

GOUT DE TERROIR ALSACE RIESLING: ON THE ROCKS

Tom Stevenson asked Essi Avellan MW and Marcel Orford-Williams to share the challenging task of trying to identify in a blind tasting which 2009 Alsace Rieslings came from granite and which from limestone

Riesling can adapt to so many soil types, but it is the most sensitive variety in reflecting that adaptation in the wines it produces. As granite and limestone are polar opposites, it should be simple to detect the differences between Riesling grown on two contrasting types of soil, shouldn't it? To simplify our task, we restricted the wines to essentially dry styles from a single preselected vintage. By focusing on dry styles, it would prevent varying levels of sweetness from obscuring the subtle influences of soil; and by limiting the wines to a single year, it would avoid variables, such as differing degrees of TDN (trimethylhydronaphthalene, responsible for the so-called petrol—kerosene, gasoline, or paraffin—aroma) and other anomalies of vintage. That is how three tasters were set up to fail miserably, and though Essi Avellan MW and Marcel Orford-Williams did not deserve what was coming, as the instigator of this little tasting, I surely deserved every humiliating moment.

Parameters for submission

We requested authentically dry Riesling from the 2009 vintage, grown on predominantly granite or limestone soil. The producers had to be confident the wines submitted would excel in quality and be expressive of their terroir. Our definition of authentically dry was less than 6 grams of residual sugar per liter; if 6 grams or more, the acidity-to-sugar ratio had to be at least 1:1 (that is, a wine with 6 grams of residual sugar must have at least 6 grams per liter of total acidity expressed as tartaric acid; a wine with 7 grams of

residual sugar must have at least 7 grams per liter of total acidity expressed as tartaric acid; and so on).

Only 24 of the 63 wines submitted had less than 6 grams of residual sugar, and of the rest, only one wine had an acidity-to-sugar ratio of at least 1:1. But by defining dry so strictly, we probably sorted some of the chaff from the wheat, attracting more of the drier off-dry wines than we might otherwise have received. Not that we did not get any sweeter wines, with a couple just under 20 grams, one with 25 grams, and we even had a Sélection de Grains Nobles (SGN) with no less than 96.6 grams!

The soil effect

Although soil is just one of the many components of terroir, soil does have a measurable effect of its own. For those who deny any influence of terroir, soil is nothing more than a growing medium in which drainage has the only discernible impact. Drainage is very important, but drainage should not be mentioned without aeration, which is essential for oxygen diffusion, through which the vine “breathes” oxygen via its roots.

Just as important as drainage is soil pH. Even if the primary nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium), secondary nutrients (calcium, magnesium, silicon, and sulfur), and micronutrients (aluminum, boron, copper, manganese, and zinc) are in plentiful supply in a vineyard, their availability to the vine is controlled by the soil's pH. As the most beneficial availability of nutrients occurs in soils with a pH of between 6.0 (slightly acid) and 7.0 (slightly alkaline), and the vine roots are most prolific in

root hairs (which facilitate the uptake of nutrients rather than the actual roots) at a pH of 5.7, a soil with a pH of between 5.7 and 6.0 is considered the holy grail for a vine's nutrient uptake. But the vine can deploy sufficient root hair growth to thrive on soils between a pH of 5.5 (acid) and 8.0 (alkaline). Though the vine manages to survive in soils well beyond these extremes, the availability of some nutrients in extremely acid and alkaline soils can make those nutrients toxic, while the restricted availability of other nutrients in such extreme soils will render the vine feeble due to the deficiency of those nutrients. There is also a relationship between water and soil pH; nutrients in dry soils are less available, though drainage and water retention are important. Water also increases the soil pH, but heat is another dynamic that affects growth, and heat retention and reflection favor drier, rockier soils. All these factors are purely related to the soil's chemistry, whereas microscopic organic life below the surface has a massive impact upon plant life above.

Relative degrees of moisture and warmth are vital for the microorganisms that promote healthy soil. Microorganisms, such as bacteria, algae, fungi, and protozoa form the microbial biomass, the biological engine that is the primary driving force for cycling elements such as carbon and nitrogen. The biomass decomposes organic matter, forms humus, replenishes soil nutrients, increases nutrient uptake, promotes root growth, and breaks down herbicides and pesticides. Vineyards can struggle to produce a tiny crop from a small biomass

even when vines are planted in a dry, rocky soil on the highest, steepest slope.

Ultimately, it is the biomass that supports the processes of sustainable production, but we know little of its constituent parts. There are estimated to be at least 40,000 different types of soil bacteria, algae, fungi, and protozoa worldwide, but we have identified less than one percent, and these are just the broad groupings. There are millions of different species. We know little about the processes performed even by those we have identified, so we know little about how the biomass works in detail.

The biomass data for soil studies associated with viticultural research is typically based on the evaluation of biomass's volume, respiration, and enzyme activity, which is like knowing a car's engine capacity, fuel consumption, and average speed, but not any of the specific engine parts or how they function. The biomass for two distinct terroirs bearing the same or similar soil can differ in size, volume, variety, and mix of microorganisms. To illustrate how the construction of the biomass in two different places can vary; in one study more than 4,000 types of bacteria per gram were found in a test patch of Alaskan soil, compared to 10,000 bacteria per gram in a Minnesotan test patch. Plus, only 20 percent of the bacteria was the same in both soils.

It is clear that soil can make huge differences to the growth of any plant, but the dynamics are so involved, with some elements impacting upon others, that the permutation of possible outcomes for even slight variations of the same soil are bewildering. Factor in different terroirs, different yields, different winemakers...

Riesling on granite or limestone?

Granite is a warm, acid soil, whereas limestone is a cooler, alkaline soil. But most of the terroirs the wines in this tasting came from are neither pure granite nor pure limestone, but a geologically more complex mix in which granite or limestone dominate to one degree or another. Furthermore, the other constituents in each mix have a tempering effect on various properties of the soil, particularly (but not exclusively) its drainage, aeration, pH, and heat. So the drier, more pebbly calcareous soils warm up the limestone,

while the clays and marls render them cooler and improve the moisture retention; the clays increase pH, the marls decrease it. The clays and marls also bring more nutrients and make the nutrients more available. Clays and marls are less evident on granite soils, which tend to be mixed with micas, schist, granitic sands, and granitic sandstone, all of which have an effect, but less markedly so than the additional components found in limestone soils.

Riesling is a late ripener, which makes it perfect for hard rock soils such as granite, since they quickly warm up in the sun, yet retain their heat well into the cool nights of late fall. This is why they say Riesling is best suited to granite soils, and has a remarkable ability to continue ripening at low temperatures late in the year, so it could be argued that with a longer, more drawn-out ripening, Riesling has an even greater potential on limestone.

