



Vintage report 2011

A curious year of weather extremes, great anxiety, and fantastic harvest results

The weather in 2011 brought wine-growers many a surprise. Only after overcoming great challenges were they rewarded with exceptional results.

Following an exceptionally early bud burst in mid-April, a cold snap one night in the first part of May sufficed to cause not inconsiderable frost damage in low-lying sites.

A summer-like spring

In general, the weather in March, April, and May was more like that of early summer, with temperatures some 3°C (5.4°F) higher than the long-term average – a value that has been topped only once during the past century. Due to the warmth, blossoming in the Rheingau had already begun by late May, and growth was more than three weeks ahead of schedule at that time.

A damp summer

If spring was marked by too little precipitation, summer rains more than made up for the deficit. As a result, however, temperatures did not drop; they remained higher than the long-term average. Extremely early blossoming and favorable weather during summer led to a phenomenon at the beginning of August: the start of veraison – the earliest since time immemorial. The weather during this phase of ripening was not ideal: it remained damp and warm from mid-August until well into September. Growers could envision pending disaster (onset of rot) even though both grapes and vineyards were still in perfect shape.

A picture-perfect Indian summer

In mid-September – just in time – the weather improved. It remained dry until the end of October, and conditions were ideal for harvesting. Justifiably, one can say that the ripeness of this year's crop was exceptional. Although fantastic analytical values confirm this, the actual taste of the grapes in the vineyard was even more telling. From the very first day of picking, ripeness was perceptible to the taste. Once again, our crop in the Turmberg and Gräfenberg sites enabled us to produce wines of every quality level, up to and including Trockenbeerenauslese. We also achieved record Oechsle readings in 2011: 265° degrees in Turmberg and 301° in Gräfenberg.

The young wines are extraordinarily compact, with brilliant aromas, thanks to the perfectly ripe condition of the grapes at harvest. We're especially pleased, though, that the wines of 2011 are not only powerful and compact, but also reveal their play and elegance through a subtle fruitiness. Despite high levels of ripeness, we were able to preserve the aromas and mineral notes typical of our cool-climate, hillside sites. Uncompromising selection during the harvest blessed us with a tremendous vintage that will surely join the ranks of its predecessors from the "comet years" 1811 and 1911. In any case, people will be talking about vintage 2011 for generations to come.