

Decanter

Germany: Grosses Gewächs new releases – Riesling 2017 and Pinot 2016

- [Anne Krebiehl](#)
- September 6, 2018

German Riesling producers faced tough conditions in 2017, but there are great wines if you know where to look, says Anne Krebiehl MW, who also reports exclusively for Premium subscribers on the German 2016 Pinot Noir vintage following the annual Grosses Gewächs tasting in the country.



TAGS:[ExclusiveHighlights](#)

The preview of the VDP **Grosses Gewächs** new releases in Wiesbaden – the annual tasting of these dry, single-site wines – must be amongst the best organised in the world. The airy, bright space of the Kurhaus is an ideal tasting space, but it's the flawless organisation that makes the tasting so special.

Over three days, international press and trade tasted 426 of the 635 GGs to be released this year, comprised of 264 [Rieslings](#), 81 Spätburgunders, 43 Grauburgunders, Weissburgunders and [Chardonnays](#), 21 Silvaners, 14 Lembergers, 2 Frühburgunders, and one Roter Traminer.

Scroll down to see Anne's 24 Grosses Gewächs recommendations

German dry Riesling 2017 vintage review

Picking just 12 of those 264 Rieslings to recommend is hard: the sheer stylistic and regional breadth of world-class Rieslings was overwhelming.

The Germans have a phrase: 'die Qual der Wahl' – the torment of having to choose – hence the focus on internationally distributed Rieslings from classic regions, and lesser known but equally historic sites.

After another challenging year like 2017 it becomes increasingly clear that there are no more poor but increasingly different vintages, which should be cause for joy.

However, the quality tasted comes at the cost of yield, reduced by either frost, hail or stringent selection.

While a damp spring in 2016 spelled huge disease pressure, in 2017 the growers had to contend with spring frosts after an unusually early bud break, followed by some dry stress and finally fruit damage caused by heavy downpours and hail in August.

What is clear is that neither intense canopy management nor intimate knowledge of sites have much effect without super-responsive and decisive logistics with the requisite manpower.

Peter Jakob Kühn, biodynamic pioneer of the Rheingau, says it all when he notes that his usual harvest team of 25 swelled to 40 in 2017. 'Selection was everything', he says, 'after a hailstorm on 1 August following a season of very balanced sun and precipitation.'

Kühn, who releases his wines after an additional year of barrel ageing, faced significant losses in 2017 but still considers it 'a great vintage.'

Wilhelm Weil of Robert Weil, who has 29 vintages under his belt in the Rheingau, agrees.

'2017 might be one of the best vintages of my professional life. We have very dense, deep, firm wines. Even if there were some losses, some sites gave grandiose wines,' he says.

Weil's winemaker, Christian Engel, reckons that the 2017s will be 'marathon runners due to their acid structure and density. They will be fun even in decades to come.'

Frost also hit the Mosel, yet fine acidity and density are apparent here too.

Further south in the Pfalz, Mathieu Kaufmann at Reichsrat von Buhl reaches a similar conclusion to Engel.

'The 2016 Rieslings were perhaps a little more elegant, fruity and precise, but 2017 comes with powerful wines. These are really great, great wines; 2017 has power – they are of a different structure and they will take their time.'

As in previous years, the Nahe showed itself as a hotbed of talent, while the large and diverse region of Rheinhessen holds so much joy.

Considering all of the above, and taking into account the additional expense and time required for steep-slope viticulture – which includes many of these GGs – it makes the prices seem ridiculously low, especially in an international context. Those who love Riesling and have patience are thus well advised to stock up on the 2017 GGs.

German Pinot Noir 2016 vintage review

Making a choice of twelve outstanding Spätburgunders [German Pinot Noir] was more difficult. While the VDP advised that 635 VDP Grosses Gewächs covering 309 sites were produced in this current release (2017 whites / 2016 reds), many decided not to show their latest wines.

Since every GG can only be shown in Wiesbaden once upon its release, there were instead some late releases from previous vintages. While this prevents us from having a complete overview of 2016, it's a move to be welcomed as these library wines have more time to come into their own – and it's something we will probably see more of in the coming years.

Nonetheless, the 2016s that were presented had shrugged off the challenging conditions of the vintage, which had left winemakers worrying about mildew throughout a damp spring and early summer, followed by brief heat spikes.

The tide turned in late summer and those who selected scrupulously prevailed, showing that not even a tough ride like 2016 can deter them from achieving superior elegance.

Not everyone fared so well – perhaps another reason numbers on show were down – but this is where we can separate the wheat from the chaff.

