

**Toast This:**

# October's Fest

In Germany, October is traditionally the time to down beers. We think otherwise. Join Edwin Soon as he toasts to some lovely German whites and a couple of rare reds



German wines may not be as popular as Australian wines or deemed as prestigious as French wines, but once upon a time in the 18th and 19th centuries, German wines were so highly sought after that their prices superseded those of neighbouring Bordeaux's! Thankfully for wine lovers, these days, you can get some impressive and very drinkable wines at far more affordable prices.

Thanks to her frosty climes, Germany produces mainly white wines. Her leading variety is none other than the noble grape of Riesling, which makes wines with lovely floral aromas and high acidity. It is admittedly rare to find German red wines but they do exist. Here, we have sussed out two impressive samples alongside a bevy of white beauties. Drink up!

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## White

### Fritz Haag, Brauneberger Juffer, Riesling Trocken, 2008

● S\$59 ● Just Palate Pte Ltd

Fritz Haag is a highly regarded German wine estate in the Mosel region concentrating on Riesling. This wine may be marketed as a 'village-level' wine, pitched a tier above the entry-level, but it delivers immense pleasure for its price. After all, Brauneberger Juffer is a premium vineyard, even if it's not the estate's jewel in the crown (which is located nearby).

Showing a pale hue, this wine has good balance and is perfumed with pineapples, honey-lemon pear drops and petroleum. Yellow apple flavours lead towards a lean mineral lime finish.

### Schloss Lieser, Lieser Niederberg Helden, Riesling Spätlese, 2008

● S\$58 ● Artisan Cellars

Thomas Hagg – his family runs Weingut Fritz Haag – bought the 9.5 ha Schloss Lieser estate of Mosel in 1997. Lieser

Niederberg Helden is one of the top sites here. Grape selection and minimal handling in the cellar ensure that the wines exhibit the typical Riesling characters – ripe fruit, acidic structure, vibrancy and verve.

This wine has a pronounced fruity nose with aromas of apples, ripe yellow pears and acacia flowers. It is dry with flavours that hint of meat and honey.

### Schloss Schönborn Riesling Spätlese, 2008

● S\$69 ● Denise The Wine Shop

This bright yellow wine has broad strokes of ripe peach and honey allied with a light fizzy texture. The high acid backbone gives the wine stature and results in an off-dry wine that is easy to drink as it is not overly sweet. It has a lovely finish, too. Pair this with spicy Sichuan or zesty Thai cuisine.

### Robert Weil, Rheingau Riesling Spätlese, 2007

● S\$80 ● Taste Wine Merchant

In 2007, German wine regions experienced the highest temperatures in more than a century. For wine growers in Rheingau, this meant a long growing season that resulted in wines with a lusciousness beyond their classification.

Weingut Robert Weil is one of Rheingau's younger estates. Grapes are farmed organically on stony soils and great efforts are taken to preserve nature's taste. From the onset, this wine seduces with grapefruit and honeyed tones. Next comes the delicious butterscotch flavours, with a hint of lime peel and the rich mouthfeel of an auslese. It finishes with great clarity on the palate.



## Sweet

### Gunderloch Nackenheim Rothenberg Auslese Riesling, 2005

● S\$89 ● Taste Wine Merchant

This wine shows some characteristics of bottle maturation. There are fading aromas of peach and hints of barley, melons, grapefruits, white florals and mango. It has a velvety texture and is nicely balanced with a long finish.

The wine takes its name from the towns of Nackenheim and Rothenberg. The climate is cool with hot nights in August and September, which endows the wines with unique aromas of peaches and apricots, and a mineral finish.

### Egon Müller, 'Scharzhofberger', Auslese, 2004

● S\$353 ● Vinum

Expect aromas and flavours of apricot, marmalade, tangerine peel, hay, honey exotic fruits and palm sugar. With its molten texture, layered complexity and awesome length, this wine is quite a gem!



The Müller family has owned the Scharzhofberg vineyard and estate in Mosel, Germany since the late 18th century. Wines are made from old vines grown along the River Saar. Low yields, intensive ploughing, little use of chemicals and minimal intervention in the cellar have resulted in what many believe is Germany's best sweet wine.

## Red

### Weingut Drautz-Able Jodokus Rotwein Trocken, 2004

● S\$112 ● Magma Trade + Consult

Württemberg is one of the few wine-growing areas in Germany where most of the wines made are actually red. This estate boasts a history that goes back to the late 15th century and is another proof that good red wines can be had in Germany.

This wine is a rare blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Dornfelder, Lemberger and a sprinkling of Merlot! It is an uber smooth blend, with ripe red and black fruit leading the flavour profile with some complementary vanilla accents from wood ageing.

### Weingut Bercher Spätburgunder, 2005

● S\$69 ● Magma Trade + Consult

Germany may not be known for its reds, but wines from Baden, the southernmost and warmest region in the country, may well be the exception. Apart from the climate, volcanic and sandy clay soils ensure real tasty red wines.

Ruby brown with a garnet edge, this Pinot Noir is particularly memorable, with a silky texture, high acidity and a slightly bitter end. Raspberry, black cherry and marmalade aromas make for a unique profile.

## Class Savvy

German wines are categorised by the degree of ripeness of the grape during harvest, which is measured by the amount of natural grape sugar. This is indicated on the wine label and often provides a clue to the taste of the wine.

- **TROCKEN**  
dry
- **HALBTROCKEN**  
off-dry
- **SPÄTLESE**  
lightly sweet
- **AUSLESE**  
fruity sweet
- **BEEREN-AUSLESE**  
very sweet
- **TROCKEN-BEEREN-AUSLESE**  
syrupy sweet
- **EISWEIN**  
ice wine

Other classifications clue you in on the quality of the wine. For instance, the term 'Gewachs' on a label signifies a top wine, usually from a premium vineyard.