

DANUBE GRÜNER VELTLINER AND RIESLING: MEANDERING THROUGH TERROIR

Stephan Reinhardt introduces an exciting tasting that he shared with Stephen Brook and Andrew Jefford of some of Austria's greatest white wines, assessing the quality of an array of single-site Grüner Veltliners and Rieslings, most from the 2018 vintage, and exploring the differences in the many and varied terroirs that follow the Danube River from Vienna to Spitz

This tasting is dedicated to the great white wines of the Danube, in so far as they originate from the federal states of Vienna and Lower Austria, respectively from the growing regions Vienna, Wagram, Kamptal, Traisental, Kremstal, and Wachau, which are connected from east to west. Thus, the Rieslings and Grüner Veltliners of the Danube region have established Austria's reputation as the origin of world-class white wines, even if, in doing so, they have overshadowed the outstanding white wines also being produced in Burgenland and Styria, which deserve their own tasting one day.

But first, we wanted to take stock of those top wines from the Danube that had yet to be featured in an extensive tasting in *WFW*. The Danube valley, with its roughly 13,000ha (32,000 acres) of vines, is a homogenous cultural area. Between Vienna and Spitz in the western Wachau, essentially the same grape varieties are cultivated, and the (primeval) Danube has not only created the wine landscapes, it also influences the climate and the growth and ripening of the grapes.

The terroirs of the Danube are quite different from east to west, especially with regard to:

1. The altitudes from 200–400m above sea level;
2. The exposure and steepness of the vineyards;
3. Their soils;
4. The proximity to the Danube.

While shell limestone soils predominate in Vienna, loess deposits from the Ice Age are found on the

ACCORDING TO RECEIVED WISDOM, THE VELTLINERS AND RIESLINGS FROM THE WAGRAM ARE FRUITY AND FULL-BODIED, BUT THERE IS ALSO A GOOD NUMBER OF SURPRISINGLY CRYSTALLINE WINES

Wagram. These soils are also calcareous but not stony; rather, dusty and very fertile. The fine granularity of the loess allowed it to accumulate in layers several meters high, from which wine growers have formed terraces over the centuries and under the specifications of the original Danube. According to received wisdom, the Veltliners (Grüner, Roter, and Frühroter) and Rieslings from the Wagram are fruity and full-bodied, but there is also, happily, a good number of surprisingly crystalline wines. Sometimes the vine roots penetrate the mighty layers of loess (several dozen meters deep, which can soak up water like a sponge and thus almost preclude drought stress of the vines), reaching into the primary-rock soil. This gives these wines a surprisingly fine structure and a different nervy or even salty acidity. Most such sites are farther from the Danube at higher altitudes, making them particularly suitable for Riesling but also Pinot Blanc.

Around the regions

The Kamptal is seamlessly connected to the vineyards of the Wagram, though when it comes to shaping the wine's character, the name of the region is much less relevant than a vineyard's position relative to the Danube, which has an effect on the soil and a more or less powerful climatic influence. Vineyards closer to the Danube are naturally more exposed to it than those farther away, from where one cannot even see the river. In the original bed of the Danube, the vines are mostly planted in flat areas on gravelly alluvial soils, which warm up quickly and are therefore particularly well suited to red varieties, such as Pinot Noir, St Laurent, and Zweigelt (aka Rotburger). In the Kamptal, as well as in the Kremstal and Traisental, and also in the eastern part of the Wachau, the east-sloping sites are again characterized by loess, whereas those to the south and west are characterized by the crystalline soils of mica slate with gneiss and amphibolite. These can also be found in the higher areas, far from the Danube, where some of Austria's most interesting Rieslings are cultivated.

A special terroir of the Kamptal, unique in the whole country, is the terraced Zöbinger Heiligenstein, visible from afar, whose easily warmed, completely lime-free, reddish-brown sandstone and conglomerate soils from the Permian period give the Rieslings an unmistakably warm, deep, sustainable, but also fine and crystalline character. At the southeastern foot of the slope, in one of the hottest locations in the region,

the great Grüner Veltliners of the Lamm vineyard grow on silty soils, again rich in limestone.

The border between the Kamptal and Kremstal is also fluid, and one should not make the mistake of thinking that one region is different from the other. Here, too, the distance to the Danube weighs far more heavily and has an equal influence on climate and soil. The wines from Senftenberg, for example, which grow on barren primary-rock soils, have a completely different, almost alpine character compared to the fruity, elegant wines from Krems itself or from Rohrendorf or Gedersdorf. Geologically and climatically, as well as in taste terms, the wines from Senftenberg are Wachau (or Spitzer Graben) wines anyway, as are the Rieslings and Veltliners from the Steiner sites belonging to Krems, especially from Pfaffenberg.

Geologically the Kremstal is at least as diverse as the Kamptal. Opposite, on the other side of the Danube, the Kremstal paradoxically continues and meets that part of the Wachau that has little or nothing to do with the part between Loiben and Spitz. But it is home to the famous Nikolaihof, which every wine region would like to have within its borders and which cultivates excellent sites on the Krems side without marketing these wines as Kremstal.

The small Traisental is also on the southern side of the Danube, and here too, loess soils dominate, though the best wine growers, such as Markus Huber and Ludwig Neumayer, prefer to emphasize the conglomerates—the strong lime content characterizes the finest of their wines and distinguishes them from all other wines of the Danube.

The Wachau is the most famous region of the Danube and undoubtedly the most beautiful and culturally rich, besides Vienna. Its best wines are not only numerous but are also among the world's finest. Sometimes the influence of the terroir here is so strong that even connoisseurs can find it very difficult to distinguish Grüner Veltliner from Riesling, especially when it comes to mature wines. The Wachau (especially the Spitzer Graben in the far west) profits from enormous contrasts between warm daytime temperatures and cool nighttime temperatures, which are not only blown down from the Waldviertel but are also carried by the Danube from west to east. The east of the area is still under Pannonian influence,

GREAT WINES WILL INCREASINGLY DEPEND NOT ONLY ON THE TERROIR BUT ALSO ON THE WORK IN THE VINEYARD, THE TIME OF HARVEST, THE GRAPE PROCESSING, AND THE AGING OF THE WINES

which characterizes all other areas of the Danube region, although here, too, the Waldviertel has its influence in the higher situated vineyards.

More terroir than variety

For this tasting, I asked the leading Danube producers for their two single-vineyard favorites, which could be Riesling or Grüner Veltliner or one of each, from the 2018 vintage. Prior to the tasting, I had felt more affection for the Veltliners from that year, since the robust Grüner Veltliner seemed better able to cope with the challenges of the extremely warm and early vintage. (Some wine growers started harvesting even in the best vineyards at the end of August.) Riesling seemed less welcoming of the rain falls at the beginning of September, and some vines were affected by botrytis, which blurred the clarity and precision of expression. On the other hand, many Veltliners turned out to be very opulent and to lack identity and nuance.

That was my impression from early tastings shortly before the 2019 harvest. Ultimately, however, 2018 is a vintage that was a challenge for certain terroirs rather than particular grape varieties. That may explain why the growers in this tasting didn't submit representatives of each variety but, rather, of the sites that were best suited to the year. Although I selected the growers whose wines had impressed me most prior to the tasting, I didn't know which wines they submitted. This may explain why I was a little more generous than my fellow tasters in my evaluation. It was good, nevertheless, to have the opportunity to check the results of my earlier tastings without prejudice. After the tasting, it was also interesting to see whether a very early harvest (as in Ott's case) or a late but meticulously selective harvest (as happened at Schloss

Gobelsburg), despite heat and rain, led to wines that were not only stylistically varied but also qualitatively different.

In any case, the production of great wines in the future will depend not only on the terroir, which is increasingly interesting on higher and cooler sites with water-retaining soils, but also on the work in the vineyard, the time of harvest, the grape processing, and the aging of the wines. This has always been important, but the more the harvest date is moved forward due to climate change, and the earlier in the morning picking takes place, the more important other considerations become: shade, canopy height and management, the preset yield level, how to press, and whether or how long one should leave juice and skins together in order to preserve structure and acidity (which should never be added to great terroir wines).

Years ago, harvests were still being completed at the beginning of November, when one had to worry less about acidity levels or the intensity of fruit or terroir aromas than today. In 2018, even in the cool, extremely late-maturing Spitzer Graben, the last grapes were harvested in mid-October.