What distinguishes a dry style of Riesling grown on granite from the same variety and style of wine grown on limestone? According to CIVA (Comité Interprofessionnel des Vins d'Alsace), "Alsace wines grown on granite are slimmer, more linear, more precise, more delicate, and finer than those grown on limestone, which are bigger, broader, more powerful, and often have a higher alcohol level (between 0.5 and 1% ABV). Granite wines often feel as if they have more acidity than they actually do because they are not masked by the power and size of a limestone wine."

Personally, I have never found Alsace Riesling grown on limestone to be

AVERAGE AND RANGE OF SCORES

	Average	Range
Essi Avellan MW	16	7-18
Marcel Orford-Williams	15	1-19
Tom Stevenson	16	7-19
All wines	16	1-19.5

broader than that grown on granite. A slightly higher alcohol, maybe richer, but the richness is guided by acidity, bringing exceptional length and focus to the wines. In my experience, limestone Rieslings have an elegance and a finesse that belie their richness, and the best are as linear as the best granite Rieslings.

The tasting

As we waited for the first wines to be poured, Marcel texted Josmeyer asking how they would describe the typicity of Riesling grown on granite and limestone. The answer came back rapidly, and it was similar to CIVA's definition. Céline Meyer said her father always tells her to think of Brand (granite) and Hengst (limestone) like a cross, with Brand as the vertical, representing linearity, and Hengst the horizontal, so broad. The Champagne part of my brain was formulating a blend of these two wines while my frontal lobes began to consider if maybe Riesling grown on limestone might be broader than I had otherwise imagined. It is because of the possibility of conflicting preconceived ideas that we started off with two calibration wines, one granite, the other limestone. Though we knew the soil

	Essi Avellan MW	Marcel Orford-Williams	Tom Stevenson
Granite ¹	10/17 ¹	9/17 ¹	7/17 ¹
Limestone ²	24/45 ²	18/45 ²	29/45 ²
Limestone and granite ¹	1/1	1/1	1/1
Missed wines	3	6	4
Correct score	35/63	28/63	36/63
Correct percentage	56%	44%	59%
Adjusted correct score ³	33/58	26/55	34/57
Adjusted percentage ⁴	57%	47%	60%
1. Includes one calibration wine for granite			
2. Includes one calibration wine for limestone			
3. Includes both calibration wines and the one limestone and granite wine as correct; includes the missed wines as part of the 63 wines			
4. Does not include the calibration wines, the number of missed wines, or (because either answer would be correct), the one limestone and granite wine			

these wines had come from, they were still tasted blind as far as everything else was concerned. CIVA had been asked to suggest two wines of good typicity without any inference of superior quality (which, as an interprofessional organization, CIVA would not have commented on anyway). We later discovered the calibration wines to be Henri Schoenheitz Alsace Riesling Linsenberg (granite) and Domaine Sipp Mack Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Rosacker (limestone). I found the granite calibration wine to be more fat than linear, as did Essi, and the limestone calibration wine was far from broad, with both Essi and me noting its “fine acidity” and no hint of breadth. But the latter wine had oaky aromas and a buttery finish (the Rosacker is stainless-steel fermented but spends three months aging in oak casks), which mitigated against its effectiveness as a calibrator.

As we found out after the tasting, of the 64 wines in total, 17 had been grown on granite, 46 on limestone, and one on a mix of granite and limestone. This emphasis on limestone reflects a fair approximation of the situation on the ground, where there are, for example, just nine predominantly granite grands crus compared to 35 that are limestone dominated.

If the objective was to demonstrate that granite and limestone induce styles of dry Riesling that are of such a contrast they are easy to tell apart, then this tasting was a dismal failure. Or, more likely, we tasters failed miserably.

Between us, we averaged 54.7% correct attributions, which is less than 5 percent more accurate than had we simply guessed the soil types without tasting a single wine! But I honestly believe our results have nothing to do with our ability to taste, and everything to do with the fact that we have never attempted to do this before. Marcel is, for me, one of the best tasters of Alsace wines I have met. Take a look at his top wines: who wouldn't want a mixed case of that? I am so jealous he was the only taster to have any Trimbach wines in his top scorers. Clos Ste Hune and Cuvée Frédéric Emile are two of the greatest Rieslings in the world, but they are vins de garde and can often be surly at this early age, unless you drink your way through a bottle, when they begin to

open up. But Marcel did not need to drink an entire bottle of these to see sufficient potential to rank them equal third (though in five years, when they start to show their real quality, I suspect they will be scoring even higher).

Theoretically, I was the most proficient at the soil guessing game, but not by much, and if the numbers are examined, it is clear I was hopeless at recognizing Riesling grown on granite! I also failed to recognize two of the best and most famous limestone Rieslings: the Trimbach wines. It was the fennel that misled me. First, because I have never noticed fennel in any Trimbach wine (not withstanding somebody unearthing a long-lost note to the contrary!). And second, because I always thought fennel was a descriptor I used for wines grown on acid soils; but according to this tasting, I used it four times out of five for wines grown on limestone soils. At least I have learned something from my mistake.

If we had previous experience of tasting granite-grown Riesling against limestone-grown Riesling, it is obvious we would have been much better at distinguishing soil types, though it is doubtful this would have affected our rankings. Perhaps we should have had three tasters from Alsace winemakers who vinify wines grown on granite and limestone year on year? Since they can tell their own wines apart with great accuracy, they would surely have stood a better chance of generally discerning one soil from the other in our tasting.

Any chemical differences between the wines grown on granite and limestone also proved elusive. After excluding the SGN and two sweetish wines (whose numbers would distort the analyses of the other essentially dry Rieslings), it is clear that the chemical structure of the wines tasted was very similar.

Pure quality

Putting the geological origin to one side, we also assessed the quality of the wines in the normal way and, as both Essi and Marcel point out, the tasting

was good and hugely enjoyable in that sense. When the scores of 7 or lower for those wines we individually considered to be faulty are removed, it is clear that there was a very slight predilection for limestone in my scoring and Marcel's, and a somewhat distinctive preference for Essi. There were some high-scoring wines among the granite Rieslings, including Marcel's top wine, but it was his only granite-grown top wine. As the color-coded top wines for each taster clearly illustrate, limestone Rieslings dominate 20 to six, but this is almost a perfect reflection of the disproportionate number of limestone-grown wines in the tasting as a whole. A perfect reflection would have been 19 to seven, but as indicated, there was a slight predilection for limestone, so the numbers are one out.

Unfortunately, there are no descriptors in our notes unique to one or the other soil. There are not even descriptors that feature prominently for one soil and only occasionally for the other. I even went to the trouble of running the notes through a word count and analysis program, adjusting the results to even out the disproportionate number of notes per soil type. We know that soil fundamentally affects in many ways the growth of the vine and, so the composition of the grapes and then the style of the wine those grapes produce. And we know that winemakers who work with these soil types can tell the wines apart with unerring accuracy, so it is not unreasonable to assume that they would have been far more successful at distinguishing Rieslings grown on granite from those grown on limestone in this tasting. However, I doubt that even a 100 percent successful identification by all three tasters would have resulted in notes from which it would be possible to distill distinctive terroir-driven descriptors for either limestone or granite.

