions relevant to wine sales
- Dissemination of advancements in viticulture and oenology

## 1938 | Last routine association committee session before outbreak of war

## 1949 | Resumption of association's work

New statutes (changes necessitated by new democratic conditions)

Member associations: Rheinpfalz, Mosel-Saar-Ruwer, Rheingau, Baden, Rheinhessen

## 1955 | Change to Statute §3:

Membership in the association limited to those organizations whose members exclusively produce "naturally pure"* wines using their own estate-grown fruit and which are auctioned or otherwise sold in this "naturally pure" state. (*This refers to a strict ban on chaptalization, i.e. the addition of sugar to fermenting must to increase its natural alcohol content of wines produced by members.)

## 1958 | New Statutes

Ratified: monitoring of wines from all members. New conditions for the association:

- Primary production of Naturwein.
- Establishment of vineyards, selection of varieties and setup of cellar should be oriented toward long-term production of fault-free Naturwein.
- Members are obligated to select varieties, vineyard management techniques, and harvest and vinification processes so as to create fine, high-quality Naturwein.

## 1971 | Change of Name to Verband Deutscher Prädikatswein-Versteigerer e. V. (VDPV)

## 1972 | New Statute | Change of Name

- Switchover from association of wine selling clubs into an association of winegrowing estates
- Promotion of higher quality standards and rules for sales conditions
- Name change to Verband Deutscher Prädikatsweingüter (VDP)

## 1982 | Expansion of Statutes and Change of Name

- Implementation of higher must weights
- Required inclusion of the association's insignia
- Strict separation between estate bottled wines and those from large scale winemaking and bottling companies
- Change of name to Verband Deutscher Prädikats- und Qualitätsweingüter e.V.
THE VDP Classifications

1990 | New Statute | New Objectives
- Recomposition of the goals of the VDP, including an increased focus on natural methods
- Introduction of strict production rules (yield restriction, increased must weights) and marketing rules
- Obligation to display the association's logo on the capsule
- Routine operational inspections (certification)
- Establishment of minimum standards for each classification

1994 | Change to Statutes
- Elimination of Großlage (large consolidated vineyard) regulation
- Guarantee of manual harvest for all Prädikat grades Auslese and above

Read more at: www.vdp.de/en/vdp/geschichte

HISTORY OF THE VDP Classifications

German Wine Act of 1971
The revised German Wine Act of 1971 brought many radical changes to German wine sector, not least a substantial reorganization of the country’s vineyards. Roughly 34,000 individual vineyard sites were consolidated down to just 3,400 individual vineyard sites, ostensibly to allow winegrowers with numerous micro-parcels to henceforth produce at realistic commercial volumes. The newly created blocks subsumed all sites within their borders, regardless of their respective quality or terroir, under the name of the most prominent single vineyard contained within.

Also the newly designed “Grosslagen” (collective vineyard sites) were a new iteration of what had previously been called “Gattungslagen,” or generic vineyards, and bore the same name as single sites (a combination of Village name and random site name)— despite potentially stretching across several towns and encompassing scores of vineyards. Some of these Grosslagen covered over 600 hectares, such as “Niersteiner Gutes Domtal” (Rheinhessen) and “Gimmeldinger Meerspinne” (Pfalz). There was no longer any effective way for a consumer to identify from the label whether the wine reflected the terroir character of a single site or not.

Around the same time, the term naturein (naturally pure) was forbidden for all foods and could no longer be used as a quality descriptor. The category Qualitätswein was newly defined with the option for chaptalization (must enrichment with sugar to increase alcohol content). Terms like Kabinett and Spätlese within the Prädikat category were also redefined. In this new system of quality categories, the only legal gauge for quality was the natural must weight of the grapes (potential alcohol) accompanied by a governmental quality control.

As a consequence, the traditional quality categories (Kabinett, feine Spätlese, etc.) lost their original qualitative and taste profile meaning. The Prädikat category now included wines with highly variable levels of sweetness because this was no longer defined for the Prädikat sub-categories. In addition to this, the number of wines marketed under a Prädikat label exploded.

THE VDP Journey
In 1984, the VDP estates began an internal classification movement in response to the aforementioned failed reforms.

To goal of the VDP classification system is
- to establish the value of Germany’s top vineyard sites
- to secure the preservation of a unique cultural landscape
- to reclaim the prestige of grand dry wines from Germany
- to emphasize the importance of traditional naturally sweet Prädikat wines.
CLASSIFICATION STAGES

Starting in 1996, the VDP. Prädikatsweingüter worked step-by-step to re-develop the association’s classification model, drawing on feedback from professionals, connoisseurs and the larger market. There is no one single step that could resolve three decades of unsuccessful reforms. Beyond this, a variety of legal regulations had to be taken into account.

1996 | The VDP.manifesto is announced: “A classification of vineyards, the benefits of which have long been understood in other winegrowing countries, will secure our shared cultural heritage for the future.”

1997 | VDP.Nahe approves Riesling statue. Only Riesling wines from clearly demarcated top vineyards are eligible for the site appellation.

1998 | Founding of the ERSTES GEWÄCHS committee. Estates from the regions Rheingau, Rheinhessen and Pfalz join together to further develop the ERSTES GEWÄCHS philosophy.

1998 | The VDP General Assembly approves uniform classification policies for classified growths of German origin: a clear and top class reputation should be achieved through origin, grape variety and taste profile.