AVERAGE AND RANGE OF SCORES

	Average	Range
Tasting	90	74-96
SB	90	86-95
AJ	88	74-95
SR	92	88-96

STEPHAN REINHARDT'S TOP WINES:

Weingut Bründlmayer Ried Zöbinger Heiligenstein Riesling Alte Reben 1 ÖTW Kamptal 2018 **96**

Weingut Bründlmayer Ried Langenloiser Spiegel Vincent Grüner Veltliner 1 ÖTW Kamptal 2018 **96**

Prager Ried Zwerthaler Kammergut Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Wachau 2018 **95**

Hajszan Neumann Ried Haarlocke Grüner Veltliner Wien Nussberg 2018 **94**

Neumayer Ried Rothenbart 1 ÖTW Inzersdorf Riesling Trocken Traisental 2018 **94**

Fritsch Ried Schlossberg 1 ÖTW Grüner Veltliner Wagram 2018 **94**

Weingut Bernhard Ott Ried Feuersbrunner Rosenberg 1 ÖTW Trocken Grüner Veltliner Wagram 2018 **94**

Franz Hirtzberger Ried Axpoint Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Wachau Spitz 2018 **94**

Prager Ried Zwerithaler Kammergut Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Wachau 2018
(14% ABV)

94

SB | The nose is sumptuous and powerful, with ripe apricot and pear aromas. No lack of aromatic force here. The power is mirrored on the rich palate, which has breadth and weight. It's a touch heavy but has sufficient energy and minerality for that to be supportable. Not the most elegant style of Wachau GV, but it's majestic and imposing and built to last. Long, nutty finish. | 95
AJ | Mid-white gold in color. Vanilla, hay, and white pepper meet orange and pineapple fruits: lots of sweet charm here. Very puppy-fat-like and almost reductive; ideally needs longer in bottle to up its nobility, but the style pitch is very classical. Rich, vivid, and deep on the palate, with great substance, weight, and drive; lots of white pepper, hazel, celery, agave, and whipped-cream flavors. At the same time, there is no deficiency of peachy acidity, which drips through the wine, too. So much going on in a big, extravagant, archly Danubian mouthful: lovely work. Not quite the subtlety of the very best, however. | 91

SR | Deep, intense, and pure on the nose opens this 2018 Veltliner, which shows flinty/herbal terroir aromas of crushed stones. Powerful yet pure on the palate, this is a complex and persistently salty Veltliner that can compete with [Weingut Bründlmayer Ried Langenloiser Spiegel Vincent Grüner Veltliner 1 ÖTW Kamptal]. | 95

Schloss Gobelsburg Ried Lamm 1 ÖTW Kamptal Grüner Veltliner Kamptal 2018
(13.5% ABV)

92

SB | Charming nose of apricots and mirabelles, giving a yellow-fruits profile. There's some lift and precision, too. Rich and weighty without being heavy or clumsy, this has heft and concentration. I like the amplitude and volume here, deftly excavated from the fruit without being excessive. There's also a mineral bite on the finish, which is persistent. This should evolve well. | 93

AJ | Mid-gold. Not an aromatically showy wine, but carefully crafted aromas with plenty of subtlety and grain to them: very soft spices, burnished summer fruits, falling autumn leaves. Very satisfying, and takes a lot of scrutiny. This is a terrific Kamptal GV on the palate: dry and crisply focused, yet with ample wealth, drive, poise, and follow-through, too. All the mid-palate texture and wealth you might want, allied to real intricacy of fruit—citrus, as well as summer fruits—with understated leafy composure and stealthy spices. | 92

SR | Intense yellow in color and opening with a clear and aromatic bouquet of perfectly ripe and healthy Veltliner aromas intermixed with herbal and discreet oaky notes, this is a round, lush, and persistently salty, pure, and mineral Veltliner with well-hidden power, good tannic grip, and a persistent mineral structure. Excellent! | 92

Franz Hirtzberger Ried Axpoint Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Wachau Spitz 2018 (13.5% ABV)

92

SB | The nose is appley and piquant. Fresh attack,

DRY AND CRISPLY FOCUSED, YET WITH AMPLE WEALTH, DRIVE, POISE, AND FOLLOW-THROUGH, TOO. ALL THE MID-PALATE TEXTURE AND WEALTH YOU MIGHT WANT, ALLIED TO REAL INTRICACY OF FRUIT, CITRUS, AS WELL AS SUMMER FRUITS, WITH UNDERSTATED LEAFY COMPOSURE AND STEALTHY SPICES

nimble and poised. This isn't the weightiest of wines, but it has fine balance and ample acidic backbone and flair. It shows finesse in place of heft and power but is none the worse for that. Harmonious but still a touch slight. | 91

AJ | Pale to mid-gold. A lovely GV nose, with ample ginger, melon, white pepper, plant sap, white chocolate, lanolin, musk spice—none of these is overt (overt is not GV's style), but once you set off looking, you can find treasures hidden away in there. A very seductive and beguiling aromatic profile. Sumptuous, deep, and luxuriously upholstered on the palate; gorgeous from top to bottom. Very richly fruited, with melon and exotic tropical fruits, as well as citrus and ripe summer orchard fruit; spicy and deep, with ample sweet extravagance: the complete Danubian full-body massage. Who could resist? | 92

SR | This 2018 Grüner Veltliner from Spitz is pure, deep, and rich on the nose, with flinty notes of crushed stones. Pure, lush, and elegant on the palate, this is a dense, intense, finessed, and lingering GV, with a long and refined, well-structured, persistently salty finish. Impressive. | 94

Högl Ried Schön Alte Parzellen Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Trocken Wachau Spitzer Graben 2018 (14.5% ABV)

92

SB | Wet stones on the nose, which has a discreetly vibrant, appley character. The palate is very ripe but avoids blousiness or excessive softness. It's relatively forward but has ample grip and acidity, though it does lack some persistence and punch. Drink fairly soon for its exuberant fruitiness. | 90

AJ | Bright gold. A little quieter in aromatic terms than its Spitzer peers, but the blend of fruit and spice is beautifully managed and this bubbles with grace and charm. Sumptuous and refined aromas. Lively, fresh, vivid, and perfumed on the palate, with impressive levels of orchard and

wild-strawberry fruit, soft gingery spice, and a creamy vanillic richness. This is not a beast of a wine, but everything in it is crafted in perfect proportion to all of its other components. Very fine, almost dappled, yet totally gorgeous and irresistible in its sumptuous, nuanced, teasing, northern-meets-southern richness. The acidity resonates throughout, and for those who long for "minerality," there is also a residual otherness in the wine once the fruits have faded. Spellbinding. | 95

SR | Intense on the nose, with ripe and spicy, botrytis-flavored notes opens this 2018 Veltliner. On the palate, this is a rich and sweetish, quite opulent GV, with a long and salty, well-structured finish. Far too young to drink today, but promising. | 91

Martin Muthenthaler Viesslinger Stern Grüner Veltliner Wachau Spitzer Graben 2018 (13% ABV)

92

SB | Intense apple and apricot nose, with some hints of tropical fruit, too. Rich and forthright, this is concentrated and tense, with admirable depth of flavor. Mouth-filling and powerful, yet without being overblown. There's spice and complexity, a fine mineral undertow, and great persistence. Backward, of course, but with fine potential. | 94

AJ | Full mid-gold. A little less allusive, pure, and focused than the best of its Spitzer peers, this nonetheless has an enticingly sweet, creamy, almost lardy aromatic charm (and a touch of oak?) behind the honeyed, rich fruits. It seems oaked on the palate to me, too (a touch of waxy dryness), which is perhaps a shame because the rich fruits are slightly occluded. Delicious wine, nonetheless, and impressive concentration, too. | 88

SR | Lovely, pure, and flinty on the nose, with a clear yet concentrated bouquet and some oaky tones, this is a rich and sweetish Veltliner with a juicy palate, a lingering salinity, and mineral tension. Complex and concentrated, this is a promising, persistent, stimulatingly salty Spitzer Veltliner. | 93

FX Pichler Ried Kellerberg Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Wachau 2018 (14.5% ABV)

92

SB | Broad, spicy, apricot, and green-pea nose that's lightly exotic. Rich and hefty, this shows considerable weight and gravitas, with ample concentration and force. There's an impressive stoniness on the mid-palate, which has grip and tension. A classic expression of Wachau GV, serious and demanding, with a mineral grip on the finish. Long. | 94

AJ | Mid- to full yellow-gold. Rich, peppery, and gratifying scents, with ample vanilla cream bubbling around the pear-quince fruits: very GV. Very seductive. This is wonderfully wealthy, ample, and tongue-coating on the palate, with plenty of flavor action and as Danubian as you like: creamy, spicy, layered, and almost unctuous at the same time as it is vivid, fresh, sparkling, snowy, and pristine. A long, white-pepper and gingerbread finish. Spot on. I challenge anyone not to enjoy drinking this. | 93

SR | Intense in its yellow color, this 2018 Wachau

Veltliner is clear and aromatic on the elegant nose, with its leafy tobacco notes. Lush and fruity on the palate, this is a charmingly round, finessed, and salty Veltliner, with plenty of body as well. Very pleasant. | **90**