Whatever the original objective of this tasting might have been, the one thing it demonstrates beyond doubt is the pure quality of Alsace Riesling.

	Alcohol ¹	Residual Sugar ²	Total Acidity ³	pH
Granite	13.3	7.1	4.54/6.99	3.20
Limestone	13.4	6.7	4.60/7.07	3.15

Notes: 1.Expressed as alcohol by volume. 2.Residual sugar expressed in grams per liter.
3.Expressed in grams per liter as Sulfuric/Tartaric

18.5 | **Cave Vinicole de Hunawihr**
Alsace Riesling Grand Cru
Rosacker (14% ABV, 7.5g/l RS,
4.90/7.54 TA, 3.09 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon-gold. Stylish, characterful nose with citrus fruit and toasty notes, as well as a fine petrolly undertone. Full, rich, intense, but not heavy. Smart. ● | **17**

MO-W | Full-flavored, rich. Some sweetness, but so what. This is brilliant. Schoenenbourg maybe? | **18**

TS | The vanilla (not oak-derived) and peaches in this wine are almost Rheingau—almost, but not quite. Definitely Alsace! Limestone for finesse! | **19**

18 | **Rolly Gassmann Alsace Riesling**
Sélection de Grains Nobles
Silberberg de Rorschwihr
(13% ABV, 96.6g/l RS,
12.3/18.92 TA, 3.18 pH) ●

EA | Deep golden. Botrytized, apricotty, explosively fruity nose. Full, rich, and luscious on the palate, with beautiful acidity despite the high residual sugar. Racy, fresh, and succulent. Excellent. ● | **18**

MO-W | Steel-edged here. Very sweet but fine. Wonderful really, but not ready. Still raw. Needs time. ● | **18**

TS | Really high acid, spoiled by a touch of VA, but very good, nonetheless. ● | **17**

17.5 | **Josmeyer Alsace Riesling Grand**
Cru Brand (13.5% ABV, 3.5g/l RS,
4.30/6.62 TA, 2.99 pH) ●

EA | Medium-deep lemon. Sweet, developing, floral nose, with fine petrol tones. Full-bodied, fleshy, but firm on the palate. High in alcohol but nevertheless vibrant and balanced. Drinking well already, with developed aromatics and rounded character. ● | **17**

MO-W | Very classic nose. Rich, fine, complex. Very ripe, yet dry. Powerful. Fab. Good now but will keep. ● | **19**

TS | Fresh, light, easy-drinking, with a touch of fennel. Very fresh and long, and it gets more focused the longer it goes on, so I'm not convinced this is granite. A granite-lite perhaps? ● | **16**

17.5 | **Gustave Lorentz Alsace**
Riesling Lieu-Dit Goldesch
(13% ABV, 2.9g/l RS, 5.12/7.88 TA,
3.30 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon-gold color. Evolving, petrol-scented, sweet, ripe potpourri-and-perfume nose. Strong, firm, expressive, and explosive on the palate, with high acidity and length. Succulent and zesty. Still holding back and deserves to be given time, which it should certainly reward. ● | **17**

MO-W | Lovely fruit here. Good nose, fine fruit—gorgeous, in fact. Ripe and sunny, but with well-marked acidity. Nicely etched and long on the finish. Limestone, methinks. ● | **18**

TS | Has the fatness and richness of a sun-baked mountain vineyard. Ready to drink now, but really needs a heck of a lot more bottle age. ● | **17**

17.5 | **Maison FE Trimbach Alsace**
Riesling Clos Sainte-Hune
(14% ABV, 2.9g/l RS, 4.87/7.49 TA,
3.11 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon color. Sweet, expressive, and characterful soft nose, with white fruits and baking spices. Wide and muscular palate with firm structure. Medium-long palate, with warming alcohol and development potential. ● | **17**

MO-W | Good nose, closed. Lots of flavor. Bone-dry. Rich, with deep-seated minerality and complexity. Great length and real presence. ● | **18**

TS | Fatter, fennel-rich fruit and has the acidity to take the richness. Delicious now, but keep for 5 to 10 years and be blown away. ● | **18**

17.5 | **Domaine Zind Humbrecht**
Alsace Riesling Gueberschwihr
(13.5% ABV, 4.5g/l RS, 4.60/7.08
TA, 3.10 pH) ●

EA | Deep golden. Strong, highly aromatic, ripe, sweet, fruity nose with sulfuric complexity. Full, rich, warming palate, with medium length and good freshness. ● | **17**

MO-W | Rich and creamy nose. Crab apples. Almost Rheingau-like. Very mineral; has finesse and great length. Still needs time. ● | **17**

TS | I love this wine: rich and concentrated, yet pure and focused. Heaps of fruit, but truly dry. Delicious now, yet will be sensational in a few years. | **19**

17.5 | **Eugène Klipfel Alsace Riesling**
Grand Cru Kastelberg (13% ABV,
5.3g/l RS, 5.69/8.75 TA, 4.00 pH) ●

EA | Medium-deep lemon-green. Restrained, lemony nose with smoky minerality. Sweet feel on the finish; finely balanced alcohol and freshness. Vibrant and pleasurable. ● | **17**

MO-W | Good nose. Full-flavored, dry, and rich. Complex and long, savory, spicy. Great fruit. ● | **16**

TS | Rich and fruity in a pure, focused style. A wine that leaves an imprint on the palate but really needs time in the bottle. | **18**

17.5 | **Domaine Jean-Marie Haag**
Alsace Riesling Lieu-Dit
Weingarten (13% ABV, 7.1g/l RS,
4.04/6.22 TA, 3.21 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon. Stylish, age-complexed nose, with layers of lime, toast, smokiness, and petrol. Delicious, firm, structured, rich, and intense palate. Warming alcohol, but fine balance of sugar and acidity. ● | **18**

MO-W | Crab-apple jelly. Fine fruit, good length. Freshness, grip. Lots of middle and length. Like it. ● | **16**

TS | This is a delicious, fresh, elegant, dry Riesling. Delightful drinking. Has finesse. ● | **18**

17.5 | **Domaine Zinck Alsace Riesling**
Grand Cru Eichberg (13.5% ABV,
14.1g/l RS, 4.20/6.46 TA, 3.29 pH) ●

EA | Deep golden. Stylish, expressive, open, flower-and-honey nose. Strong, muscular, serious palate, with weight and depth. ● | **16**

MO-W | Lovely fruit flavors. Yes, it's sweet,

undeniably. But it's well done, and I could see myself drinking a glass or two with some scallops. ● | **16**

