



In Issue 120, Claude Kolm's *The Fine Wine Review* rates the 2006 vintage in Germany including a first-time visit to Weingut Clemens Busch as well as tasting and rating some selections from Knebel, Stein, and Steinmetz.

WEINGUT CLEMENS BUSCH

2006 Pündericher Marienberg Kabinett trocken	92/A-
2006 Pündericher Marienberg Spätlese trocken **	94/A
2006 Pündericher Marienberg Kabinett halbtrocken	91/B+
2006 Pündericher Marienberg Vom Roten Schiefer	(90-93)
2006 Pündericher Marienberg Fahrlay Spätlese	(92-95)
2006 Pündericher Marienberg Rothenpfad Spätlese	(89-92)
2006 Pündericher Marienberg Kabinett	91/A
2006 Pündericher Marienberg Spätlese Gold Capsule	93/A
2006 Pündericher Marienberg Auslese Vom Roten Schieffer	93+/A
2006 Pündericher Marienberg Auslese Fass Nr. 636	95+/A
2006 Pündericher Marienberg Auslese Fass Nr. 651	95/A
2006 Pündericher Marienberg Rothenpfad Auslese	95/A
2006 Pündericher Marienberg Falkenberg Auslese	95/A
2006 Pündericher Marienberg Auslese (Gold Cap)	94(+)/A
2006 Pündericher Marienberg Auslese (Long Gold Cap)	95+/A
2006 Pündericher Marienberg Fahrlay Beerenauslese	97/A
2006 Pündericher Marienberg Falkenberg Beerenauslese	97/A
2006 Pündericher Marienberg Beerenauslese (Gold Cap)	97+/A

This estate is a first visit for me, but I have been hearing about it for some time. Based on this visit, the high praise has not in the least bit been exaggerated. Organic producers are rare in Germany and biodynamic ones even rarer, but Busch has been organic for 20 years and biodynamic for two years. Harvest in 2006 lasted 3 weeks here, with a selection each night in the cellar of the grapes that had been harvested that day. Clemens Busch says that he was lucky that there was no rain during that period, and the wind kept the botrytis down. The first wine presented was the *Kabinett trocken*. The wine is from gray slate soils. It shows intense minerality in the nose and minerality and earthiness with slate and incipient apricot flavors and a smooth texture and plenty of density. Normally, this wine is 10.5-11% alcohol, according to Busch, but in 2006 it is 12%. This is superb dry wine -- where do we go from here? The *Spätlese trocken* ** shows intense mineral aromas, almost like a Puligny-Montrachet. In the mouth, the wine is smooth with minerality, grip, and some earthiness, and also some silkiness -- again there is a resemblance to Puligny. Superb wine. The *Kabinett halbtrocken* is calm with a presence on the palate, and length. The wine is still firm, but does not have as much bite as the trockens that preceded it. There is great length in the mouth and development, with a silky texture. The *Vom Roten Schiefer* is, as the name states in German, from red slate soils. The wine is floral with a touch of earth in the nose. In the mouth, the wine is firm and dry and not as broad as some of Busch's other wines, but long and pure. The *Fahrlay Spätlese* is floral and somewhat fruity in the nose with honeysuckle overtones. In the mouth there is some sweetness to this wine and the honeysuckle carries over, but the wine is firm. The alcohol is 14.6% and one can tell that there is high alcohol here, but it is not bothersome and overall, the wine shows great finesse. Busch's *Rothenpfad Spätlese* also shows honeysuckle aromas. In the mouth, the wine is the sweetest of the group but there is also the firmness of a dry wine, and the honeysuckle continues in the mouth. The wine was harvested at 125 degrees Oechsle, has 14.8% alcohol and 50 g of residual sugar, but finishes fairly dry.