Marc Adeneuer of JJ Adeneuer in the Ahr says of the 2016 Spätburgunders: 'full ripeness, great acidity structure, ripe generosity but still mineral: I think it's a grandiose vintage comparable to 2009. We had the luxury of having very healthy fruit that didn't need much selection.'

Yquem Viehhauser of Weingut Bernhard Huber in Baden emphasises the 'exacting' and 'intense' work necessary in the vineyard in a season that 'presented many surprises.' But she also notes a 'happy ending' for the 2016 Pinot Noirs which have 'precise elegance, fine-fruited acidity and lots of juiciness.' She adds that '2016 unites the freshness and coolness of 2014 with the fruit and generosity of 2015.'

Sebastian Fürst of Weingut Rudolf Fürst recalls the 18% loss in yield dealt by the late spring frost, however he also cites 'near perfect conditions' during the 'crucial time' in August.

'I see 2016 as a great vintage with full ripeness and freshness of very fine, red berry fruit,' he says. 'While frost reduced our yields, it perhaps is also a reason for the great concentration. It's one of my absolutely favourite vintages.'

Those who value elegance above sheer power will love the 2016 Spätburgunders.

Anne's top picks of Grosses Gewächs new releases:

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/schloss-lieser-lieserer-niederberg-helden-riesling-grosses-gewchs-2017-5b90ea1360f44.jpeg>



Schloss Lieser, Grosses Gewächs, Lieserer Niederberg Helden

It is, in Thomas Haag's own words, 'strictest selection' that guarantees the level of quality evident here. Still reduced on the nose, pure lemon zest blazes across the slender palate. Citric purity reigns with its tingling, pointed freshness, while wet slate provides a wonderful backdrop. There's inherent coolness, even if...

Points 96

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/peter-jakob-khn-oestricher-doosberg-riesling-grosses-gewchs-2016-5b90fd8a25534.jpeg>



[Peter Jakob Kühn, Grosses Gewächs, Oestricher Doosberg](#)

Peter Jakob Kühn works magic, and this two-year-old release from 2016 has an uncommon, enveloping headiness, almost like herbal, citric vapours combining chamomile tisane, lemon and lemon balm. The palate is of such serene unity, it has something of an elixir about it. The richly textural pleasure you derive is...

Points 96

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/van-volxem-kanzemer-altenberg-riesling-grosses-gewchs-2017-5b90fc034caf3.jpeg>



[Van Volxem, Grosses Gewächs, Kanzemer Altenberg Riesling,](#)

The Kanzemer Altenberg is monumental - cellar master Dominik Völk has outdone himself. Weathered rhyolite and slate rise steeply to above 250m, a lofty, matter-of-course serenity that's reflected in this wine. Gentle notes of stone fruit are accompanied by a hint of green tea, while the body comes together with poise...

Points 95

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/dnnhoff-oberhausener-brcke-riesling-grosses-gewchs-2017-5b9000a58c4dd.jpeg>



[Dönnhoff, Grosses Gewächs, Oberhausener Brücke Riesling,](#)

Cornelius Dönnhoff continues on the exact path his father Hermann took: utterly clean and precise Riesling is their mission. From this tiny 1.1ha parcel of shale we get such aromatic pleasure: crushed herb and grapefruit zest aromas lead onto a palate of pristine citrus freshness. The body reverberates with riper...

Points 95

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/schfer-frhlich-bockenauer-stromberg-riesling-grosses-gewchs-2017-5b90e6f8d5367.jpeg>



Schäfer-Fröhlich, Grosses Gewächs, Bockenauer Stromberg

The customary reduction resulting from a spontaneous, slow ferment still clouds the nose of this Riesling. From porphyry soils on a rocky, elevated site we get almost piercing freshness that presses all of the pleasure buttons of dry Riesling fans. Bundled around a central, bright shaft of acid are alluring...

Points 95

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/wagner-stempel-siefersheimer-heerkretz-riesling-grosses-gewchs-2017-5b8ffd1b37b91.jpeg>



Wagner Stempel, Grosses Gewächs, Siefersheimer Heerkretz

The elevated Heerkretz site on heterogeneous rhyolite and melaphyre soils has both windy parcels and suntraps, but the wine is always serene. The nose is restrained, but plenty of air allows some zesty lemon to shine through. Already there is something still and solid in this wine which quietly convinces...

Points 95

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/a-christmann-knigsbacher-idig-riesling-grosses-gewchs-2017-5b8ff4cb822fb.jpeg>



[A Christmann, Grosses Gewächs, Königsbacher Idig Riesling,](#)

From solid limestone bedrock, this is one of the most understated, elegant wines of the tasting. Christmann plays the long game, and these wines get finer and finer with age. The nose is shy and the palate comes with a straight-laced, lemony, completely disarming directness. This is taut and fresh,...