TS | Absolutely stupendous! Doesn't matter what soil it was grown on! Such intensity and great acidity, yet there is a deft handling that has imparted the lightest and most elegant balance. Size without weight—the winemaker's holy grail! ● | **19**

17 | **Léon Beyer Alsace R de Beyer**
(13.5% ABV, 1.5g/l RS, 4.16/6.4 TA,
3.20 pH) ●

EA | Bright lemon color. Stylish, lemony-mineral, toasty nose with sulfuric complexity. Lean, linear, succulent, and racy palate, with good length and purity. ● | **18**

MO-W | Clean, complex nose. Bit of heat here. Rich and powerful. Lots of flavor. Some minerality, fully dry, rich, complex, with good length. Like it. Needs food, though, and will keep. ● | **17**

TS | Fresh and dry, with notes of fennel and aniseed. A northern growth perhaps? Very young, better acidity, but still granite I think. ● | **16**

17 | **Josmeyer Alsace Riesling**
Grand Cru Hengst (14% ABV,
3g/l RS, 3.90/6.00 TA, 3.09 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon-gold. Evolving, slightly lifted floral and honey nose. Powerful palate, with warming alcohol and medium acidity. Muscular, with a sweet feel to the finish. ● | **16**

MO-W | Clean apples for a change. Earthy, too. Dry, full-flavored Riesling, with a touch of sweetness. Spicy, mineral, savory. Touch of residual sugar, but it's nicely in check. Lots of focus. ● | **18**

TS | Light balance of rich fruit; creamy; some tangerine. ● | **17**

17 | **Rolly Gassmann Alsace**
Riesling Pfanzereben de
Rorschwihr (13% ABV, 25g/l RS,
4.30/6.62 TA, 3.23 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon-gold. Lifted nose with petrol and honey, with good fruit purity. Sweet but structured and vivacious. Finely balanced. ● | **17**

MO-W | Fine fruit here. Long and graceful, fine on length and flavor. Needs two years. ● | **15**

TS | There is a place at the table for these Rieslings with around 20 grams of residual sugar when the balance is as superb as this. ● | **18**

17 | **Bott-Geyl Alsace Riesling**
Lieu-Dit Grafenreben (14% ABV,
1.8g/l RS, 4.95/7.62 TA, 3.05 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon-gold color. Sweet fruitiness, peach and lemon on the soft nose. Full, rich, powerful, and muscular palate, with tightness. Still holding back. ● | **17**

MO-W | Smoky aroma, rich and pungent. Lots of weight. Spicy. Granite and other things. | **16**

TS | More off-dry than truly dry, but that may just be the fruit. Excellent acidity and focus, so it would work well at the table as essentially a dry style. Nice citrus fruits. Has elegance and still so youthful. ● | **17**

16.5 | André Kientzler Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Geisberg
(13.5% ABV, 2.4g/l RS, 4.90/7.54 TA, 3.12 pH) ●

EA | Bright deep lemon. Elegant, mineral-driven nose, with light toastiness, hint lemon-meringue pie, and petrol complexity. Promisingly harmonious, multifaceted nose. Accentuated acidity on the linear, lean palate. Well-balanced alcohol. Less refined than the nose promised, but the minerality is strong on the finish, too. ● | 16

MO-W | Clarity and precision here. Good length. Narrow. Incisive. Pretty fine. East-facing: Osterberg, maybe? ● | 17

TS | Fine, fresh, citrus fruits that are focused but a bit short at the moment, requiring more bottle age. ● | 16

16.5 | Kuentz-Bas Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Pfersigberg Trois Châteaux
(14% ABV, 6.2g/l RS, 4.20/6.46 TA, 3.18 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon-gold color. Beautiful, evolving nose with petrolly tones, wood notes, and toast. Fresh and lively, with linear structure and fine length. Compact with character. ● | 18

MO-W | Lots of flavor here, too. Dry, quite rich, and very long. Mineral, with good grip. Long. Like it. ● | 16

TS | A touch of residual gas helps to lift this intensely flavored, but somewhat angular, wine. Long aftertaste. ● | 16

16.5 | Domaine Louis Sipp Alsace Riesling Lieu-Dit Hagel
(12.5% ABV, 5.5g/l RS, 5.30/8.15 TA, 3.00 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon color. Fine, elegant nose of lemon and minerality. Precise with great fruit purity. Very zesty, energetic, linear palate. Compact and complete, joyful. ● | 17

MO-W | Fine, crystalline fruit. Dry, cleanish. Finish a bit dirty. ● | 14

TS | This truly dry Riesling slashed across the palate amid a run of richer wines, but it retained extraordinary length on the finish. ● | 18

16.5 | Muré Alsace Grand Cru Vorbourg Lieu-Dit Clos Saint Landelin
(13.5% ABV, 5g/l RS, 5.90/9.08 TA, 3.08 pH) ●

EA | Deep golden. Full, powerful, evolving, vanilla, spice, and floral nose, with interesting layers. Full, oily, smooth, coming with a sweet feel and noticeable but under-control oaky note. Long, velvety, fleshy, and rounded. A beautiful acid line. Drinking well but still improving. ● | 18

MO-W | Smoky nose. Weird tropical-fruit flavors. What is guava doing in a glass of Riesling? Shame, because it ain't bad as such. Probably. ● | 14

TS | Very gluggy fruit, almost sandstone-like, but definitely herbal with a touch of fennel and basil. ● | 17

16.5 | Henri Schoenheitz Alsace Riesling Linsenberg [Granitic Calibration Wine] (13% ABV, 8.5g/l RS, 3.92/6.03 TA, 3.30 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon color. Elegant, wide but restrained nose, mineral and lemony with spiciness. Wide, fat, dry palate, with firm acid backbone. Warming alcohol and plenty of potential. | 17

MO-W | Lovely nose, floral, clean, finely etched, decent grip, quite fresh despite the vintage. Crisp, a touch residual, but well balanced and long. | 16

TS | Full, rich, slightly oily texture, hint of sweetness, quite fat. | 17

16.5 | Domaine Weinbach Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Schlossberg Cuvée Sainte Catherine (14% ABV, 4g/l RS, 5.13/7.89 TA, 3.03 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon. Fragrant, sweet, fruity nose with mineral, sulfuric complexity. Succulent, linear palate, with fine, mouthwatering acidity. Long, zesty, refined, and enjoyable. ● | 18

MO-W | Still desperately young. Not all there and dominated a bit by sugar. Potential exists, but, for the medium term. Bit short maybe? ● | 14

TS | Delicious, I could drink this now! Fresh, vibrant fruit. Tingly. ● | 17

16.5 | Cave de Turkheim Alsace Riesling Vieilles Vignes
(13.5% ABV, 5.8g/l RS, 4.20/6.46 TA, 3.19 pH) ●

EA | Shiny, deep lemon. Stylish nose with restraint. Toast with an underlying petrol character. Less refined on the palate, slightly hollow. Sweet feel in the finish of good freshness. Good, but not great. ● | 15