With the *Kabinett*, we move into the traditional fruity-style wines. This wine is only 9.0% alcohol. It shows sweetness and some botrytis with a golden color and lovely finesse. The *Spätlese Gold Cap* continues the honeysuckle aroma theme, and is very honeyed with prickly acidity and the texture and weight of a Spätlese with some buttery flavors and great length. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 21 07. Turning to the sweet wines, Busch thinks that 2006 is the best year he has seen for noble sweet wines; 1999 comes close, but he had less property then. Although not lacking in finesse, these wines are more powerful than their neighbors upstream on the Mosel. The *Vom Roten Schieffer Auslese* is, as the



name states, from red slate. This wine is very strongly botrytised, almost Beerenauslese in character. Add to that a silky texture and firmness, this is attractive, but since I have no prior experience here, I am conservative in my rating and we will have to see how it develops. The *Fass Nr. 636* is more elegant in the nose and mouth with greater minerality and outstanding length. The *Fass Nr. 651* falls in between the previous two wines in weight and minerality and is very long and powerful with honeyed flavors. This is virtually a Beerenauslese in style. Busch's *Fahrley Auslese* displays very fine slate and honey aromas. In the mouth, the wine is sweet and honeyed with excellent acidity and liveliness and fine length. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 13 07. The *Rothenpfad Auslese* has slate and some honeyed aspects in the nose. In the mouth, the wine is quite sweet with great acidity, making for great finesse, and the wine is quite long and shows excellent nervosity. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 14 07. The *Falkenlay Auslese* is the most complex in the nose with honey and lemon scents. In the mouth, the wine is round but not heavy with complexity to its flavors centering around honey and lemon confit, and a succulent texture. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 15 07. The *Gold Cap Auslese* has plenty of botrytis, but for the moment is more restrained in the nose than the preceding wine. In the mouth, it shows lemon curd flavors with acidic support that prevents it from being too heavy. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 16 07. The *Long Gold Cap Auslese* has botrytised, honeyed aromas. The acidity seems even greater than the preceding wine and there are honey and brown sugar flavors with slate showing through, plus a lemony finish. Notable length here. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 17 07. The *Fahrley Beerenauslese* shows real weight on the palate with golden, lemony fruit, great purity, and incredible length. Nothing cloying about this wine. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 18 07. The *Falkenlay Beerenauslese* shows butter and honey in the nose. It is dense and even weightier than the Fahrley in the mouth with even more brown sugar, outstanding acidity, and intense lemon curd flavors. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 19 07. The *Gold Cap Beerenauslese* is for the moment closed because there is so much botrytis. In the mouth, the wine has a smooth, creamy texture with crystalline lemon curd flavors, enormous length, and great balance. I did not taste the two Trockenbeerenauslesen because they were still fermenting at the time of my visit. Importer: Mosel Wine Merchant, New York.

2005 Pündericher Marienberg "Fahrley" Spätlese	92/A
2005 Pündericher Marienberg "Weissenberg" Spätlese	92/A
2005 Pündericher Marienberg "Falkenberg" Spätlese	91/A-
2005 Pündericher Marienberg "Fahrley Terrassen" Spätlese	94/A
2005 Pündericher Marienberg "Felsterrasse" Spätlese	94/A
2005 Pündericher Marienberg "Raffes" Spätlese	94+/A
2005 Pündericher Marienberg "Trockenbeerenauslese" Spätlese	98+/A

Clemens Busch's *Pünderich Marienberg "Fahrley" Spätlese* is from blue slate. The wine shows some walnut and apple aromas, but largely is closed. In the mouth, the wine is off dry with the apples and walnuts continuing, some succulence, and great length. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 29 06. The *Pündericher Marienberg "Weissenberg" Spätlese* is from what Busch describes as his best vineyard for red slate. The wine is less earthy than the Fahrley and shows more fruit with more sweetness, and a creamy texture, but with firmness underneath. The fruit is broader here and needs more time to develop. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 28 06. The *Pündericher Marienberg "Falkenlay"* is the estate's best plot. This is mostly gray slate, although there are some red slate points, too. The pungent nose shows spiced apple and even floral aromas. There is a fair amount of sweetness here, and more fruit than in the preceding wines, especially quince. The wine is somewhat harder than the Fahrley, and there is a some botrytis evident here, too. Alcohol is a lofty 13.5%. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 35 06. The *Pündericher Marienberg "Fahrley terrassen" Spätlese* is from vines that are 60-65 years old on terraces. The wine is deep with plenty of character to its intense walnut and apple aromas and flavors. This shows more character than the regular Fahrley and is longer -- it almost tastes dry, no doubt because of the acidity. Great calm here. 14.0% alcohol, but not noticeable. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 34 06. The *Pündericher Marienberg "Felsterrasse" Spätlese* is from vines that are nearly 70 years old and that is located between two rocks, making for a special micro-climate. The wine is more elegant than the the Fahrley terrassen and tastes dry or off dry (stated alcohol is 13.5%). The chief difference I noticed from the Fahrley terrassen is the increased oiliness but at the same time elegance of this wine. The *Pündericher Marienberg "Raffes" Spätlese* is from a particular plot within the Falkenlay vineyard. This wine was made in 2005 because it was picked very late, at Beerenauslese and Trockenbeerenauslese must weights, but without botrytis. The resulting wine has 14.5% stated alcohol, although it does not show. Instead, the wine remains elegant and balanced and tastes dry with some black walnut and earth flavors, and tremendous length. It would seem that this is a wine for drinking in 5-6 years. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 37 06. Last, the *Pündericher Marienberg Trockenbeerenauslese*,