Points 95

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/konomierat-rebholz-siebeldinger-ganz-horn-im-sonnenschein-riesling-grosses-gewchs-2017-5b8ff71013afa.jpeg>



Ökonomierat Rebholz, Grosses Gewächs, Siebeldinger Ganz Horn

Gravelly, sandy soil makes for subtle but concentrated citrus flavours in the Ganz Horn site. A coolness emanates from the glass as the nose is gentle and shows subtle hints of citrus. The mouthfeel is lacy, with zesty lemon and a grounded, dancing dryness pervaded by limpid acidity. This is...

Points 95

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/peter-lauer-ayler-schonfels-riesling-grosses-gewchs-2017-5b8ffb90881d8.jpeg>



[Peter Lauer, Grosses Gewächs, Ayler Schonfels Riesling, 2017](#)

Devonian slate and extremes of stone-stored warmth and constant wind make this a racy yet ripe wine. Riesling wunderkind Peter Lauer knows exactly how to tease out the opposites apparent in this wine. On the one hand there is the light-bodied, lacy, racy Saar acid; on the other there's a...

Points 95

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/schloss-johannisberg-silberlack-riesling-grosses-gewachs-2017-5b90e7f502cd9.jpeg>



Schloss Johannisberg, Grosses Gewächs, Schloss Johannisberg

This GG is proof of Stefan Doktor's determination and drive to impose a very clear line and a vein of purity across Johannisberg's range. On the nose there is a fine lemon balm touch while the body has verve and freshness and a silvery, lemony, unclouded freshness. There's body and...

Points 94

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/groebe-westhofener-aulerde-riesling-grosses-gewchs-2017-5b8ffc47c3356.jpeg>



[Groebe, Grosses Gewächs, Westhofener Aulerde Riesling, 2017](#)

Marl, weathered limestone and loess lend coolness to this warm site, and Fritz Groebe gives all of his heart to this wine. A slight whiff of passion fruit flits across the nose before nettle and citrus make their aromatic debut. The palate has a richness and a deliciously sharp aromatic...

Points 94

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/reichsrat-von-buhl-deidesheimer-kieselberg-riesling-grosses-gewchs-2017-5b8ffcdb0fbbd.jpeg>



[Reichsrat von Buhl, Grosses Gewächs, Deidesheimer Kieselberg](#)

An unusual but fitting marriage of a slender wine from a sandstone plateau with oak - doppelstück (2400l) in this case. The faintest hint of oak is evident on the nose while on the palate its creaminess combines with the lemon Riesling freshness to create a most gentle but vivid...

Points 94

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/friedrich-becker-schweigener-kammerberg-sptburgunder-grosses-gewchs-2016-5b91082f80356.jpeg>



Friedrich Becker, Grosses Gewächs, Schweigener Kammerberg

The Kammerberg straddles the German-French border, thus creating an arch-European wine. Limestone bedrock and the masterful hands of Pinot-pioneer Friedrich Becker senior and his son (also called Friedrich) make this a world-class wine. Strikingly dark, the elegant palate has smooth fullness and silken tannins. It's dense and concentrated but unobtrusive,...

Points 96

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/rudolf-frst-centgrafenberg-sptburgunder-grosses-gewchs-2016-5b910ada2fa77.jpeg>



[Rudolf Fürst, Grosses Gewächs, Centgrafenberg Spätburgunder,](#)

The triassic sandstone rocks of Centgrafenberg bring forth this tender wine. A faint, flinty whiff of reduction accompanies the floral perfume, leading to a palate which encapsulates utterly pure red fruits resting at the very core of this elegant, understated wine. With 85% whole-bunch ferment, the flavours are tart, vivid...

Points 96

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/bernhard-huber-hecklinger-schlossberg-sptburgunder-grosses-gewchs-2016-5b910c31eba17.jpeg>



Bernhard Huber, Grosses Gewächs, Hecklinger Schlossberg

After the untimely death of his father Bernhard, young Julian Huber has continued in an even finer vein. Grown on a steep slope of weathered fossil limestone, this starts with restraint and leads onto a taut palate that reverberates with red-fruited verve and freshness. The tart fruitiness seems layered, presenting...

Points 96

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/schnaitmann-fellbacher-Immler-sptburgunder-grosses-gewchs-2016-5b910200c3cc4.jpeg>



[Schnaitmann, Grosses Gewächs, Fellbacher Lämmle](#)

Sandstone soils and high diurnal temperature variations are behind Lämmle's finesse. As is Rainer Schnaitmann, who never stops fine-tuning his approach. Both flinty reduction and heady elderberry flash briefly across the nose before tart redcurrant and floral highlights appear. The palate is serenely beautiful, carried aloft by riper, fuller, aromatic...