MO-W | Lots of color. Guavas again. Full-flavored, dry. Lots of interest and a lovely, long finish. Like it. ● | 16

TS | Very fresh, light (but not lacking) and seemingly the youngest wine of the tasting so far (28 tasted). Delightful, elegant. ● | 18

16.5 | Domaine Gresser Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Moenchberg
(12.5% ABV, 7.8g/l RS, 4.94/7.6 TA, 3.08 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon color. Elegant and expressive nose, with pineapple, confectionary, and petrol nose. Succulent, zesty, intense, with noticeable sweetness but a good balance. ● | 17

MO-W | Very up front. Saline, yes, but lacks fat. Good grip, yes, but lacks body. ● | 15.5

TS | Fat, sappy fruit, which must come from limestone, from its chalky minerality, though there is no chalk in Alsace, of course. ● | 17

16.5 | Hugel Riesling Tradition
(14% ABV, 7.5g/l RS, 4.90/7.54 TA, 3.09 pH) ●

EA | Pale lemon. Youthful, floral nose, with noticeable but under-control sulfur. Tight, zesty, and compact on the palate. This is linear and vibrant but not very complex. ● | 16

MO-W | Lovely Riesling, whatever bit of rock it comes from! Gorgeous. Lots of flavor,

some sweetness—maybe a bit too much, but there is enough grip, and the sweetness will integrate further. ● | 17

TS | Lovely fruit, clean and vibrant on the nose, with nice acidity in a fullish overall balance. ● | 16

16.5 | Léon Beyer Alsace Riesling Les Ecaillers
(13.5% ABV, 0g/l RS, 4.42/6.8 TA, 3.19 pH) ●

EA | Bright lemon-gold color. Soft, mild, sweet, and seductive nose. Full, fleshy, and weighty, with warming alcohol and less accentuated acidity. ● | 16

MO-W | Lots of clarity here; precision, too. A little bit sweet and lacking real fat. Good length. Not especially fine but might find itself in a year or two. ● | 15

TS | Nice acidity and fruit focus; again a touch off the true dry scale, even though it comes within the 1:1 sugar-to-acidity-ratio group. Perhaps it is just more expressive of fruit? ● | 17

16.5 | Cave de Turkheim Alsace Riesling Marnes et Calcaires
(12.5% ABV, 5.9g/l RS, 4.63/7.12 TA, 3.07 pH) ●

EA | Medium-deep lemon-gold. Stylish, expressive, pineapple and lemon nose, with layers of aging characters and toast. Powerful, rich, opulent, sweet palate. Long, velvety finish, with charm. ● | 18

MO-W | Guavas again. Maybe there's a guava-inducing granite? Don't like it anyway. ● | 12

TS | Ripe pink grapefruit, mandarin, and other citrus fruits from the aroma to finish. A Riesling of some gravitas. ● | 19

16.5 | Maison FE Trimbach Alsace Riesling Cuvée Frédéric Emile
(14% ABV, 3g/l RS, 4.91/7.55 TA, 3.09 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon color. Soft, sweet pineapple and floral nose. Pungently aromatic on the palate. Feels unforgiving and lacks charm, but well built and balanced. ● | 15

MO-W | Smoky nose. Full flavor. Quite dry. Has some power and breadth of flavor. Long. Trimbach? ● | 18

TS | More fat, rich, fennel-laden fruit. ● | 16

16 | Domaine Louis Sipp Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Kirchberg de Ribeauvillé
(13.5% ABV, 8.3g/l RS, 4.70/7.23 TA, 3.10 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon. Stylish, fairly delicate floral nose, with faint lanolin tones. Lightweight, firm, fresh, and vibrant. Delightful but not hugely complex. ● | 16

MO-W | Lovely indeed. Very fine, mineral, long. Gorgeous. ● | 17

TS | A blur in the fruit detracts slightly from what would otherwise seem to be a fresh and elegant Riesling. ● | 15

16 | **Jean-Baptiste Adam Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Kaefferkopf Vieilles Vignes**
(13.5% ABV, 8g/l RS, 5.30/8.15 TA, 3.08 pH) ●

EA | Medium-deep lemon. Smooth, rounded, fresh fruity nose. Lemony, crisp, and succulent. ● | **16**

MO-W | Big, powerful wine. Heady, rich, dry. Lots here. There is fat and a long finish. Still needs a year or two. | **16**

TS | Tasty, but angular fruit. Lacks finesse but can age. ● | **15**

16 | **Boeckel Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Zotzenberg**
(14% ABV, 7g/l RS, 5.23/8.05 TA, 3.09 pH) ●

EA | Medium-deep lemon. Stylish, finely layered nose of citrus, toast, and minerality. Full, rich, suitably weighty, with vivacity. Impressive and finely crafted. ● | **18**

MO-W | Edgy, etched, and dry. Firm, full-flavored, and long. Has complexity but not quite all together. ● | **14**

TS | Full, firm, rich fruit that has enough acidity but rather heavy-handed balance. ● | **14**

16 | **Cave Jean Geiler Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Mambourg**
(14% ABV, 5.9g/l RS, 4.03/6.2 TA, 3.12 pH) ●

EA | Medium-deep, lemon-green color. Youthful, floral, soapy, highly aromatic nose. Sweet, unrefined, loose-structured. ● | **13**

MO-W | Full-flavored, powerful. Rich, big, and complex. Hengst or similar? Big personality and needs time. ● | **17**

TS | A firm structure, yet a lightness of balance, with an intensity of undeveloped fruit on the finish. A long way from being ready. ● | **17**

ESSI AVELLAN'S TOP WINES

Muré Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Vorbourg
Lieu-Dit Clos Saint Landelin **18**

Boeckel Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Zotzenberg **18**

Dopff & Irion Alsace Riesling Grand Cru
Vorbourg **18**

Léon Beyer Alsace Riesling R de Beyer **18**

Rolly Gassmann Alsace Riesling SGN Silberberg
de Rorschwihr **18**

Domaine Zind Humbrecht Alsace Riesling
Grand Cru Brand **18**

Domaine Weinbach Alsace Riesling Grand Cru
Schlossberg Cuvée Sainte Cathérine **18**

Cave de Turckheim Alsace Riesling Marnes
et Calcaires **18**

Domaine Jean-Marie Haag Alsace Riesling
Lieu-Dit Weingarten **18**

Kuentz-Bas Alsace Alsace Riesling Grand Cru
Pfersigberg Trois Châteaux **18**

16 | **Cave de Ribeauvillé Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Osterberg**
(14% ABV, 3.7g/l RS, 5.20/8.0 TA, 3.08 pH) ●

EA | Deep golden color. Full, soft, harmonious but unexpressive nose. Powerful, warming, even alcoholic palate of width and length, with beautiful acidity. Forceful and big, still holding back. ● | **17**