the “smallest” of Busch’s TBA’s in 2005, is sweet, pure, smooth, and dense with crystalline lemon flavors and fabulous length. Busch contrasts the botrytis in 2005 with that of 2006: for the latter year, the botrytis came very quickly, whereas in 2005 it had more time to develop and so has greater substance and underlying acidity. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 24 07. Importer: Mosel Wine Merchant, New York.

WEINGUT REINHARD UND BEATE KNEBEL

2006 Von Den Terrassen trocken

92/A

2006 Winner Uhlen Spätlese trocken

88/B

Following Rheinhold Knebel’s suicide a few years ago, his widow Beate has taken control of the estate. The *Von den Terrassen trocken* is a superb wine with aromas of stone and slate and a touch of citrus peel. In the mouth, the wine is firm, smooth, and medium-full with citric flavors and complete dryness. It is so delicious now, there is no reason to wait to drink it. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 06 07. The *Winner Uhlen Spätlese trocken* initially starts with Sauvignon Blanc-like grassiness, but then turns around into an attractive, somewhat austere, stony wine with just enough residual sugar to slightly suggest sweetness. Almost assuredly, this wine, although good for tasting, is even better matched with food. Drinkable now, but it should age well for 7+ years. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 07 07. Importer: Mosel Wine Merchant, New York.

WEIN-ERBHOF STEIN

2006 St. Aldegunder Palmberg-Terrassen Spätlese feinherb

91/A

Aldegunder is a location that previously had not been familiar to me. The village is located on the eastern portion of the Mosel (Unter Mosel), maybe ten kilometers downstream from Zell. The vineyards are not considered anything special here, yet Stein has a reputation for getting outstanding results from them. Certainly, the *St. Aldegunder Palmberg-Terrassen Spätlese feinherb* demonstrates this, with crystalline, earthy lime/slate fruit with a touch of anise, and a juicy texture that at the same time is firm, stony, and smooth. Technically not dry (hence the feinherb designation), the residual sugar is not evident except in the sense that it gives the body a little more breadth. I’d guess this best drunk over the next 6-8 years. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 5 07. Importer: Mosel Wine Merchant, New York.

WEINGUT GÜNTHER STEINMETZ

2006 Brauneberger Juffer Spätlese “Devon”

92/A

2006 Brauneberger Juffer Spätlese *

93/A

This is an estate that I need to learn more about: the wines are pure and racy, right up my alley. Edith and Stefan Steinmetz’s *Brauneberger Juffer Spätlese “Devon”* has no mention on the label of being dry. The only clue to the consumer is the stated alcohol at 11.5%. The wine is wonderfully stony and nobly austere and very steely without being harsh. Perfect for drinking now and over the next few years. It is a little less round and more incisive than the Fritz Haage Brauneberger Juffer Spätlese trocken. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 14 07. The *Brauneberger Juffer Spätlese ** is a traditional fruity-style wine. While many wines of this vintage are too alcoholic or too sweet and lack a firm structure, this one is mineral and taut with not too much sweetness (in fact, some may find it too austere), and incipient pineapple and complexity showing. I’d give this wine several years to reach its apogee. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 3 07. Importer: Mosel Wine Merchant, New York.