1999 | The quality classification map for Rheingau’s sites is presented and Hesse approves regulations for “ERSTES GEWÄCHS” as a quality label. Starting with the 1999 vintages, eligible wines may use the term “ERSTES GEWÄCHS” on their label.

2000 | Name change to: VDP. Die Prädikatsweingüter

2001 | Castell Accord
The VDP General Assembly approves its first internal origin-based classification system, organized in a three-tier model. The focus is placed on the uppermost classification tier, to be called Grosses Gewächs.

2002 | The VDP General Assembly agrees upon a concrete definition for Grosses Gewächs: a wine of a dry taste profile. Naturally and nobly sweet wines are however to be accepted as on an equal tier with the Grosses Gewächs. A “1 with grape cluster” logo is adopted for these wines.

2003 | With the passage of the classification statute for Mosel-Saar-Ruwer, clear taste profile definitions are established as an uppermost classification tier, to be known as ERSTE LAGE®. (Background: the ‘Großlage’ specified at that time in the applicable wine legislation still played a major role in how bottles were marketed. The GROSSE LAGE name would have been too easily confused with it.)

2006 | Marienthal Accord
The VDP General Assembly clears the way for the current classification system:
- ”VDP.ERSTE LAGE“ is a uniform upper level term for all wines of the superior category in all winegrowing regions. The ”1 with grape cluster“ on the label or directly embossed on the bottle identifies this status.
- Dry wines from Erste Lage sites are to be labelled as GROSSES GEWÄCHS®. From the 2006 vintage onward these wines were legally mandated as dry, meaning a maximum of 9 g/l of residual sugar.
- Naturally sweet VDP.ERSTE LAGE wines are to be labelled using the traditional Prädikat levels, running from Spätlese and Auslese up through Trockenbeerenauslese.
- Conventions for sites: after a transitional period, each named site may only produce one dry Grosses Gewächs® per year.

2012 | At an extraordinary general meeting of the VDP.members at Neustadt an der Weinstraße, a four-tiered classification system is unanimously approved. The new system is built around the following levels: VDP. GUTSWEIN | VDP.ORTSWEIN | VDP.ERSTE LAGE® | VDP.GROSSE LAGE®, akin to the Burgundian Premier Crus and Grands Crus. Starting with the 2012 vintage, this facilitates differentiation of the quality of the sites. As a result, all sites previously qualified as ERSTE LAGE are to be inspected for their suitability, either in part or as a whole, as a VDP.GROSSE LAGE®. Going forward, only wines presenting the specific characteristics of their site are allowed to bear that site’s name.
THE VDP. CLASSIFICATIONS

VDP. CLASSIFICATION 2012-PRESENT

THE FOUR-TIER CLASSIFICATION PYRAMID IN DETAIL

Redesignation of former "Erste Lage" as VDP. GROSSE LAGE®

The redesignation of the "Erste Lage" as VDP. GROSSE LAGE® was intended to eliminate an inconsistency in the nomenclature, namely that the "GROSSES GEWÄCHS®" wines came from "Erste Lagen". It was not seen as an attempt to establish an even higher quality category. A VDP. GROSSES GEWÄCHS® is a dry wine from a VDP. GROSSE LAGE®. It is considered of equal quality to naturally sweet Prädikat wines.

Review of previous classifications for all vineyard sites

All VDP. member regions and estates review the roster of classified sites to exclude the least promising and better promote wines that express singular site-specific characteristics. This ensures that when a site is named on a label, it is truly referring to one unique vineyard.

Introduction of a new second tier in site classification: VDP. ERSTE LAGE®

The regions retain the option to introduce hierarchical usage of site names. Independent of the estates themselves, only the very best German vineyard sites are classified as VDP. GROSSE LAGE®, while very good sites are classified one tier below as VDP. ERSTE LAGE®.

Definition of Prädikat levels for naturally sweet wines

Across all classification tiers (excepting the VDP. GUTSWEIN category), the use of Prädikat designations is reserved for use with naturally sweet wines as determined by regionally established taste corridors. This widespread elimination of dry and semi-sweet Prädikats in the fine wine sector restores the Prädikats to their traditional intention.

Regional differences

The VDP. regional associations are granted a degree of latitude to account for their own regional peculiarities — as long as they can still work within a shared Germany-wide framework.

SUMMARY

The VDP. estates view themselves as pioneers in establishing origin-based wine labelling for high-end wines that are comprehensible to consumers. Productive discussions and successful agreements on this topic achieved by the VDP have made it a role model for numerous imitators (the more the merrier), thus confirming the direction being taken. The VDP. estates are aware that course corrections are sometimes necessary to reach the final goal, especially when wine law and regional differences necessitate certain compromises.

The goal for the VDP. estate's all-round efforts, and the key to the future of high-end winegrowing in Germany, are hand-crafted, terroir-shaped wines that express the long viticultural history and diversity of German wine styles.

The combination of outstanding soils, individual microclimates, traditional varieties and the dedication of VDP. winemakers represents a unique foundation. Guided properly, it will secure the existence of quality-minded estates and the well-deserved stature of German wine within the larger international wine universe. And last but not least, it serves the aspiration for unique, comprehensible authenticity.
IN COOPERATION WITH:

Zwiesel Kristallglas

Das Wasser mit Stern

Gaggenau

Prowein

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