MO-W | Has minerality but not a lot of depth. Rich, salty, quite broad and dense. Good length. ● | **16**

TS | Fat and rich in excess, and though the acidity is there, the balance does not seem right. ● | **14**

16 | **Cave Vinicole de Hunawir Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Schoenenbourg** (14% ABV, 9g/l RS, 4.70/7.23 TA, 3.13 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon-gold. First bottle corked. Fresh, ripe, fruity nose, with tropical fruit and peach. Full, rich, highly oily, and rounded, velvet-smooth. Quite sweet, but acidity suffices. Long, rich, overt palate. ● | **16**

MO-W | First bottle corky. Second bottle rather lifeless. Sweetish, dull. Short. ● | **13**

TS | A beautifully balanced, delicious, essentially (if not scientifically) dry Riesling. ● | **18**

16 | **Domaine Weinbach Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Schlossberg Cuvée L'Inédit** (14% ABV, 18g/l RS, 4.90/7.54 TA, 3.18 pH) ●

EA | Pale lemon-green. Tight, lifted, floral nose. Berry-sweet and pungently aromatic—too much for the acidity. ● | **14**

MO-W | Lovely fruit, quite fine, long. Needs time. Sweetness overriding. ● | **15**

TS | Glorious! Rather than a paragraph of superlatives, I'll pick on its only weak point: The alcohol shows on the finish. ● | **18**

16 | **Domaine Zind Humbrecht Brand Grand Cru**
(13.5% ABV, 4.5g/l RS, 4.30/6.62 TA, 3.10 pH) ●

EA | Deep golden. Strong, characterful developing nose with a mineral undertone. Full-bodied, wide, fleshy, yet rounded. Big but balanced and at an interesting development phase with lots of expression. Warming alcohol but still in balance. ● | **18**

MO-W | Lots of color here. Ripe. Sweet and sour. High acid. Don't like. ● | **13**

TS | All stone fruits and acidity—quite different from the rest. Not sure that it is geologically pure, not that that has anything to do with intrinsic quality. ● | **16**

15.5 | **Cave de Ribeauvillé Riesling Alsace Mühlforst** (14% ABV, 2.2g/l RS, 4.90/7.54 TA, 3.12 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon color. Soft, sweet, evolving floral nose, with vanilla and rose petals. Full, with warming feel of alcohol and low acidity. Rich and weighty, with a fatty texture. Big, explosive, and obvious but lacks sophistication. ● | **14**

MO-W | None too clean. Apples. Musty. Better

“ALSACE WINES GROWN ON GRANITE ARE SLIMMER, MORE LINEAR, MORE PRECISE, MORE DELICATE, AND FINER THAN THOSE GROWN ON LIMESTONE”

on the palate. Plenty of grip, even a touch green. Lots of flavor, with some complexity. Decent effort but no more. ● | **15**

TS | Really quite complete and ready for phase one of its life. Lovely, sassy fruit beginning to bristle. More plums and other orchard fruits. ● | **18**

15.5 | **Gustave Lorentz Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Kanzlerberg**
(13% ABV, 6.9g/l RS, 4.70/7.23 TA, 3.15 pH) ●

EA | Medium-deep lemon. Youthful, floral, fragrant nose. Fresh, zesty, with accentuated acidity. Vibrant, but not with much complexity. ● | **15**

MO-W | Pure, crystalline style here. Dry. Fine and clear. Salty, fine fruit. ● | **15**

TS | Very fresh, yet intense. Precise, focused, citrus and orchard fruits. Good now, but really needs a few years in the bottle. ● | **17**

15.5 | **Domaine Sipp Mack Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Rosacker [Limestone Calibration Wine]**
(13.5% ABV, 5.8g/l RS, 4.81/7.4 TA, 3.07 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon color. Overt, rich, sweet floral-and-vanilla nose. Tight, compact palate, with oaky nuances. Evolved aromatics and round palate that has a fine acid line. | **16**

MO-W | Not quite as well defined on the nose. Touch of oak in the background, masking the fruit. Rich, bready fruit, quite sweet. Has power and width but is blunt on the finish. Not sure I see this aging that well. | **15**

TS | Gentle oak aromas pervade both nose and palate, and there is a buttery touch on the finish; otherwise quite fine and precise, with fine acidity on the finish. | **16**

15.5 | **Domaine Léon Boesch Alsace Riesling Luss**
(13.5% ABV, 8.5g/l RS, 4.23/6.5 TA, 3.10 pH) ●

EA | Deep golden. Sweet, honeyed, floral nose, not much complexity. Not completely clean fruitiness. Full, sweet, and mellow. ● | **14**

MO-W | Oxidative style, here. Flavor, yes—lots of it. Has minerality, too, and is not without interest, but why bother? ● | **13**

TS | Exquisite balance between residual sugar and total acidity. ● | **19**

15.5 | Kuentz-Bas Alsace Riesling Collection (13% ABV, 9g/l RS, 4.90/7.54 TA, 3.0 pH) ●

EA | Medium-deep lemon. Sulfur-complexed with borderline too much of it overshadowing other characters. Tight, lemony, linear, and zesty. Otherwise fine but taken down by the SO₂.

● | 14

MO-W | This is a fabulous Riesling. It's mostly all there. Still needs a little time, though. Lovely.

● | 16

TS | Plenty of fruit and an extraordinary amount of acidity. High on character, low on finesse (at the moment). ● | 16

15.5 | Domaine Sipp Mack Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Osterberg (13.5% ABV, 5.8g/l RS, 4.81/7.4 TA, 3.07 pH) ●

EA | Medium-deep, lemon-green color. Restrained, lemony fresh nose. Full, oily, soft, round palate, with medium acidity and borderline high alcohol. ● | 16

MO-W | All over the place, really, and too sweet. Has minerality, on the other hand, and a long finish. Wait a bit longer. | 15

TS | Gently rich, ripe, herbal Riesling fruit. A bit too lush for my liking, but some will love it. ● | 15

15.5 | Domaine Bernhard Reibel Alsace Lieu-Dit Weingarten (13.5% ABV, 4.5g/l RS, 3.89/5.98 TA, 3.15 pH) ●

EA | Deep golden. Ripe, evolving, layered nose with petrol on top of sweet opulent white fruit, vanilla, and lifted notes. Highly oily, oak-influenced palate of intensity and power. ● | 16

MO-W | Rich, luscious even, though it finishes dry. Prefer the nose to the palate, which seems to have a tad too much sweetness. Might develop with time, though. Length is excellent. ● | 16

TS | Plenty of fruit, but a bit like a Chardonnay of Riesling! ● | 14

MARCEL ORFORD-WILLIAMS'S TOP WINES

Josmeyer Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Brand 19

Cave Vinicole de Hunawirh Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Rosacker 18