**Veyder-Malberg
Weissenkirchner Ried
Buschenberg Riesling
Wachau Spitzer Graben 2018** | **92**
(13.5% ABV)

SB | Although one senses the underlying fruit, this is still closed on the nose. Rich and forthright, this has drive and tension, with admirable texture to ensure there's no hint of blowsiness. Citric and mineral, this seems well-composed, but remains inexpressive, which is not surprising in a young Wachau, even from this vintage. It's the energy and propulsion that impresses here, but give it three years or more. Delightfully long and tangy on the finish. | **94**

AJ | Mid-gold. Sweet, warm, and enveloping, with notes of vanilla pod, Virginia tobacco, strawberry jam and apricot jam, too. The higher up the quality pyramid we go, the "more Danubian" the wines get, and the more we leave behind the Northern orchard-fresh ideal. This is soundly fruity on the palate (apple and plum), with good concentration and drive; the lemon-pineapple acidity is sustained and indeed dramatic. An exciting wine, but just a little bit strained in its articulation. | **90**

SR | Intense and spicy on the nose, with bright, ripe fruit aromas, this is not fully dry but a concentrated and finessed Riesling, with power, elegance, and a juicy intensity. | **93**

**Domaine Wachau Ried
Achleiten Riesling Smaragd
Wachau 2018** (14% ABV) | **92**

SB | The nose is very ripe, with apricot and apple compote aromas. Rich but assertive, with a firm attack, and the ripe fruit is supported by impressive but ripe acidity. There's no softness or slackness here. There's a certain grandeur as it cruises along the palate, joining fruit with minerality and leading to a long, dry, and almost austere finish. Imposing. | **93**

AJ | Delicate mid-gold. Ravishingly perfumed and intense: beautifully ripe orange and tangerine fruit and Cox's Orange Pippin fruits, too, with intense floral aromas of freesia and violet. Just a little vanilla cream behind. A gorgeous aromatic profile, and it's very hard not to leap into the wine after smelling this. So, in we leap... I'm not, in fact, quite as enthusiastic about the palate as about the aromatic profile, though it is very good: ringing, resonant, bell-like, and retaining many of the floral notes that were apparent on the aroma. But the acidity is very dominant in its overall structural build, and for me it finishes just a little bit hard—though in aromatic terms it is one of our leading wines. Fine concentration, too. This is perhaps a wine to keep longer, to see if it can dredge up a little intercellular fat and richness with time, which is not apparent as yet... | **91**

SR | This Riesling is more reductive on the concentrated and flinty, spicy nose. The palate shows a pure, fresh, and lean character, with good freshness and a bright fruit. Pure and salty

on the long and fresh, yet not super-complex finish. | **92**

**Weingut Bründlmayer Ried
Langenloiser Spiegel Vincent
Grüner Veltliner 1 ÖTW
Kamptal 2018** (14.5% ABV; SC) | **91**

SB | Lovely nose, with stone fruits and tropical fruit, too; thus exotic without being overblown. Broad and velvety, with a succulent texture making up for the slight lack of energy and precision. There's both minerality and acidity on the mid-palate, giving some complexity and structure. A distinct tanginess sets this apart from many others and enlivens the finish. Long. | **92**

AJ | Mid depth of gold. Ample, sweet, spicy warmth and scents of summer plant growth with quieter green-plum fruits beneath. There's just a faint reductive touch also. Bright, fresh, full, and forceful on the palate, with plenty of cut and edge. A GV that thinks it's a Riesling. | **86**

SR | Intensely yellow in color, this 2018 Veltliner is deep, pure, and fine on the complex and refined, mineral nose. Full-bodied, intense, and very salty on the palate, this is a Burgundian Veltliner of immense complexity, tension and finesse. The wine is silky textured, bone-dry, self-confident, has a fine grip and a sustainable structure, with the finest tannins from the aging in oak. It will age for decades. This is a new dimension for Grüner Veltliner, and readers shouldn't miss it. | **96**

**Schloss Gobelsburg Ried
Heiligenstein 1 ÖTW Kamptal
Riesling Kamptal 2018** | **91**
(13.5% ABV)

SB | Ripe apple and apricot nose, though it doesn't show much lift or piquancy. Rich and generous, this is concentrated and forceful, with a taut structure rather than strong acidity to give it some drive. The ripe stone fruits are

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persuasive, and there is a welcome sweet and sour tone on the finish, which does show some length. | **91**

AJ | Bright pale gold. This has alluring, enticing, but rather forceful aromas of lemon pastille, verbena, oil of orange, and Cascade hops. Aromatically very resourceful. After a little while in the glass, this heady torrent of aromas calms somewhat and something more fine-grained and sculptured emerges: sweet vanilla cream laps around citrus ice. Very appealing scents, unique, very Danubian also in its melange of the freshly fruity and the satisfyingly rich. On the palate, this is an excellent and exciting wine, a starburst of citrus and apple, which nonetheless contrives to cruise through a lengthy central palate profile toward something structured, vinous, sustained, and food-friendly. Maybe a little stony and saline, too, though those aren't the front-of-house notes. An impressive Kamptal Riesling. | **91**

SR | Radiant yellow color. Late-picked Riesling aromas, with stony intertwined with ripe and concentrated stone-fruit scents. Intense and complex, even somewhat flinty. Traditional, very elegant style. The palate is pure, fresh, and salty, pretty complex and highly digestible. This makes it already a great pleasure to drink. The salinity on the finish is really remarkable, and so is the acidity, which is stunningly fresh and coolish for a warm vintage like 2018. | **92**

**Franz Hirtzberger Ried
Singerriedel Riesling Smaragd
Wachau Spitz 2018** (13.5% ABV) | **91**

SB | This seems slightly overripe on the nose with its peach and apple compote aromas. A bit sweet on the palate, too, and slack thanks to its lowish acidity. Disappointing, lacking in force and personality and structure. | **86**

AJ | Mid-gold in a relatively deep gold (Spitz-/Spitzer) flight. Fresh, pure, mellow fruits; beautifully defined and sustained, with none of the exaggeration or freakiness that can beset wines at this level. Apple, nectarine, and peach: spot on. This casts the perfect fruit spell. On the palate, it is richly fruity, intense, deep, pure, and seductive. I doubt there is a wine here that has more intense fruit essences than this, and you can't but revel in them. They are southern, Danubian, ample, citrusy, as well as orchard, comforting and comfortable; pristine and pure, with superb definition. Very fine work here. | **94**

SR | Ripe tropical-fruit aromas, with mango and crystalline terroir flavors lead to a rich and fruity, pretty tropical bouquet. The palate is pure, fresh, and salty, but also powerful, rich, and aromatic. | **92**

**Högl Ried Bruck Alte Parzellen
Riesling Smaragd Wachau
Spitzer Graben 2018** | **91**
(14.5% ABV)

SB | Very ripe yellow-fruits nose, mirabelles and apricots. The attack is supple and juicy, less vibrant and taut than expected. Indeed, there is a slight souppiness here, and a weak softness of texture. There's little energy or drive, nor much extract or minerality. A shame, as the fruit quality is attractive. | **88**

AJ | Mid- to deep straw-gold. Complex, full, and

rich: a beautiful weave of apple, peach, honey, cardamom, and barley sugar. Classical and fine. Generous, deep, honeyed, and mellow, though with less absolute fruit intensity, for example, than [Franz Hirtzberger Ried Singerriedel Riesling Smaragd Wachau Spitz 2018]. This more than makes up, though, with its nuts and white-chocolate richness and doughy, vanillic finish. Gorgeous and toothsome. Another outstandingly seductive effort, which trowels on the layers and the pleasure. | 93

SR | Golden-yellow in color and with a deep, fine, and elegant bouquet of white-fruit and tea-leaf aromas, this is a very elegant and substantial Riesling, with a lingering salinity, purity, and finesse. Powerful and rich, as well as tense and salty. Rich but promising. | 93

Weingut Knoll Dürnsteiner Riesling Ried Schütt Smaragd Trocken Wachau 2018 | 91
(13.5% ABV)

SB | Light, zesty, orange-peel nose, bright and perky. The nose is richer and broader than the nose would suggest, but there's good concentration of fruit here, and the acidity creeps up on the mid-palate and finish. Too young and needs time to harmonize. Possibly not a Smaragd wine, but it's balanced and intense, with a finish that shows potential. | 92

AJ | Pale silver-gold. Beguilingly floral fruits here, with a sweet Virginia-tobacco and vanilla undertow: complex and refined. Fresh and juicy, yet sweet and rich, too. The palate is concentrated and gushing, intricate, with ample apple, plum, and almost brandy-like flavors, yet bright with acidity and very clean-finishing. A tender yet ample and expressive Riesling of marked Danubian style (those ample contours). Exciting stuff. | 92

