



ELECTRIC, FEATHERLIGHT RIESLINGS FROM THE SAAR VALLEY



Hanno and Dorothee Zilliken in the estate's deep, cool barrel cellar.

WEINGUT ZILLIKEN is one of the leading wine estates of the Saar region in Germany. Renowned for the steely precision of their Rieslings grown in the very cool climate and slate soils of the area, the Zilliken estate built its reputation with intense, yet delicate and nearly weightless Rieslings that “float like a butterfly.”

WINEGROWING SINCE 1742

The Zilliken family traces its winegrowing tradition back to 1742. The early generations toiled diligently in their Saarburg and Ockfen vineyards, but it was the Royal Prussian Forest Superintendent (Forstmeister) Ferdinand Geltz (1851–1925) who laid the groundwork for what would become one of the most highly regarded family-owned estates anywhere in the Saar and Mosel area.

In 1908, Ferdinand Geltz was a co-founder of the “Vereins der Naturweinversteigerer GroÙer Ring,” the elite winegrowers association known today as the VDP-Mosel. It promoted the sale of premium-quality, unchaptalized wines as a way to raise the profile, both domestically and internationally, of the outstanding Rieslings being produced in this winegrowing region.

On Christmas Day 1944, the estate’s house and cellar were completely destroyed in a heavy bombing raid. It was the steely determination of then-owner Marianne Geltz that preserved the winegrowing tradition within the family. In 1947 Marianne married Fritz Zilliken, and from that point on the estate has labelled itself Forstmeister Geltz-Zilliken. In 1950, they acquired the deep cellar in Saarburg that became the estate’s permanent home.

The estate is currently managed by Dorothee Zilliken, who has been working with her father, Hans-Joachim “Hanno” Zilliken, since 2007. She took on full responsibility in 2016, with the ongoing guidance of Hanno, and the indispensable help of her mother, Ruth, and husband, Philipp.

THE REMARKABLE ZILLIKEN CELLAR

The Geltz Zilliken cellar is the deepest in the Saar Valley, extending three stories beneath the earth. Yet beyond the impressive dimensions, it also radiates an atmosphere of myth and majesty. The effect is so pronounced that its dimly lit halls have even served as the backdrop for detective films. And, as if by design, the natural conditions of 100% humidity and a constant, cool temperature (around 11°C) lend themselves to slow fermentation in neutral oak barrels. The natural gravity of the deep cellar is harnessed to fill the traditional 1,000-liter, neutral oak Fuder casks, where the wines are vinified from start to finish.

OVERVIEW OF WEINGUT ZILLIKEN

YEAR FOUNDED: 1742

OWNER: Zilliken family

WINEMAKER: Dorothee Zilliken

LOCATION: Saarburg, Saar Valley, Germany

VINEYARD AREA: 12 hectares (30 acres)

SOIL TYPES: Devonian slate, volcanic diabase stone

VITICULTURE: Sustainable

GRAPE VARIETIES: 100% Riesling

AVERAGE YIELD: 50 hl/ha (approx. 2.5 tons per acre)

ANNUAL PRODUCTION: 6,000 cases

FOUNDING MEMBER: Mosel-Saar-Ruwer VDP (1908)

GROSSE LAGE VINEYARDS

SAARBURGER RAUSCH: 11 hectares (27.5 acres)

OCKFENER BOCKSTEIN: 1 hectare (2.5 acres)

GERMANY’S WINEMAKER OF THE YEAR 2017

Gault Millau *Weinguide Deutschland*

THE VINEYARDS AND WINES OF ZILLIKEN



The Grosse Lage Saarburger Rausch vineyard.

THE SAAR RIVER VALLEY

THE SAAR is a small wine region along a tributary river that joins the Mosel at Trier, on Germany's western border with France and Luxembourg. Of the Mosel region's 8,800 hectares of vineyard, the Saar region accounts for only 735 hectares (1,837 acres). The narrow river has a minimal mitigating influence on the regional climate. That, combined with the higher elevations here, creates very cool conditions that produce wines of lighter weight and brighter acidity than the Mosel. The soil is primarily gray Devonian slate, which lends a pronounced raciness and delicacy to the wines.

The Zilliken estate owns 11 hectares (27.5 acres) in the town of Saarburg, exclusively in the top-class Grosse Lage Rausch vineyard. In addition, they own one hectare (2.5 acres) in the renowned Bockstein vineyard in the neighboring village of Ockfen.

THE WINES OF ZILLIKEN

ESTATE WINES

Zilliken "Butterfly" Riesling (off-dry "feinherb" style)

Zilliken Estate Riesling (fruity "lieblich" style)

VILLAGE WINES

Saarburg Riesling Trocken Alte Reben (dry; old vines)

Saarburg Riesling Kabinett

GROSSE LAGE WINES

Bockstein Riesling Kabinett

Rausch Riesling Grosses Gewächs (GG = dry)

Rausch Riesling Kabinett

Rausch Riesling Spätlese

Rausch Riesling Auslese

Rarities such as Eiswein, Beerenauslese and Trockenbeerenauslese are produced in small quantities when the vintage allows.

SAARBURGER RAUSCH

The exceptional Rausch vineyard is a Grosse Lage (grand cru) site on the steep, south-facing slope behind the charming little town of Saarburg. The weathered gray slate is interspersed with a greenish volcanic rock, called diabase (Diabas in German). This makes the soil even lighter and more well-drained, which helps to bring a brilliantly focused precision and intensely mineral edge to the wines. A distinct element of citrus and white peach are typical here, in tightly focused wines that can age well for decades.

OCKFENER BOCKSTEIN

The Bockstein vineyard is a glorious amphitheater of vines that shelters the small village of Ockfen. At 52.9 hectares (132 acres) it is much larger than Rausch, but they both have the steepness and southerly exposure that are required for achieving ripeness in this very cool climate. The slate soil in Bockstein is laced with sandstone and quartzite, producing wines that are robust and relatively full-bodied, with acidity that is a bit less assertive than in Rausch.

THE ZILLIKEN APPROACH TO WINEMAKING

The Zilliken family seeks to carefully preserve the potential that the wine carries within itself. For them, wine is created on the vine; you cannot add anything in the cellar. So their greatest effort is in the vineyards, where meticulous attention to detail leads to healthy fruit and optimal ripeness for each style of wine. Their approach in the cellar is traditional and simple, with fermentation, clarification and maturation all happening naturally in old Fuder casks.

"Our goal is to produce Rieslings with the highest level of finesse and lightness," says Dorothee. The result of the family's dedication is graceful wines of crystalline purity that express the rocky soils and cool climate with concentration, intensity and length.

With climate conditions that deliver restrained ripeness and striking acidity, the style here favors wines with balancing sweetness. About one quarter of their production is dry, with another 25 percent in the off-dry style, and the rest in the range of sweeter styles.

THE VINEYARDS OF SAARBURG AND OCKFEN