Rolly Gassmann Alsace Riesling SGN Silberberg de Rorschwihr 18

Gustave Lorentz Alsace Riesling Lieu-Dit Goldesch 18

FE Trimbach Alsace Riesling Clos Ste-Hune 18

Josmeyer Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Hengst 18

FE Trimbach Alsace Riesling Cuvée Frédéric Emile 18

Zind Humbrecht Alsace Riesling Gueberschwihr 17

Léon Beyer Alsace R de Beyer 17

15.5 | Henri Schoenheitz Alsace Riesling Herrenreben (13% ABV, 14g/l RS, 4.42/6.8 TA, 3.13 pH) ●

EA | Medium-deep lemon. Fresh, youthfully floral. Fairly light, but with good intensity and white-currant and white-flower character. Medium-long, fresh, and not at all too sweet, despite noticeable residual sugar. ● | 16

MO-W | Full-flavored, fine, quite sweet, but the sweetness is well in check, and the finish is long; has finesse. ● | 15

TS | This is really quite sweet, despite having high acids. Green apple, Bramley, unripe! ● | 15

15.5 | Domaine Jean-Paul Schmitt Alsace Riesling Rittersberg Réserve Personnelle (13.5% ABV, 6.8g/l RS, 4.11/6.32 TA, 3.10 pH) ●●

EA | Deep lemon-gold. Full, evolving, floral, but with strange chemical notes. Dirty, chalky notes. Uninspiring. ● | 12

MO-W | Lovely. Crab apples here. Could be Rheingau. Fine fruit, long. Delicious. ● | 17

TS | This is a strangely interesting brew. Should turn toast, a bit like a Hunter Valley "Riesling" of old, which was not Riesling, of course, but Semillon aged in non-malolactic bottles. It tasted like Riesling, of course, but with an increasingly toasty aroma, as this one will. I rather like it. | 17

15.5 | Dopff & Irion Alsace Riesling Clos du Château Isenbourg Les Tommeries (13% ABV, 8.7g/l RS, 3.98/6.12 TA, 3.16 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon. Stylish, firm, serious nose of white fruit and spice. Intense, structured. Sweet but suitably balanced. ● | 16

MO-W | Fairly closed: Is this is a better sign? Ripe mirabelles on nose. Full-flavored. Sweetish. Not bad but lacking fat. | 14

TS | Plums and other soft orchard fruits. Very rich. Could do with better balance resulting in more finesse. ● | 16

15.5 | Dopff & Irion Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Vorbourg (13.5% ABV, 8.5g/l RS, 4.60/7.08 TA, 3.05 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon. Sweet, soft, petrolly/floral, mild, and refined nose. Full, voluptuous, velvet-smooth, with enough acidity to match the sweetness. Compact and zesty. Succulent and charming, drinking beautifully. ● | 18

MO-W | Also a tad oxidized, but it's better managed. Still don't like it. ● | 13

TS | Intensity without finesse. ● | 14

15 | Paul Blanck et Fils Alsace Lieu-Dit Furstentum (13.5% ABV, 13g/l RS, 4.36/6.71 TA, 3.18 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon. Classy, fruit-forward, but layered nose, with toast, honey, and light petrolly complexity. Rich, strong, and sweet. Masculine. ● | 16

MO-W | Peachy guavas again. Sweet. Rich. VT-ish but without the quality. Falls short. ● | 13

TS | Good balance of fruit, sweetness, and acidity, but the sugar in this intensifies the fruitiness at the expense of any specific aromatics. ● | 16

15 | Paul Blanck et Fils Alsace Lieu-Dit Schlossberg (13% ABV, 12g/l RS, 4.54/6.98 TA, 3.16 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon. Evolving, floral, perfumed nose. This is cloyingly sweet, with an oily, structureless palate and strange, pungent aromatics. | 12

MO-W | Fine-flavored Riesling, rich and full, sweet but not unbalanced. Fairly evolved, though. ● | 15

TS | Beautifully balanced, lovely interplay between the fruit aromatics and acidity. ● | 18

15 | Dirler-Cade Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Saering (14% ABV, 8g/l RS, 4.83/7.43 TA, 3.09 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon-gold. Overt, pronounced, floral potpourri nose, fruit-forward. Too sweet for the acidity. ● | 15

MO-W | This is full-flavored, essentially dry, with good acidity and length. Apples again. Bit bruised but serviceable. There is sweetness on the finish and a touch of sweet and sour. Not bad. ● | 16

TS | First bottle a bit estery; second even more so—but it could be simply how long each bottle had been opened. ● | 14

15 | Wunsch & Mann Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Steingrubler (12% ABV, 11.3g/l RS, 3.20/4.92 TA, 3.28 pH) ●

EA | Deep golden. Evolving, sweet, petrol-complexed, floral-fragrant nose. Mouth-filling, weighty, and fatty, verging on heavy. Fine balance of sugar and acidity. ● | 16

MO-W | Rich fruit. Sweet but blunt. Don't see it. ● | 14

TS | All the elements of other wines, but in the wrong order or proportion, and nowhere near as exciting. ● | 15

14.5 | Domaine Albert Mann Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Furstentum (13% ABV, 19g/l RS, 4.94/7.6 TA, 3.15 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemony. Classy nose with aging characters. Full, sweet, but with good freshness. Silky and refined. Granite. | 16

MO-W | This is horrid. Oak somewhere drying it out. | 9

TS | A delicious, mouthwatering, yin/yang of fruit, acidity, and balanced sweetness. ● | 18

14.5 | Wunsch & Mann Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Hengst (13% ABV, 10.4g/l RS, 3.80/5.85 TA, 3.26 pH) ●

EA | Deep golden color. Overt, serious, spice-complexed nose, with honey. Full, wide, muscular palate. Sweet, but with just enough freshness to keep it vibrant. ● | 15

MO-W | Ripe mirabelle on the nose. Full-flavored, a tad oily, and finishes short. Dull. ● | 14

TS | Soft, easy, but a bit blurred between fruit, acidity, and aromatics. ● | 14

14 **Eugène Klipfel Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Kirchberg de Barr**
(12% ABV, 6g/l RS, 5.42/8.34 TA, 4.20 pH) ●

EA | Medium-deep lemon. Youthfully floral, sweet, white-fruit nose, with mild spiciness. Strong acidity, soft, loose, oily palate. Less character here. ● | **14**

MO-W | Lovely, ripe-fruit flavors here. Crisp, hard-edged, apples again. Long but not especially fine. ● | **14**

TS | Rich in fruit, but it lacks vivacity. Either it has the common touch, or it is much too young. It will certainly improve in the bottle, but by how much? ● | **14**

14 **Domaine Jean-Marie Haag Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Zinnkoepfle**
(13% ABV, 12.7g/l RS, 4.64/7.14 TA, 3.10 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemony color. Sweet, with lifted notes. Apricots and honey. Full and cloying. ● | **13**