Points 95

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/knipser-dirmsteiner-mandelpfad-sptburgunder-grosses-gewchs-2014-5b910e117a719.jpeg>



[Knipser, Grosses Gewächs, Dirmsteiner Mandelpfad](#)

A late release but worth the wait. Initially the 2014s were rather forbidding with all their acidity but this shows, like so often, that cooler years make for elegant Pinot. Heady cherry fruit unfolds on the nose, while on the palate a creamy mellowness is pervaded by freshness, swishing sinuously...

Points 94

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/dr-wehrheim-birkweiler-kastanienbusch-kppel-sptburgunder-grosses-gewchs-2015-5b910e8cbfc21.jpeg>



[Dr Wehrheim, Grosses Gewächs, Birkweiler Kastanienbusch](#)

From an elevated site on coloured sandstone within the Kastanienbusch vineyard, this shows vivid freshness, grace and elegance. Initially the nose is all smoked meat, but the tender, pure raspberry fruit within has huge and tender allure. There is firmness at the core, and real substance despite the translucent finesse....

Points 94

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/franz-keller-oberrottweiler-kirchberg-sptburgunder-grosses-gewchs-2016-5b9105b772ffb.jpeg>



[Franz Keller, Grosses Gewächs, Oberrotweiler Kirchberg](#)

This estate has always made solid wines, but this is a real evolution towards elegance and freshness - a feat in the warm volcanic vineyards of the Kaiserstuhl. Opening with insinuations of aromatic red fruit, the palate presents the crunch of redcurrant and ripe red cherry. Bright, fresh and vivid,...

Points 94

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/aldinger-fellbacher-lmmler-sptburgunder-grosses-gewchs-2016-5b91065d00033.jpeg>



[Aldinger, Grosses Gewächs, Fellbacher Lämmeler Spätburgunder,](#)

Brothers Matthias and Hansjörg Aldinger keep setting new accents of elegance and freshness, honing their craft year on year. While the nose is still reduced, the palate is fresh, vivid, bright and tangy, with all the tension of intense, tart red fruit. The finely captured tannins crunch deliciously, standing firm...

Points 94

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/allendorf-assmannshuser-hllenberg-sptburgunder-grosses-gewchs-2016-5b9102afdea92.jpeg>



Allendorf, Grosses Gewächs, Assmannshäuser Höllenberg

This steep site of mica schist is probably Germany's most iconic and historic Pinot Noir site. While the nose is still closed, underneath a wealth of wonderfully pure, alluring and expressive fruit opens, just captured at the point where it's ripe but still has tension, focus and crunch - nothing...

Points 94

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/jj-adeneuer-walporzeheimer-grkammer-sptburgunder-grosses-gewchs-2016-5b91005821794.jpeg>



[JJ Adeneuer, Grosses Gewächs, Walporzeheimer Gärkammer](#)

From the smallest classified site in the Ahr, on steep slopes of compact greywacke and slate, comes this dynamo of German Pinot. A heady hint of mocha plays on the nose, while on the palate the fully ripe character of raspberry and red cherry creates a juicy, concentrated and fresh...

Points 94

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/dautel-bnnigheimer-schupen-sptburgunder-grosses-gewchs-2016-5b9103cf69296.jpeg>



Dautel, Grosses Gewächs, Bönningheimer Schupen Spätburgunder,

Christian Dautel always wrests elegance from the heavier gypsum Keuper soils of the south-facing Schupen. He also increasingly uses larger oak formats to let the fruit speak even more clearly. While reduction still dominates the nose of this wine, the palate opens with vivid freshness and generous, ripe but wonderfully...

Points 93

image: <https://decanter-prod-aws1-timeincuk-net.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/images/knstler-assmannshuser-hllenberg-sptburgunder-grosses-gewchs-2016-5b90fef9ac3a4.jpeg>



[Künstler, Grosses Gewächs, Assmannshäuser Höllenberg](#)

The density and power in Gunter Künstler's rendition of Höllenberg is undeniable. The fruit almost borders on the aromatic richness of candied Amarena cherry. There's a little heat too, and a radiating, almost raw strength clothed in fine, firm tannins. There's some mouthfilling fleshiness, with hints of conifer and iron...

Points 93

Read more at <https://www.decanter.com/premium/german-riesling-2017-grosses-gewachs-400831/#PXrC4oiDoObwew30.99>