



## 2024 VINTAGE: UNIQUE, EXTREME WEATHER CONDITIONS AND A HAPPY ENDING

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*The 2024 growing cycle once again demonstrated how climate change has turned the world of agriculture upside down. The year was shaped by extreme weather conditions – from late frosts and hail to heat and heavy rains with flooding. Despite all these challenges, we owe a tremendous debt to the tireless work of our vigneron and a meticulously planned harvest that brought in high-quality fruit.*

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The year began unusually warm, with February marking the highest temperatures since records have been kept. This led to notably early blossoming of the almond and apricot trees as well as an usually early bud break for the grapevines in late March. We sowed our green cover mixes, which include red clover, vetch, and phacelia, throughout the spring. This practice promotes biodiversity in the vineyard soils and greater vitality in the vines. April was full of surprises, with the weather swinging from 30°C days to nights of heavy frost. During the period from April 19th - 26th, temperatures sank as low as -4°C, causing major frost damages, especially on the right bank of the Danube in Rossatz and Rührsdorf, as well as in the Spitzer Graben and in Weißenkirchen. Armed with torches and smudge pots, our vigneron bravely worked to protect the most vulnerable shoots.

May started dry and windy. The much-needed rain arrived mid-month, bringing cooler temperatures with it. Although this

slowed the growth cycle for a time, a quick and largely uneventful flowering took place in early June to warm weather. Fruit set was good, lending hope for a positive harvest despite the difficulties of the spring.

The summer showed two distinct sides. While June was shaped by rain and moderate temperatures, July brought an enduring heat wave, complete with record temperatures. Early July saw a bit of evening hail, causing individual damages in Eastern Wachau. August also remained hot, with the "City Center Vienna" weather station documenting a record number of tropical nights. The situation was fortunately not quite as extreme in the Wachau, as the cooling influence of the Waldviertel (northern plateau to Wachau) and the Danube kept temperatures relatively low. Despite the hot days, rain fell regularly in this period. By late August, we had already reached our normal average annual precipitation (450mm). Such abundant rain always sets the stage for potential incidences of downy mildew. The





frost-damaged sites in particular needed significant attention from the vignerons to fight fungal stress.

Harvest started early, on 3rd September, a reflection of the hot summer and the threatened overripeness in the grapes at that time. As we launched into the work, the sunny weather allowed us to pick only until roughly noon, to avoid letting the fruit grow overly warm. Starting on September 12th, however, several days of intense rains brought roughly 200mm of precipitation and led to a one-week pause in the harvest. Flooding also followed as a result, including high-water measurements. The Wachau's flood walls prevented catastrophic damages, but in nearby St. Pölten, the enormous amounts of rain led to unprecedented flooding and flood damage. Lower Austria was declared a disaster site. Here in Wachau, the drystone walls on many terrace vineyards collapsed due to the water-soaked soil. The hand rebuilding of these walls will present a major challenge to vignerons and will likely be a focus for their work this winter.

On September 18th, harvest resumed to significantly lower temperatures. The cooler nights slowed the maturation process, promoted the development of aromas, and stabilized acidity levels in the grapes, which in turn had a positive impact on the quality of the wines. The weather remained unsettled, requiring repeated pauses throughout harvest. The sustained rainfall encouraged fungal disease, especially on the Rieslings. Thanks to the experience and flexibility of our vignerons, it was possible for us to conduct a very precise selection to bring in healthy, ripe Riesling grapes.

Grüner Veltliner proved notably resistant to Botrytis, and so harvest ended in mid-October with our Grüner Veltliner Rieden Smaragd wines as well as the Riesling Smaragd Ried Brandstatt in the Spitzer Graben.

The high alcohol levels that normally might come with a hot late summer never materialized. Thanks to the autumn cool down, maturation levels remained

moderate. In all, the extreme weather events (frost, hail, and enduring rains) ultimately led to a 20% drop in volume. 2024 was a vintage unlike any other, with many challenges to manage. And yet the vintage seems destined to be remembered for high quality.

Despite the hot late summer, the wines of the 2024 vintage are characterised by their moderate alcohol level and fine fruity and spicy aromas. The wines present a balanced, crisp acidity as well as the elegance and finesse that are so important to us. We are looking forward to wines with vibrant freshness, great drinkability and plenty of structure and depth.



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