SR | Bright and concentrated fruit aromas on the rich and slightly flinty nose, with its crushed-stone aromas. Rich, round, and almost sweet on the palate, this is a concentrated and still fruit-driven Veltliner, with an intense and aromatic taste, a fine mineral structure, and a long and powerful finish. This wine will drink better in the future than today, when it is dominated by fruit and an inorganic (added?) acidity. | 90

Weingut Knoll Loibner Ried Loibenberg Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Trocken Wachau 2018 | 91
(13.5% ABV)

SB | Vibrant apricot nose, and herbal without being herbaceous. Rich and concentrated, this has underlying firmness and vigor, as well as breadth of fruit. Perhaps a touch more acidity would be welcome, but it's balanced, with a fairly long, nutty finish. | 90

AJ | Pale to mid-gold. Clear, fresh, and full: fine fruits and a tobacco-leaf warmth. Very soundly appealing. Clean, fresh and pure: a tight-drawn skin of flavor for GV, with less texture than many, yet the concentration, purity, and finishing flavory complexities are very impressive. This pristine, tight-drawn style makes it a GV for Riesling lovers. | 90

SR | Intense, super-ripe, and concentrated on the nose, this Veltliner reflects the extraordinary

PURE, FRESH, AND COMPLEX ON THE NOSE, AND ALSO SPICY. EXCITING! THE PALATE IS LUSH AND CREAMY YET FINESSED AND FRESH, WITH REMARKABLE ELEGANCE AND STIMULATING BITTERS ON THE FINISH. LEAN AND ELEGANT, MINERAL STYLE. GOOD AGING CAPACITY BUT ALREADY A PLEASURE

warm and early vintage, exhibiting some tropical-fruit aromas intermixed with weathered stones. Full-bodied and powerful on the palate, this is a firm and mineral Veltliner, with a clear, bright fruit, a long and intense finish, and a sustainable, stimulating salinity. | 92

Martin Muthenthaler Ried Schön Grüner Veltliner Wachau Spitzer Graben 2018 | 91
(12.5% ABV)

SB | The nose is charming and lifted, with ripe apricot fruit. Rich and pump, this has a sleek texture and pretty stone-fruit flavors. It's not especially mineral or punchy, but it has immediate appeal and sufficient acidity to give some tang and bite on the finish. Not my ideal Spitzer GV, but a wine with wide appeal. Quite long. | 90

AJ | Perhaps the deepest gold that we have seen from 2018, though not by a wide margin. Ample spicy, almost beefy fruits overlain by a warm, roast-spice note: very lush, broad-beamed, and Danubian. On the palate, too, this is the swashbuckling pirate among our GVs, ample in every dimension with lots of nougatine richness. Perhaps some of the fruit has slipped the leash, but there are ample rewards as well. | 90

SR | Subtle hints of oak but pure and fresh on the nose, this is an elegant and spicy, vital and finessed Veltliner, with a lingering salinity, finesse, and tension. This is a great Veltliner from the coolish Spitzer Graben, with a clear and piquant fruit and a long finish with finesse, as well as tension. | 93

Weingut Bernhard Ott Ried Feuersbrunner Rosenberg 1 ÖTW Trocken Grüner Veltliner Wagram 2018 | 91
(13% ABV; SC)

SB | Lean and precise lime nose, and with a whiff of the white pepper so often attributed to GV but so often not in evidence. Rich and opulent, this

is full-throttle Wagram, with bags of fruit and some depth of flavor. The finish shows a light minerality, too. Not a very complex wine, but on its own terms balanced and harmonious. Quite long. | 90

AJ | Pale silver-gold, indeed almost green-gold, with fresh, leafy, green-apple scents. Seems simple, yet has ample youthful appeal. Lively and fresh, with more lift and athleticism than our other Wagram GVs; clean, fresh, peppery, doughy, sappy, and stony. It doesn't quite have the mid-palate wealth of its Wagram peer [Weingut Bernhard Ott Ried Feuersbrunner Spiegel 1 ÖTW Trocken Grüner Veltliner Wagram 2018], but the style is different, and it is very close behind, with plenty of delicious drinking appeal. | 89

SR | Citrus-yellow color. Pure, fresh, and chalky flavors on the dense and complex yet bright nose, with its ripe, white-fruit aromas. Lush, piquant, and salty on the palate, this is a remarkably finessed and tensioned style of Veltliner. So pure, fresh, and elegant, but tensioned and spicy on the finish. Very young, very precise, and with a gorgeous phenolic grip. This is where Veltliner is kissing Riesling. | 94

Weingut Bernhard Ott Ried Feuersbrunner Spiegel 1 ÖTW Trocken Grüner Veltliner Wagram 2018 | 91
(13% ABV; SC)

SB | There's admirable spice on the nose, as well as attractive lime and pear fruit. Juicy and succulent, this has an engaging generosity without being heavy. The acidity is modest but it doesn't lack nuance or subtlety. Not a wine for long aging, but it's less one-dimensional than many others. Fairly long, with a nutty finish. | 90

AJ | Pale gold in color. This is wine 9, and is the first one so far that I feel has what are, for me, the classic Danubian appeal: aromatic amplitude and wealth, with a rich spectrum of fruits with late-summer charm and sweetness. Some haunting spice, too, behind the dripping peach and nectarine. Pure and sustained, too, without the must-like notes of some of its peers. Very enticing. It's a little less pretty and charming than that on the palate, but is still full-flavored, doughy, structured, with ample fruity "chew" to it. Very sound and enjoyable wine. | 90

SR | Bright yet not pale in its white-golden color opens this Wagram Veltliner from chalky loess soils. Pure, fresh, and complex on the nose, and also spicy. Exciting! The palate is lush and creamy yet finessed and fresh, with remarkable elegance and stimulating bitters on the finish. Lean and elegant, mineral style. To be served with freshwater fish. Good aging capacity, but it's already a pleasure to enjoy today. | 93

Prager Ried Klaus Riesling Smaragd Wachau 2018 | 91
(13.5% ABV)

SB | Aromatic nose, with peardrop aromas that are slightly confected. But the attack is fresh and nimble, with reasonable concentration and some depth of flavor. It does lack some energy and punch, but it's accessible for those who like their Wachau young. Medium length. | 88

AJ | Pale to mid-gold. A soft but attractive profile

STEPHEN BROOK'S VERDICT

I have had three opportunities to taste white wines from the Danube region over the past year. The most recent vintages, 2017 and 2018, were impressive initially for their richness, but in some cases they lacked freshness and drive. These were very hot years with climatic conditions that are becoming the norm rather than the exception. The wines, especially the Grüner Veltliners, had abundant fruit but could also be heavy.

Yet the wines continue to improve as time goes by, shedding some puppy fat and revealing more structure and energy. To some extent, this may reflect tasting conditions rather than the evolution of the wines—it's hard to be sure. But it's evident that there are many magnificent, world-class wines in 2018.

It wasn't that surprising that the cooler subregions produced some of the best wines. Spitz in the Wachau has less moderating

influence from the Danube, and the wines preserve acidity, an advantage in these years. The same is true of the Senftenberg subregion of the Kremstal, which lies inland. The main producers here are Proidl and Nigl, and their wines certainly delivered the goods.

The terraced vineyards of the Wachau, as so often, were the source of the most intense and complex wines, both Grüner Veltliner and Riesling. The primary rock soils of the Senftenberg, as well as Heiligenstein in the Kamptal, overcome any vintage deficiencies.

Wines from the more easterly regions such as Wagram and Traisental lagged behind, as here the summer heat may have done the wines no favors. Loess soils bring opulence and suppleness to Grüner Veltliner, but those weren't necessarily the qualities to highlight in these vintages.

