

GERMAN WINES AT A GLANCE

THE THIRTEEN GERMAN WINE-GROWING REGIONS AND THEIR WINES

AHR: Vigorous red wines. Steely, fresh white wines.

MOSEL-SAAR-RUWER: Racy, piquant wines with elegant fruit and fragrant bouquet. Vineyards often on steeply terraced hillsides.

MITTEL RheIN: Hearty, full-bodied wines with pronounced fruity acidity, from steeply terraced clayish slate soils.

RHEINGAU: Noble, racy, elegantly fragrant white wines, primarily from the King of Grapes, the Riesling.

NAHE: Fruity wines full of flavor, with refined fragrance in abundant variety.

RHEINHESSEN: Hearty, satisfying and refreshing white wines. Velvety smooth and mild red wines. One of the two largest German wine-growing areas.

RHEINPFALZ: Wines that range from robust and hearty to juicy, mild and thirst-quenching. Full-bodied and expressive. The second-largest wine-growing area in Germany.

HESSISCHE BERGSTRASSE: Full-bodied wines enlivened by refreshing, fruity acidity.

FRANKEN: Home of the Bocksbeutel or flagon-shaped bottle. Full-bodied masculine wines, rich in extract, expressive and individualistic.

WURTTENBERG: Hearty, fruity red wines with pronounced regional style. White wines with a robust character.

BADEN: Fragrant, aromatic white wines in plentiful variety. Velvety to hearty/vigorous red wines.

SAALE-UNSTRUT AND SACHSEN: Pleasant mostly light, dry white wines with a fruity acidity. Mostly consumed locally.

TYPES OF GERMAN WINES

There are two categories of wine allowed in Common Market countries: (1) "Table Wine" and (2) "Quality Wine from Specified Regions." In addition, Germany produces its famed "Qualitätswein mit Prädikat," "Quality Wine with Special Attributes."

GERMAN TAFELWEIN: Pleasant wines for everyday enjoyment. They may come from four different German Tafelwein regions and must be 100 percent German origin. The German Tafelwein should not be mixed up with foreign table wine or blends from other countries of the European Community.

GERMAN LANDWEIN -- THE SPECIAL TABLE WINE: Hearty, fresh regional wines, enjoyed

every day by the vintners themselves. Dry or medium-dry, they come from one of 17 approved Landwein regions, each with its own special characteristics.

QUALITATSWEIN b.A.: Light, refreshing, fruity wines from one of 13 official German wine-growing regions. Meant to be enjoyed young.

QUALITATSWEIN MIT PRADIKAT: The highest category of German wines. Elegant, noble and long-lived. There are six ascending levels of ripeness and quality:

KABINETT: Elegant wines made from fully ripened grapes. The lightest wines in the world. Low in alcohol.

SPATLESE: Literally, late-harvest. Balanced, well-rounded wines with the intensity of fully ripened grapes.

AUSLESE: Noble wines, intense in bouquet and taste, made from very ripe grapes, selected in bunches.

BEERENAUSSLESE: Rare and exquisite wines with the unmistakable honey-like aroma of botrytis ("Noble Rot"). Made from over-ripe grapes individually selected by hand.

EISWEIN: Wines made from grapes of Beerenauslese quality, harvested and pressed while frozen. Truly unique wines with a remarkable concentration of fruity acidity and sweetness.

TROCKENBEERENAUSSLESE: The crowning achievement of German viticulture. A wine made from individual grapes shriveled almost to raisins.

DIFFERENT TASTE STYLES

There are German wines for every taste and every occasion. "Trocken" (dry) and "Halbtrocken" (medium dry) is often indicated on the label. If the label gives no indication as to taste, the wine usually offers a harmonious balance of fruit and acidity.

GERMAN GRAPE VARIETIES

RACY, LIGHT, REFRESHING WINES:

WHITE: Riesling, Kerner
RED: Trollinger

MILD, BALANCED WINES:

WHITE: Muller-Thurgau, Silvaner, Gutedel
RED: Portugieser

FULL, AROMATIC WINES:

WHITE: Scheurebe, Morio-Muskat, Rulander, Gewurztraminer
RED: Spatburgunder

WINE AND FOOD

Germany's fruity, fresh and light wines are right for every occasion, from an informal snack or picnic to the most elegant dinner or reception.

DISHES WITH DELICATE FLAVOR AND LITTLE SEASONING: Mild, harmonious QbA and Kabinett wines are a good match. Many vegetables and mild sauces have a slightly sweet taste and call for a medium-dry wine or one with a hint of sweetness.

SPICY AND PIQUANT DISHES WITH PRONOUNCED AROMA: Racy, lively, fresh wines or full, aromatic ones from Qualitatswein through to Spatlese. Dry wines are also recommended.

CHEESE AND WINE: The standard rule -- mild foods with mild wines -- applies to cheeses as well; spicy cheese with more aromatic wines.

BEFORE AND AFTER MEALS: Germany's noble Spatlese and Auslese wines are distinctive on their own -- setting the tone for an evening or giving an elegant finishing touch.