MO-W | Lovely fruit. Fine fruit, rich, flavory. Too sweet now, so keep. Finish is lovely, though. ● | **15**

TS | Varietal purity spoiled by butter-and-toffee malolactic aromas. ● | **14**

14 **Boeckel Alsace Riesling Clos Eugénie**
(12.5% ABV, 7g/l RS, 4.24/6.52 TA, 3.15 pH) ●

EA | Bright, deep lemon. Pungently floral, soapy, with licorice notes. Unrefined and hollow, with highly lactic notes. ● | **12**

MO-W | Very lactic. Might come around one day, but today this is not tasting well. ● | **14**

TS | With its slightly herbal, citrusy fruit, this wine could be either granite or limestone, but I'm guessing. ● | **15**

14 **Domaine Bernhard Reibel Alsace Riesling Lieu-Dit Rittersberg**
(14% ABV, 5.1g/l RS, 3.59/5.52 TA, 3.20 pH) ●

EA | Deep golden color. Soft, evolved, slightly muted nose. Strong, alcoholic, lacks life. ● | **13**

MO-W | Big color. Loads of flavor. Spicy, rich. Lots of character, mineral and long. Needs food. ● | **15**

TS | Alcohol showing, particularly on the finish. ● | **13**

13.5 **Cave Vinicole de Cleebourg Alsace Riesling Lieu-Dit Hannesacker**
(13% ABV, 7.36g/l RS, 5.51/8.48 TA, 3.13 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon-gold color. Ripe, earthy/floral nose, with dirty, chalky note. Oily, smooth, but loose-structured. Unrefined. | **13**

MO-W | Dusty. Dry. Horrid. I don't like this. ● | **10**

TS | Full, rich, truly complex wine that needs a bit more time in the bottle to settle. Herbs, earthy vegetables (without any connotation of geosmin), and firm acidity. | **17**

TOM STEVENSON'S TOP WINES

Domaine Zinck Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Eichberg
19

Cave Vinicole de Hunawirh Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Rosacker **19**

Domaine Zind Humbrecht Alsace Riesling Gueberschwihr **19**

Domaine Léon Boesch Alsace Riesling Luss **19**

Cave de Turckheim Alsace Riesling Marnes et Calcaires **19**

Eugène Klipfel Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Kastelberg **18**

Rolly Gassmann Alsace Riesling Pflanzereben de Rorschwihr **18**

Domaine Weinbach Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Schlossberg Cuvée L'Inédit **18**

Paul Blanck et Fils Alsace Riesling Lieu-Dit Schlossberg **18**

13.5 **Domaine Albert Mann Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Schlossberg**
(13.5% ABV, 7g/l RS, 4.41/6.79 TA, 3.18 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon-gold. Strong, aromatic, with sulfur on top. Full, rich, firm, and intense but SO₂-troubled. ● | **12**

MO-W | Don't like the smell. The taste is much better. Grip and flavor. Sweetness is okay. Good length. ● | **14**

TS | Buttery malolactic aromas are the first to hit. Technically well made, but it does not suit the region or variety. ● | **14**

13.5 **Vins d'Alsace Kuehn Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Brand**
(14% ABV, 6.1g/l RS, 3.52/5.42 TA, 3.35 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon-gold. Soft, mild, even muted nose. Full, hard, with warming alcohol and too much sweetness for the freshness. Finishes on the heavy side. ● | **13**

MO-W | Full-flavored, decidedly sweet. Why? This is a clean wine, but it's not exciting. ● | **14**

TS | Herbal aromas, sweetish fruit, rather simple. ● | **13**

13.5 **Sick-Dreyer Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Kaefferkopf Cuvée Joseph Dreyer**
(13% ABV, 0.4g/l RS, 4.41/6.78 TA, 3.14 pH) ●

EA | Medium-deep lemon color. Floral potpourri nose, perfumed and youthful. Pungent, powerful, mouth-filling oily palate, with warming alcohol. Unrefined, full of force. ● | **13**

MO-W | Pungent. Not especially pleasant. Trace of TCA, maybe? Old apples. Dry, mean, austere. I don't like it. ● | **13**

TS | Truly dry, but a bit flat; lacks vibrancy and the verve expected from Riesling, whatever the soil. Coffee grinds and fennel. ● | **14**

13 **Domaine Frédéric Mochel Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Altenberg de Bergbieten**
(13.5% ABV, 12g/l RS, 5.10/7.85 TA, 3.09 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon-gold. Pronouncedly aromatic and noticeably sulfuric nose. Sweet white-fruit and white-currant aromas. Very sweet on the palate, but the acidity takes it well. Long, intense, and characterful. ● | **16**

MO-W | Very smelly. Sulfides. No idea what unfortunate rock gave birth to this. | **10**

TS | Herbal aromas, lacks focus and precision. ● | **13**

13 **Sick-Dreyer Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Kaefferkopf** (13% ABV, 6.9g/l RS, 4.12/6.34 TA, 3.24 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon. Sweet, floral nose with honey and soapy notes. Too pungently powerful on the palate, unrefined and not completely clean. ● | **10**

MO-W | Don't like. Unbalanced in a way and not totally clean. ● | **13**

TS | First bottle was a bit oxidized, but it seemed positively fresh after tasting the second bottle. ● | **16**

12.5 **Cave Jean Geiler Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Eichberg**
(13% ABV, 7.5g/l RS, 4.09/6.29 TA, 3.24 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon-green. Soft, evolving, floral, rose-petal nose, with soapy whiffs. Full, oily, and round, lacking backbone and vibrancy. Neither complex nor refined enough to be great. ● | **15**

MO-W | Lots of color. Rich fruit, sweet, ripe, juicy. Fab finish. Needs time. ● | **16**

TS | First bottle not attractive; second bottle the same. ● | **7**

10.5 **Bott-Geyl Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Mandelberg**
(13.5% ABV, 7g/l RS, 4.60/7.08 TA, 3.09 pH) ●

EA | Deep lemon-gold. Developed, with some oxidative notes. Less fruit-forward. Rich, soft, but hollow and lacking vivacity. No second bottle to make sure the oxidation is deliberate. | **12**

MO-W | There's oxidation here. Not brilliant. ● | **2**

TS | Rich, tasty fruits, almost fat. Very fresh. Has some finesse and might develop more. ● | **17**

5 **Domaine Léon Boesch Alsace Riesling Grand Cru Zinnkoepfle**
(13.5% ABV, 6g/l RS, 4.36/6.71 TA, 3.00 pH) ●

EA | Oxidized first bottle. The second is the same, so deliberately so. Deep brown-hued golden color. Dull, oxidized, old nose. Sweet palate but too oxidized. ● | **7**

MO-W | First bottle oxidized, the second bottle idem. I suppose granite, but of the beastliest sort. ● | **1**

TS | Both bottles oxidized, seemingly deliberately so! Sweet aftertaste. ● | **7** ■