TOP WINES

Prager Ried Zwerithaler Kammergut Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Wachau 2018 **95**

Martin Muthenthaler Viesslinger Stern Grüner Veltliner Wachau Spitzer Graben 2018 **94**

FX Pichler Ried Kellerberg Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Wachau 2018 **94**

Veyder-Malberg Weissenkirchner Ried Buschenberg Riesling Wachau Spitzer Graben 2018 **94**

Schloss Gobelsburg Ried Lamm 1 ÖTW Kamptal Grüner Veltliner Kamptal 2018 **93**

Proidl Senftenberg Ried Hochacker 1 ÖTW Kremstal DAC Reserve Riesling Trocken Kremstal 2018 **93**

Proidl Senftenberg Ried Ehrenfels 1 ÖTW Kremstal DAC Reserve Grüner Veltliner Trocken Kremstal 2018 **93**

Domaine Wachau Ried Achleiten Riesling Smaragd Wachau 2018 **93**

Domaine Wachau Ried Achleiten Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Wachau 2018 **93**

Weingut Bründlmayer Ried Langenloiser Spiegel Vincent Grüner Veltliner 1 ÖTW Kamptal 2018 **92**

Weingut Knoll Dürnsteiner Riesling Ried Schütt Smaragd Trocken Wachau 2018 **92**

Nigl Ried Hochacker 1 ÖTW Privat Riesling Kremstal 2017 **92**

Nikolaihof Riesling Vinothek Wachau 2002 **92**

Franz Hirtzberger Ried Axpoint Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Wachau Spitz 2018 **91**

Schloss Gobelsburg Ried Heiligenstein 1 ÖTW Kamptal Riesling Kamptal 2018 **91**

Salomon-Undhof Ried Kögl Riesling 1 ÖTW 2018 **91**

Alzinger Ried Steinertal Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Wachau 2018 **91**

of citrus and hop oils (English aroma hops like Goldings or Fuggles). Quietly enticing. A lovely palate: very bright with acidity, and a real sense of poised, cusp-ripeness here, energetic and dancing. The apple fruits (less citrus here than in many; just a little lemon) are impeccably defined, and dominate the palate with just a little vanilla sparkle. Pure, refined flavors that linger long. An outstanding effort and the clearest evidence you could have that Riesling distinguishes itself with absolute clarity here from GV. **| 92**

SR | Deep, pure, and intense on the nose, this opens with a super-ripe and spicy bouquet. The palate is lean and aromatic, with super-ripe and overripe fruit aromas, but also a remarkable acidity. Pure and exciting but needs time. **| 93**

Proidl Senftenberg Ried Hochacker 1 ÖTW Kremstal DAC Reserve Riesling Trocken Kremstal 2018 (13% ABV; SC) **| 91**

SB | Bright citrus fruit leaps from the glass, giving finesse and poise. Fresh and zesty, compact and concentrated, with good depth

A LOVELY PALATE: VERY BRIGHT WITH ACIDITY AND A REAL SENSE OF POISED, CUSP-RIPENESS HERE, ENERGETIC AND DANCING. THE APPLE FRUITS ARE IMPECCABLY DEFINED AND DOMINATE THE PALATE WITH JUST A LITTLE VANILLA SPARKLE. PURE, REFINED FLAVORS, WHICH LINGER LONG

of fruit and exuberant minerality. This may be from the northern Kremstal, with its rockier soils. Whatever the source, it overcomes the sometimes excessive ripeness of the vintage and shows a welcome firmness and grip, as well as a robust, structured finish. Good length, with some mouth-watering acidity. **| 93**

AJ | Bright pale gold. Sweet and simpatico: crystallized orchard fruits, with hints of vanilla and cardamom. Pure and lifted: very enticing. Both concentrated and refined on the palate, and very Riesling, with its bright crystallized apple, pear, green plum, and nectarine just given enough Danubian warmth and wealth to linger and tease. An excellent Kremstal Riesling. **| 91**

SR | Bright, pure, and spicy on the elegant and stony nose, with ripe and partly raised Riesling flavors. The palate is tight, pure, and somewhat rustic, showing good grip. Well done but not really deep or complex. **| 89**

Alzinger Ried Steinertal Riesling Smaragd Wachau 2018 **| 90**
(13% ABV)

SB | Brisk, lively, and lifted nose, with scents of lime and apple. Unlike the nose, the palate is rich and forward, with considerable breadth of fruit. It's quite concentrated, with a light mineral tone but not much weight or density. Relatively approachable for a young Wachau Riesling, but it seems balanced and reasonably long. **| 89**

AJ | Mid-silver-gold in color. Sweet and fresh, with just a touch of doughy charm: pretty. On the palate, the wine is light and ballerina-like but with impressive intensity of grape, apple, and white-cherry fruit; acidity dominates the structure from start to finish, but it's ripe and resonant acidity. **| 90**

SR | Bright yet ripe fruit aromas on the elegant nose of this 2018 Riesling from the Wachau. The wine is pure, fresh, and salty on the palate, showing a firm tannin structure and lots of power. It is bright and fresh but very ripe, showing some bitters on the finish. Still young, it will benefit from bottle aging. **| 92**

Weingut Bründlmayer Ried Zöbinger Heiligenstein Riesling Alte Reben 1 ÖTW Kamptal 2018 (13% ABV) **| 90**

SB | Juicy lime nose with a slight waxiness, too. Plump and juicy, but there is a distinct lack of acidity and flair. I find this rather leaden for Riesling and thus a throwback to some of the heavy Kamptal wines from the past. And yet there is some minerality on the finish that gives it some nuance and persistence. **| 88**

AJ | Mid-gold in color. Slightly raw, green aromas with a little evident free sulfur; angelica and quince behind. Rough and ready compared to the best of its peers. The palate, too, has a rather raw, half-finished quality to it, and for me the wine is clearly adrift of its Kamptal peer [Schloss Gobelsburg Ried Heiligenstein 1 ÖTW Kamptal Riesling Kamptal 2018], though it has admirable concentration and depth of lime-citrus fruit. Maybe some more bottle time would improve matters? **| 86**

SR | White-golden in color, brilliant. The nose is terribly pure, deep, fresh, and terroir-driven.

Phenolic flavors and an immensely concentrated but spicy fruit. The palate is intense, pure, persistently salty, structured, and highly elegant. Unique style. The finish is not just salty but deep, intense, and structured by terroir and presumably old vines. There is a phenolic grip you don't find in the wines before. This is traditional in a modern way. Healthy fruits, phenolic grip, and great aging potential. Kamptal Riesling in a new dimension. Still needs years to reach its peak. | 96

Neumayer Ried Rothenbart 1 ÖTW Inzersdorf Riesling Trocken Traisental 2018 | 90
(13% ABV; SC)

SB | Muted nose, ripe citrus and pear. The attack is very ripe, and there seems to be a trace of sweetness. There is some balancing acidity, but overall it's attractive but simple, without much precision or complexity. Highly drinkable, but not structured or persistent. | 87

AJ | Certainly the palest wine of its flight of six: pale steel-gold with some spritz in the glass. Scents of hyacinth and jonquil and sappy plant growth. Zesty, light, refreshing, and spritzy: a glittery thirst-quenching Riesling with ample dessert apple and tangerine and some of those same floral notes the aromatic profile had sketched out. Delicious, mouthwatering stuff for relatively quick drinking. | 89

SR | Bright, pretty pale color, some CO₂. Clearly Riesling on the nose, with bright and concentrated yet very precise and well-defined white and yellow-fleshed fruit aromas that are intertwined with stony-chalky flavors and even some notes of rust and iron. Reductive, very precise and refreshing style. Lush and juicy on the palate, with intensity, finesse, and a delicate but sustainable mineral finesse and tension this is a highly delicate, balanced, and elegant dry Riesling, with a long and juicy finish. A gorgeous wine, with an immense aging capacity. Persistently salty. | 94

Neumayer Der Wein Vom Stein Inzersdorf Grüner Veltliner Trocken Traisental [Bio] 2018 | 90
(14% ABV; SC)

SB | There are mild pear aromas on the nose, but they don't exactly leap from the glass. The palate is ripe and juicy, very approachable, and with a trace of nuttiness that comes close to bitterness but is nonetheless attractive, and it adds some bite and textural complexity to the finish. Fairly long. | 89

AJ | Pale silver-gold. Slightly clumsy, putty-like scents, lacking some freshness and lift. After a little while in the glass, the wine freshens somewhat and grows more attractive, though without offering much aromatic detail. Fair concentration, depth and drive on the palate: medium-weight and medium wealth of honey orchard-fruit flavors. This seems a fuller wine than the Vienna GVs, and there is some attractive vinosity on the finish, too: a serious food proposition. | 88

SR | Bright, pale yellow color, some CO₂. Concentrated, bright, fresh, and delicate nose. The palate shows a full-bodied, lush, and intense, pretty fruity and powerful Veltliner, with a

somewhat tannic finish. The wine has structure, salt, and intensity but not the delicious finesse and elegance of the Riesling tasted before. It's certainly a long-distance runner that still needs time to combine its power and components in a seamless way. | 92

Nigl Ried Hochäcker 1 ÖTW Privat Riesling Kremstal 2017 | 90
(13.5% ABV; SC)

SB | Ripe apricot and quince nose, heady and lifted. Rich and juicy, this also seems a touch sweet despite a burst of acidity on the mid-palate. It's youthful, with plenty to give, and that citric acidity should keep it from becoming cloying. A different vintage, of course, and one with more tension and vibrancy. Still needs time, but it should unfurl nicely. Long, subtle finish. | 92

AJ | Pale, bright, and silvery. Clean, fresh lime with a little oatmeal richness: ample straightforward appeal. Intense, bright, tight-squeezed lime juice, with just enough dessert-apple sweetness to save it from being mouth-puckering. Clean and lean: the new Danubian look, perhaps. High quality here, though, with excellent fruit purity. | 90

