WEINGUT FRANK

Hoher Weg, Grüner Veltliner Reserve DAC

Harald Frank is a true Meister of his beloved native varietal, Gruner Veltliner. His Hoher Weg is a single-cru wonder that allows even experts to experience this marvelous grape in a new light. Hand-harvested and made in micro-quantities, Hoher Weg is intensely aromatic for Gruner, with aromas of flint, lime pith, salt water and white flowers. This wine is the culmination of 10 generations of family winemaking, and is the top expression from the Frank estate -- in sum, one of the best examples of Grüner Veltliner in the world.

WINEMAKER BIOGRAPHY

As affable and humble as they come, Harold Frank is one Austrian whose demeanor actually reminds us of the Italians! Gently manning the helm of his family's ten-generation estate, his joy seems matched only by the caliber and precision of their wines.

ENOLOGIST

Harald Frank

TASTING NOTES

Color	Medium yellow
Nose	Ripe apples and honeydew, with hints of flint, white blossoms, and almond
Palate	Creamy, medium-full bodied and complex, with layers of white apple and tropical fruit
Finish	Long and complex

VINEYARD & VINIFICATION

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Vineyard Location	Weinviertel DAC, Niederösterreich
Vineyard Size	1.6 ha
Varietals List	100% Grüner Veltliner
Farming Practices	Organic (non-certified); dry-farmed; hand harvested grapes
Elevation	230 m
Soils	Loess
Maturation Summary	In 600L Austrian oak barrels for 6 months and bottled for 6 months
Alcohol	13.0 %
Acidity	5.5 g/liter
Residual Sugar	3 g/liter
Annual Production	1,500 bottles

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WEINGUT FRANK

For ten whole generations, the Frank family has lived and made wine in the charming, northeastern town of Herrnbaumgarten. Planted on gentle slopes above the village, the vines of Harald and Daniela Frank span 23 hillside hectares in one of Austria's coolest, driest zones. Fortuitously, the vineyards of Weingut Frank also enjoy a bit of extra altitude, which helps maintain the family's dedication to clean, precise whites and extreme typicity. Plantings range from 180 to 320m, providing cooler nights and often extending the growing season into October. Depending upon the varietal, this elevation really matters. Remarkably, even here in Austria's far north, there's a 0.7 degree C difference in median temperature, from the bottom of their hill to the top!

Priding themselves on tradition, Weingut Frank's production revolves around Grüner Veltliner - a cross between Traminer and St. Georgen and the country's most telltale varietal. While omnipresent throughout Austria, its spiritual home remains Niederösterreich, to the northeast. (This is where Herrnbaumgarten is located, within the Weinvertal DAC and just 15 minutes south of the Czech Republic.) A prolific varietal, Gruner's clusters and berries both tend to be large, so vines need to be monitored constantly. To prevent an overly sweet style, it's all about extra altitude, sharp-eyed harvests, and lower yields. Soil makes a big difference, too. Ideal is 'loess' - windblown sediment dating back to the Ice Ages - which the Frank's vines enjoy in spades higher up on the hill. In the Weinvertal DAC, Gruner has the nickname pfefferl, which translates to "little peppery one", exhibiting the light, spicy notes that derive from loess and help define the region.

REGION

NIEDERÖSTERREICH

With some 28,000 hectares under vine, Niederösterreich, or "Lower Austria" is the country's largest region for producing Qualitätswein. To clarify, "lower" is a reference to altitude – and decidedly not latitude, as it's located in the uppermost NE corner, bordering both Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Its comparatively flat terrain is the result of the Eastern Alpine foothills flattening out to meet the Bohemian Massif and the edge of the Western Carpathians. While terroirs are diverse, ranging from ancient sea beds to long-forgotten volcanoes, deposits of the glacial, fine-grained loess can be found in about half the vineyards, and coarse-grained gravels also contribute greatly to the viticultural landscape.

Niederosterreich has a rich winemaking history that dates back to the Bronze Age., and the Roman's left behind substantive evidence of their own. Adding to the lore, monks were responsible for building the steep, terraced vineyards of Wachau during the Middle Ages. Today, Niederösterreich includes 8 of Austria's 16 DAC's and is home to about 60% of the nation's vineyards. Overall, Niederösterreich can be divided into three distinct areas. In the cool, dry, northeastern Weinviertal, winemakers tend to focus on zippy, mineral-laden whites, including Grüner Veltliner, Welschriesling, and rich, Pinot-family wines. To the south and west, in the hilly Danube River Region and in DACs like Wachau, a somewhat warmer climate can lead to rounder, more aromatic whites. Finally, in the SE, red varieties tend to thrive in a warmer, Pannonian meso-climate, benefitting from low rainfall, hot summers, and moderate winters.

WEINVIERTEL DAC

Austria's shift toward the French system of recognizing typicity and terroir began with the creation of its first DAC (Districtus Austriae Controllatus) in 2003. At that time, Weinviertal was credited with producing a unique expression of Grüner Veltliner (by far the main grape cultivated in this NE corner of the country). There, thanks to large pockets of loess – the fine, lime-rich sediment blown in from barren, northern flood plains during the last Ice Age – Grüner showcases a clear-headed, herbal spice. Alongside scents of green or white (and when riper, black) peppercorn, a fruit-forward nose and fresh acidity can be counted upon. Starting with the 2009 vintage, the more powerful DAC Reserve also became available and, more recently, recognized towns or crus (like Weingut Frank's Hernnbaumgarten) may also be displayed on the label.

A microcosm of the Niederosterreich region, the Weinviertel DAC is Austria's largest subdivision and covers nearly 14,000 hectares. It extends from the Danube River in the south to the Czech border in the north, and from the steep Manhartsberg ridge in the west to the Slovak border in the east. On the same latitude as the Champagne AOC, it has always focused on fresher, lighter, more approachable whites. While none can contest the reign of Grüner Veltliner, it's also where most of the base wines for Austrian sparkling wine, or sekt, are grown, and is home to a host of other varieties ranging from Riesling to Zweigelt. Overall, Weinviertal is Austria's coolest, driest zone.