



Fine Wine Writing by Jancis Robinson

HomeArticles **Juliusspital, Würzburg Stein Silvaner GG 2005 Franken**

publication date: 05 sep 06

Last week I buzzed over to Wiesbaden in Germany (having to check in a tiny bag just because it contained lipstick and toothpaste – grrr) for a preview of the VDP's (top German estates) 2005 Grosses Gewächs releases. Over a day and half I tasted well over 200 wines in super-easy conditions: willing and efficient young wine students, winemakers and locals poured samples for dozens of us international wine commentators as, when and how we asked.

This second look at Germany's 2005s was invaluable for me because it showed that by no means all regions were as successful last year as the Mosel and Nahe on which I reported so enthusiastically previously in [fine wine news](#) and [tasting notes](#). My full report on these other regions and wines, and on the notion of Grosses Gewächs in general, will appear in fine wine news and in tasting notes this Saturday, but I wanted to draw you attention to how delicious some of the Franken 2005s are. Franken makes some of Germany's most distinctive wines - relatively assertive and full bodied and well suited to drier styles. Silvaner is the characteristic grape of the region. These are the wines that have traditionally been sold in those dumpy green flasks that are such a nightmare to store in wine racks. (Indeed our Wiesbaden servers had to abandon their six-bottle crates for the Franken flights in favour of supermarket wire baskets.)

It seemed to me last week that the historic, charitably-funded producer Juliusspital of the town of Würzburg made the best range of Franken wines by far, and this dry **Würzburg Stein Silvaner 2005** was outstanding. Deeper yellow than most, it has a nose that seems reticent relative to the much more aromatic Rieslings that dominated this tasting. But that is not the nature of Silvaner. It's an earthy, ancient grape and it was obvious that this was a very substantial wine, almost rich, which communicated the fact that it is an agricultural product of a single vineyard, the famous Stein, so eloquently (and I don't mean bad smells) that it captured my attention. This is a wine that just gets better and better on the palate – and there are too few of those. Too many wines today are all flash on the nose and then fade away on the finish. Earthy, correct. Great stuff. Big and confident, this wine should provide exciting drinking with or without food, over the next three years at least.

It was only by chance at the lunch on the second day that I came across a bottle of Juliusspital 2005, sitting in an ice bucket after Prinz zu Salm had given a presentation to some other journalists on recent changes to the Grosses Gewächs regulations (including, worryingly, the requirement that from 2006 they are even drier). I just happened to notice that Juliusspital, most unusually for this group of more than 100 top German estates, is now using screwcaps. Could this be part of the reason why their wines shone so much more brightly than their peers, I wonder?

I would love to tell you where to find this wine but the Grosses Gewächs wines were released only last Friday so it will presumably be some time before it is in retail distribution. What I can direct you to is Juliusspital's excellent [website](#) which includes an online shop, even though the GGs are not (yet?) available there.