SR | Bright color, bright and fresh white-fruit aromas on the elegant, pure, and well-concentrated, also stony nose. Very fruity on the palate, this is a piquant, fresh, and reductively styled Riesling, with a lingering salinity and somewhat rustic grip. Not very long. | 89

Nikolaihof Riesling Vinothek Wachau 2002 (12.5% ABV) | 90

SB | Not sure what this wine is doing here, but it's a welcome guest. The appley nose is delectable, though I'd have guessed GV rather than Riesling. It certainly has poise and elegance. Still fresh on the attack, this is sleek and supple but has ample concentration and it's not flagging. The finish is quite mineral without exaggeration. Eminently drinkable. Quite long. | 92

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AJ | Bright gold. Sweet, fresh, and enticing, with walnut-skin and furniture-polish complexities over relatively restrained fruit notes. Still very "young"; contrariwise, should it not be doing a little more than this after more than 15 years? Vivid and fresh on the palate, but relatively slight and without much Danubian grandeur, alas. Well-preserved, but not enormous fun. | 86

SR | This is exceptionally clear, pure, and mineral on the matured nose. Pretty round and sweet on the palate, this is a medium-bodied and slightly tannic Riesling, with remarkable finesse and mineral tension. Very salty, grippy, and tensioned, but already pretty mature. Fine tannins. | 93

Rudi Pichler Ried Achleithen Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Wachau 2018 (14% ABV) | 90

SB | Curiously waxy nose, with aromas reminiscent of the skins of red Canadian apples, though not to the extent of being confected. Juicy and super-ripe, this seems very forward, with low acidity and a distinct sucrosity. It lacks bite and tension and persistence. A crowd-pleaser, not my idea of Wachau GV. Moderate length. | 87

AJ | Bright mid-gold. Fresh orchard fruits, with some ground-hazel richness and soft spice: quiet and unshowy, but attractive. Some spring-bulb plantiness, too. Vivid, lively, deep, searching, with plenty of forthright vigor and push, all built around a sound core of rich, orchard fruits. There are vanilla and hazel notes on the finish. Exciting, vigorous wine. | 90

SR | Bright and clear on the reductive palate. Juicy, round, and pretty rich on the palate, this is a well-made and powerful Veltliner, with elegance and a certain finesse but lots of drive and salts. Needs time. | 92

Fritsch Ried Mordthall 1 ÖTW Ruppersthal Riesling Wagram 2018 (12.5% ABV) | 89

SB | Rich apricot nose, almost honeyed. This is soft on the palate, which is hardly unusual for Wagram, though this does seem a bit too plush. There is some underlying acidity, but it's too fractured to constitute a backbone. And it's low enough to give some excessive sucrosity to the fruit. Forward and juicy, so drink young for its youthful fruit, as it lacks structure. | 87

AJ | A fuller gold in color than our Vienna and Traisental wines. Expressively aromatic, too: sappy green leaf, bay leaf, clove-spiked apple, wet pumice. Enticing though almost urgent, hence a touch raw. Fresh and bright on the palate, with plenty of apple and lime fruits; sappy and long, with a dry finish. A kind of halfway house between the Rhine and South Australian styles. Well-made and expressive wine that might in fact be better with six more calming months in the bottle. | 88

SR | Golden-yellow color. The nose is intensely fruity and almost sweet, with delicate honey flavors and a remarkable concentration. Lush yet tight and mineral on the palate, this is a full-bodied, almost rich and powerful Riesling, with a lingering finesse and salinity on the finish. The wine is juicy, piquant, and salty and reveals a tight structure and an immense aging potential. Powerful and really long. | 93

**Fritsch Ried Schlossberg 1 ÖTW
Grüner Veltliner Wagram 2018** | **89**
(13% ABV)

SB | Spry, waxy, appley nose, with welcome aromatic immediacy. Broad and supple, this has lavish fruit and the presumably loess soils contribute to the cushiony succulence. Very drinkable, but not a wine of great structure or depth of flavor. The modest acidity keeps it short. | **88**

AJ | Full, rich gold. Creamier and richer than any of the GVs we encountered from Vienna or Traisental, this has lush, complex spice-and-fruit aromas, with plenty of bass notes. Some grassiness, too, though. Plenty to get your nose into, anyway, though satisfying rather than sublime. The palate is rather sinewy and coarse compared to the best of its peers, and the early season orchard fruits weighty, lacking zest and lift. An enjoyable wine nonetheless with fair concentration. | **85**

SR | Oh, this is a beautiful nose! Ripe but bright and fresh and with wet and slimy earthy notes that are perfectly intertwined with the ripe and elegant Veltliner fruit whose finesse is remarkable. The attack on the palate is Riesling-like, with a nervy, very delicate acidity. The mid-palate is really intense and juicy and leads to a sustained, fresh, complex, and persistently salty finish with lovely healthy bright fruit aromas and stimulating bitters. A gorgeous wine. | **94**

**Hajszan Neumann Ried
Haarlocke Grüner Veltliner
Wien Nussberg 2018** | **89**
(13.5% ABV; SC)

SB | This has a pleasing aromatic briskness, piquant and refreshing. The palate is surprisingly juicy, a good mouthful of fruit, but less nuanced and precise than the nose leads one to expect. But grapefruit acidity perks up the mid-palate and finish. A good wine for fairly early drinking, as it seems to lack the structure or grip for a long evolution. Moderate length. | **88**

AJ | Pale gold. Sweet, fresh, with some blossomy charm. A hint of musk rose, too; even tobacco leaf. The earthy touch is perhaps a little less appealing—damp earth. Fresh, vivid, cool, close-textured, acid-structured GV, with plenty of green pungency, cleanness, and length, though rather less aromatic charm than the aromatic profile had suggested might be on offer. Green apple again provides the fruit key (a Vienna trait?). | **86**

SR | Dense and pure on the well-concentrated and limestone-driven nose, this Nussberg Veltliner is remarkably fresh and precise on the nose and displays nutty and yeasty notes. On the palate, this wine is still young if not closed, yet full of mineral tension, finesse, and vitality. Really remarkable in its future potential, and with a stimulating, sustainable salinity. A great wine that has not nearly reached its peak yet. | **94**

**Hajszan Neumann Ried
Steinberg 1 ÖTW Riesling
Wien Grinzing 2018** | **89**
(14% ABV)

SB | Charming nose, distinctly floral, with aromatic lime fruit. Fresh attack, lively and

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A GORGEOUS WINE**

piquant, with fine acidity. This has energy and brightness and a welcome sweet and sour tone on the finish. Crisp, well made, and balanced, but not a great deal of depth or nuance. | **89**

AJ | Light gold in color. Sweet citrus and summer-fruit scents, slightly must-like in style. A little bit cloying rather than inviting, though vivid and with plenty of profile. The flavor has some concentration and attack, with plenty of green-apple fruit and a crisp acid balance—much more attractive, indeed, than the aromas suggested. Just beyond grassy in style, with plenty of force and vitality to it. | **88**

SR | The first wine of the tasting shows a bright color and bouquet, with a subtle, ripe fruit and some very discreet hints of botrytis. On the palate, this is a tight, vital, and vivacious dry Riesling with a juicy fruit, remarkable finesse, and a refreshing acidity. Nice tannin bitters and citric flavors on the structured yet still closed finish. Good tension. The wine is still young and shall benefit from further bottle aging. | **91**

**Loimer Langenlois Ried
Loiserberg 1 ÖTW Riesling
Kamptal 2018** | **89**
(12.5% ABV; SC)

SB | Breezy nose, ripe citrus with a dash of spice. Up front and juicy, this is dominated by primary fruit, so there is little subtlety or complexity. Citrus gives a Riesling footprint. A solid mouthful of wine, to be sure, and there is a light acidic backbone and minerality, but they don't come across with sufficient force. Quite long. | **89**

AJ | Pale bright gold. Lots of bulb-like hyacinth and jonquil aromas when freshly poured, though these "ferment" aromas clear after a while. Vivid, fresh, and lively on the palate, but little aromatic intricacy or embroidery here. Refreshing, lively drinking nonetheless, with both zest and zip and a Danubian wealth of fruit—apple, pear, plum. | **87**

SR | After some really terroir-driven wines, this is a bright, pure, and fruity Kamptal Veltliner

that brings back spring into your glass. Crushed stones here as well. On the palate, this is a rather lithe and fruity Veltliner that lacks the depth and complexity of the former wines. It's enjoyable but rather simple in its dimensions and structure. Still very good and delicate, but not really dramatic. Some just-ripe or even greenish flavors here as well. White apples. Green skins. | **90**

**Nigl Ried Pellingen 1 ÖTW
Privat Grüner Veltliner
Kremstal 2017** | **89**
(13.5% ABV; SC)

SB | Plump, luxurious stone fruits on the rather exotic nose. It's generous and succulent, relatively forward, and the acidity seems modest. Perhaps a tad overripe, though it shows ample fruitiness rather than nuance or structure. Quite long. | **89**

AJ | Pale gold, with lots of sweet, fresh, but unfocused lift. Attractive if not mesmerizing. Full, limpid, and satisfying, without shooting the lights out; lots of orchard-fruit wealth here in the concentrated, long, though not intricately detailed palate. | **88**

SR | Concentrated, dense, and aromatic on the nose, with fruity, as well as stony, herbal, and spicy notes. The palate is pure and salty but also lush, bright, and juicy, yet with a good phenolic grip and tension. The acidity is quite disjointed. Very elegant but rather two-dimensional. | **91**

**Rudi Pichler Ried Achleithen
Riesling Smaragd Wachau 2018** | **89**
(14% ABV)

SB | There's a ripe and gentle character to the stone-fruits nose. Supple and approachable, it seems a touch slack for Wachau Riesling and lacks some drive and tension. Plenty of ripe fruit, to be sure, and fair acidity, but less persuasive than many others, and less concentrated, too. Fairly long. | **88**

AJ | Pale silver-gold. Lots of those typically post-fermentative hyacinth and jonquil aromas: attractive but quite commonplace. Zesty and fresh, with some citrus, as well as an attractive dessert-apple sweetness. Not hugely subtle, however. | **87**

SR | Intense yet pure on the nose, this is a rich and round, pretty sweetish and juicy Riesling, with the richness and power of Veltliner. It's powerful, textured, and sexy—but Riesling? Needs time. | **92**

**Salomon-Undhof Ried Lindberg
Grüner Veltliner 1 ÖTW
Kremstal 2018** | **89**
(13.5% ABV; SC)

SB | Bright juicy lime nose. This is sumptuous and generous and may well come from the loess sectors. While it doesn't have outstanding acidity, it has an engaging fruitiness, even while flirting with an overt sweetness of fruit. It does lack persistence, though, and should probably be enjoyed fairly young. | **88**

AJ | Pale. Soft, expressive orchard fruits combined with a graceful, plenty freshness. Sweet, lively, vivid—all those orchard fruits are there on the palate, with some slightly darker nut-skin flavors, too, and the finish is very choice

ANDREW JEFFORD'S VERDICT

This was a sensationally good tasting of very exciting wines. But it wasn't consistent—there were poor wines, as well as inspiring and profound wines. To work at the highest quality levels here evidently requires great commitment and attention to detail. But when these human qualities are united with the greatest Danubian terroirs, then the result is truly unique. How best to describe it? This is really the place (even more so than Alsace) where the northern ideals of European white-wine making arrive at a kind of southern apotheosis. The northern ideal privileges fruit and fruit definition, freshness,

resonant fruity acidity, balance, the qualities of the pristine and the pure, transparency and translucence, a stoniness if you like also, grace and athleticism, lift and aerial poise... The southern apotheosis is to do all these things with a succulence, a richness, a texture, a depth, and a level of fruited gratification that the north can never manage. It is Protestantism jollied by Catholicism, or Catholicism ennobled by Protestantism; it is where the austere, sheer cliffs meet the winking sunlit river. It happens here; it's gorgeous, and it produces some of the greatest white wines in the world.

TOP WINES

- Högl Ried Schön Alte Parzellen Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Trocken Wachau Spitzer Graben 2018 **95**
- Franz Hirtzberger Ried Singieriedel Riesling Smaragd Wachau Spitz 2018 **94**
- FX Pichler Ried Kellerberg Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Wachau 2018 **93**
- Högl Ried Bruck Alte Parzellen Riesling Smaragd Wachau Spitzer Graben 2018 **93**
- Schloss Gobelsburg Ried Lamm 1 ÖTW Kamptal Grüner Veltliner Kamptal 2018 **92**
- Weingut Knoll Dürnsteiner Riesling Ried Schütt Smaragd Trocken Wachau 2018 **92**
- Prager Ried Klaus Riesling Smaragd Wachau 2018 **92**
- Franz Hirtzberger Ried Axpoint Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Wachau Spitz 2018 **92**
- Prager Ried Zwerithaler Kammergut Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Wachau 2018 **91**
- Domaine Wachau Ried Achleiten Riesling Smaragd Wachau 2018 **91**

- Schloss Gobelsburg Ried Heiligenstein 1 ÖTW Kamptal Riesling Kamptal 2018 **91**
- Proidl Senftenberg Ried Hochäcker 1 ÖTW Kremstal DAC Reserve Riesling Trocken Kremstal 2018 **91**
- Veyder-Malberg Weissenkirchner Ried Buschenberg Riesling Wachau Spitzer Graben 2018 **90**
- Weingut Knoll Loibner Ried Loibenberg Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Trocken Wachau 2018 **90**
- Martin Muthenthaler Ried Schön Grüner Veltliner Wachau Spitzer Graben 2018 **90**
- Weingut Bernhard Ott Ried Feuersbrunner Spiegel 1 ÖTW Trocken Grüner Veltliner Wagram 2018 **90**
- Alzinger Ried Steinertal Riesling Smaragd Wachau 2018 **90**
- Nigl Ried Hochäcker 1 ÖTW Privat Riesling Kremstal 2017 **90**
- Rudi Pichler Ried Achleithen Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Wachau 2018 **90**

and succulent (and Danubian). An exceptionally attractive wine only denied a top score by its lack of aromatic intricacy and finesse. | **89**
SR | Bright, ripe, and concentrated fruit aromas and delicately spicy notes on the nose lead to a lush, round, sweet, pretty rich and aromatic palate, with intensity, finesse, and grip. Somewhat sweetish on the finish, but that might help this Veltliner to age well. | **90**

Wieninger Nussberg Grüner Veltliner Wien Nussberg 2018 | **89**
 (13.5% ABV)

SB | Pretty and delicate lime nose, reticent but charming. This has some richness on the palate, and while lacking the attack of Riesling, has broad and generous fruit without straying into heaviness. Succulent lime and apple fruit, balanced and harmonious, with moderate length leading to a sweet and sour finish. | **89**
AJ | Pale, bright gold. Fresh, green, and quietly herbaceous: felted leaves and plant sap. Attractive rather than raw or unripe, but blind you might almost suspect this was a Sauvignon Blanc/GV blend. The palate follows through on the aromatic promise, with a cool, lean, sinewy, softly herbaceous style of GV—GV for Sauvignon lovers. Well done on its own style terms, though my own personal preference is for something a

little more ripe and more ample. | **86**
SR | Earthy and vegetal (leek) aromas on the nose of the 2018 Nussberg Grüner Veltliner ask for aeration. This wine doesn't want to show much at this stage. The palate is dense, fresh, and tight, and the finish really mineral, with

OAKY FLAVORS MIX WITH THE FLAVORS OF RIPE AND HEALTHY VELTLINER GRAPES AND GINGER NOTES. LUSH AND ELEGANT ON THE PALATE, WITH FINE TANNIN FROM THE OAK AND A RIPE AND ELEGANT YET VITAL AND FRESH ACIDITY. LINGERING SALINITY AND FINESSE

good phenols. However, the wine remains closed and is giving not much more than promises to improve over the next years. There is really a lot of tension, grip, and vitality here. | **92**

Wieninger Ried Rosengartel 1 ÖTW Riesling Wien Nussberg 2018 (13.5% ABV) | **89**

SB | Subdued apple and apricot nose, not very expressive now. Broad and juicy, clearly very ripe, with succulent pear and citrus fruit. It's not particularly racy or taut and shows the generosity of the vintage rather than great energy or persistence. Indeed, it does tail off on the finish. Drink young. | **87**
AJ | Bright gold with a little green. Honeyed, warm, almost savory aromas; some doughy freshness, too. Soft and low-focus, but attractive. That is what the palate delivers, too: well-rounded (in terms of fruit style rather than residual sugar) wine, mouth-filling and pure, with honeyed pear fruits. Lovely drinking here, though rather understated when you approach it. | **88**
SR | The 2018 Nussberg Riesling is very ripe and intense on the clear and concentrated nose that clearly represents its Muschelkalk limestone terroir. On the palate, this is a full-bodied and textured Riesling, with a remarkable mineral complexity, tension, finesse, and lingering salinity and freshness. The finish is tight but also aromatic and sensual. A great wine from Vienna with a remarkable aging potential. | **93**

Loimer Langenlois Ried Loiserberg 1 ÖTW Grüner Veltliner Kamptal 2018 (12.5% ABV; SC) | **88**

SB | The lime-scented nose is subdued and not expressive now. Rich and opulent on the palate but also somewhat soft, this doesn't have the bite and structure to go the distance, I'd guess. The acidity is modest, too. Nothing wrong with it, except that it seems rather dull and lazy. Moderate length. | **86**
AJ | Pale, bright gold. Fresh apple but cider apple, too, and something a little bit funky; not quite aromatically pristine. Bright, light, crisp, and zippy on the palate, and my anxieties about funk and cider are dropping away, but it is still relatively light and insubstantial alongside the best of its peers. Enjoyable drinking nonetheless. | **85**
SR | Oaky flavors intermix with the flavors of ripe and healthy Veltliner grapes and some ginger notes. Lush and elegant on the palate, with fine tannin from the oak and a ripe and elegant yet vital and fresh acidity, this is a pleasant Kamptal Veltliner with a lingering salinity and finesse. Excellent and ready to be served, though it can be aged for five to ten years or even more. | **93**

Nikolaihof Baumpresse Grüner Veltliner Im Weingebirge Wachau 2013 (12.5% ABV) | **88**

SB | Delicate and charming apricot nose from a ripe and graceful vintage. Broad and fleshy, this is softer than expected but has welcome succulence and sufficient acidity. It's evolving quite fast, though has sufficient concentration to keep it on a plateau for a while longer. | **90**

AJ | Mid-straw-gold. Earthy, deep, malty, warm: characterful but slightly over-cooked aromas, which lack a little freshness and lift. I appreciate it is aged, but the fruit has disappeared somewhat and this is just a little jammy. On the palate, too, this is a rather elemental wine, which is falling back on its component parts and does not make a good case for age. | **83**

SR | Here we are in another playground. The wine displays a mature and oxidative nose of oak-flavored mirabelles. Silky, round, and mature on the finessed palate, this Veltliner has some features of mature Champagne. It is nutty, pure, and tensioned, pretty advanced already. Oxidative flavors. | **92**

Proidl Senftenberg Ried Ehrenfels 1 ÖTW Kremstal DAC Reserve Grüner Veltliner Trocken Kremstal 2018 | **88**
(14% ABV; SC)

SB | Ripe apricot and pear nose. The attack is spicy and almost racy, with fine concentration of fruit and a mineral undertow. Fairly lean in structure, it nonetheless has abundant flavor and intensity. There's admirable tension here and a good acidic backbone that gives persistence. Still rather raw and youthful, this should evolve well. | **93**

AJ | Pale silver-gold. Forceful, slightly phenolic aromas of fruit and spring leaf; much less attractive than most. The palate, too, is rather forced and hard, lacking intricacy and grace. | **81**

SR | Intense in color and rich on the dense and aromatic nose, with its very ripe fruit aromas. This 2018 is a ripe and concentrated Veltliner, with purity, finesse, and mineral tension on the finish. It's still Veltliner rather than anything else (terroir), but it is pure, salty, and rich, with fine tannins on the slightly too sweetish finish. | **90**

Salomon-Undhof Ried Kögl Riesling 1 ÖTW 2018 | **88**
(13% ABV; SC)

SB | Perky lemony nose, direct and lively. Fresh and quite racy, this has good acidity and a welcome zestiness, even if it doesn't display great depth of flavor. There's ample grapefruit acidity but no unripeness. Perhaps lacking in complexity, but it shows tension and drive, and some mineral bite on the finish. | **91**

AJ | Quite a pale, silvery effort here, with slightly catty aromas, as if a little Muscat Ottonel has crept in. Superficially rather than profoundly attractive. The palate is short and rather brittle by comparison to the best of its peers. | **82**

SR | Floral and even crushed stony flavors on the bright and concentrated, pretty elegant and aromatic nose lead to a lush and juicy, nicely piquant and salty palate, which lacks depth and dimensions. A pleasant, if not very exciting, wine. | **90**

Veyder-Malberg Viesslinger Ried Bruck Riesling Wachau Spitzer Graben 2018 | **88**
(12% ABV)

SB | Juicy apricot and apple nose, fruity rather than mineral. Plump and broad, with lower

RIPE APPLE-COMPOTE AND STONE-FRUIT NOSE, BUT NOT BLOWSY AND SHOWING A CERTAIN RIGOR. RICH AND FIRM, THIS HAS CONCENTRATION AND STRUCTURE, WITH A LIGHT PHENOLIC CHARACTER THAT MAY BE AN EXPRESSION OF MINERALITY. IT'S TIGHT AND INTENSE

acidity than expected from Spitz. It lacks some tension, though there is ample dry extract. Not harmonious and a touch forward. Quite long. | **88**

AJ | Mid-gold. Striking, arresting aromas of malt biscuit (almost dog biscuit), ginger, crushed hazel, toasted grains, and milk chocolate: very articulate but a little idiosyncratic, and almost confronting. Vivid but still very malty on the palate, almost oddly so. Lots of good things here, too, notably a fiery bolt of acidity that carries the wine admirably and some luxury near-sweet flavors behind that acidity. But I find the overall maltiness somewhat disconcerting, and it doesn't have the intercellular richness of the very best GVNs in this tasting. | **85**

SR | New terroir, new game. This nose is pure yet intense and displays a concentrated, fresh, and spicy bouquet of pure fruit aromas intermixed with cereal notes. Sweetish but elegant on the palate, this is a pure, fresh, and vital Riesling, with an immense density and power. | **92**

Domaine Wachau Ried Achleiten Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Wachau 2018 | **88**
(14% ABV)

SB | Ripe apple-compote and stone-fruits nose, but not blowsy and showing a certain rigor. Rich and firm, this has concentration and structure, with a light phenolic character that may be an expression of minerality. It's tight and intense, as young Wachau should be, and has clear potential with more bottle age. It's not that nuanced now, but the balance seems right and it should open up with more time. | **93**

AJ | Mid-gold. Some rather forced aromatics here: apricot jam with just a whiff of vulcanization. Some might find it sweetly attractive, but I don't wholly trust this aromatic profile, which lacks purity and freshness alike. Intense and concentrated, but rather lurid in flavor. | **80**

SR | Just-ripe fruit aromas and even greenish flavors with nutty notes lead to a rich and concentrated palate, which reveals oaky notes and tannins and doesn't stimulate me much at this early stage. | **90**

Alzinger Ried Steinertal Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Wachau 2018 (13.5% ABV) | **86**

SB | Intense and dusty citrus nose, with a hint of talc. There's richness and weight here, perhaps to excess, though it's hard to argue with the opulence of fruit. A broader style that will please many, though I for one would prefer a bit more bite and tang. Still youthful and reserved, so there's room to expand in terms of aroma and nuance. Quite long. | **91**

AJ | Bright silver-gold color. Slightly odd, malt-biscuit and silage aromas: unattractive. A rather strange, unsuccessful, and heavy, malty white, alas. | **74**

SR | Clear, bright, and fresh yet ripe and concentrated on the nose. Very ripe, intense, and elegant on the palate, with a remarkable phenolic grip and lingering salinity this is an impressive wine but still in the Wachau context. Clear fruit, rich, fresh, and elegant but fruit-driven on the finish where, at least for my taste, a bit less could have been more. | **92**

FX Pichler Ried Kellerberg Riesling Smaragd Wachau 2018 | **86**
(13.5% ABV)

SB | There's a curious oiliness on the nose, which has pear-compote aromas. The attack is firm though not fierce, with good intensity of fruit and a distinct minerality. But there's also something a touch sweet and cloying that I find disturbing. It lacks energy and persuasiveness and just seems decidedly odd, though not unpleasant. Quite long. | **87**

AJ | Bright silver-gold in appearance. Rather raw, apple-core fruits on the nose here: "correct" but lacking in charm. Spritzy, zesty, zingy palate, with quite a lot of sweetness clinging to the appley acidity. Fun and enjoyable, though this wouldn't be a wine I'd keep for long; the fruit just doesn't have the requisite purity (the apple is always apple-core also, a faintly bitter coarse touch). | **84**

SR | Greenish and phenolic as well as super-aromatic flavors open to this Knoll-like 2018 Riesling with its ripe and juicy taste and its lovely salinity. The finish is fresh but indicates not fully ripe phenols. Somewhat rustic or simply unripe. | **88**

Weinbau Sackl Grüner Veltliner R Trocken Wien 2018 | **86**
(13% ABV; SC)

SB | Slight and reserved on the nose, with a hint of pears. Medium-bodied and supple, this lacks some energy and extract. It's certainly dry but there's little lift or personality. Forward and will develop fast. Modest length. | **86**

AJ | Very pale for this end of the tasting. Grassy, simple, sweet, light, with a slightly odd, bandage-like note. Not wholly attractive. The palate likewise. | **79**

SR | This wine is bright, fresh, and aromatic on the pure and just-ripe nose, with its intense and dried white-seed fruit aromas. On the palate, this is a fruit-intense, yet pure and salty Veltliner, with lots of power and mineral tension. Fine tannins. Very long and not really dry. | **92**