



A FAIRYTALE  
SUMMER IN  
AUTUMN

NOVEMBER HARVEST 2016



WEINTRADITION SEIT 1789

KELLER

FLÖRSHEIM-DALSHEIM

*Weintradition seit 1789 Keller*

## *Dear Wine Friends*

I have just come from the cellar, where I have tasted the casks of the new vintage. I am totally inspired by the quality that is slumbering down there. With such feelings of elation, the vintage report just about writes itself. 'If you want to understand your vines, it is essential to be close to the vineyard', Charles Rousseau of Domaine Armand Rousseau explained to me. 'The closer you get, the more your understanding becomes a feeling, Klaus Peter.' I have never forgotten this.

And from this principle I have come to conclusions about my work. If you want to work according to your feelings, the business has to be small enough so that you can see and understand everything.

When Rousseau was offered the legendary Grand Cru Ruchottes-Chambertin, he joined forces with his friends Dr Mugneret from Vosne-Romanée and Georges Roumier from Chambolle to ensure that these newly acquired vines received the same love and attention as the other Rousseau family vineyards. The three friends shared the vineyard: 1.06 of the 3.3 ha now form part of the Domaine Rousseau holdings.

*Forever young.*







*Klaus-Peter und his babies.*

To focus on the essentials and value old vines, those are two of the most important things that have always fascinated me about Burgundy.

And perhaps that's why we love our old vines so much, the narrow rows between the vines, the low canopies. We caress the plants, spoil them and talk to them. The bunches that grow there are the foundation for the highest quality in our business. What grows there on the poor stony limestone rocks is unique, unrepeatable. To work here is for us like a corner of paradise.

To have a foundation of old, deeply rooted vines which have already lived through so much was a great advantage in 2016, because old vines are not as easily put off their stride in a crazy year like 2016. Vines are just like people. Decades of experience pay off.

How much EU money is currently wasted in promoting wide row spacing with fewer vines per hectare in these times of climate change? What nonsense! Precisely the opposite produces quality. High vine density creating both competition for the roots and shade, low canopies which slowly bring their fruit to perfect ripeness – complex aromas with finesse that is rarely found anywhere else on earth. Is unique quality any less worth promoting than volume and efficiency?

Back to the vintage. The first half of 2016 was more like a constant battle with the powers of nature than loving co-operation but when finally such great wines are resting in the



barrel, then once again all the hours of hard work were worth it. From the outset, 2016 did not make it easy for us, dear wine lovers, and I need to explain why I am now so enthusiastic about it.

20 December 2016, 6 am breakfast and I am reading the headline about the choice of sportsperson of the year: 'The winners from Baden-Baden have all matured through difficult times.' Tennis ace Angelique Kerber was so frustrated five years ago that she wanted to give up tennis. Today she is seeded number one in the world. Fabian Hambüchen was plagued by constant shoulder pain and he was about to lose his Olympic place. Today he is our Olympic champion on the horizontal bar. Kira Walkenhorst suffered from terrible knee pain. At the last minute she was declared fit for Rio and today – along with Laura Ludwig – she is Olympic volleyball champion. Fabien Hambüchen hit the nail on the head when he said that the 2016 winners were united by having suffered 'mental agony' during their preparations.

'Agony' and 'emotional hell ride' describe my experience in the first six months of the 2016 vintage.

After a mild winter in which the almond trees in our garden flowered in January, temperatures stay pretty cool until mid April.

The timing of budbreak was normal in the context of the last few years and we had a few sleepless nights due to the threat of late frosts destroying the young growth. Luckily this period did not last long. Temperatures rose considerably in May and it was damp in the vineyard. Really damp!

We can't remember any year in which there was so many rainy days in May and June as there were in 2016. The warm wet weather meant high disease pressure, particularly from downy mildew, as some inflorescences were completely destroyed (see above right). Because the soil between the rows was softened by the heavy downpours, we protected the plants as in our grandfather's times: going through the vines on foot and using a hand-held spray.

Even with light equipment it was in places impossible to work the vineyard so that the whole team had to be out in the vineyard in the pouring rain. Even at the beginning of June it seemed that 2016 was carrying out nature's punishment for the particularly good 2015 vintage. We suffered in the vineyard along with the vines whose young fruits had to contend with endless rain during and after flowering.

In this phase of the year we felt like Odysseus on his Odyssey when Poseidon god of the sea sent him a storm which required every last ounce of his strength to overcome. 492 mm of rain - a year's worth in just six months. The loss of the entire crop seemed possible at that time.

If things had continued like that, I certainly could not have chosen gleaming bunches from Morstein as the opening image for this vintage report. Instead it would have been fat crocodile tears at the sight of split bunches.









Because there was some millerandage during flowering, some bunches now hung wonderfully small and loose-berried on the vine. Unfortunately it is impossible to put in an order for this type of berry, you can only ever wish for them. They have one great advantage: thanks to good sunlight exposure and ventilation, the skins are often thicker and therefore more intensely aromatic as well more resistant than their bigger, unaffected siblings.

The summery September with average daytime temperatures of almost 18 °C meant that the little berries could catch up in their ripening. Our wish list for a perfect autumn now had only one item left on it: a long and slow final ripening. And nature gave us this too in 2016. It felt almost as if she wanted to apologise for the wet spring months.

With an average temperature of 8 °C, October days were sunny and clear but cool, the nights at times really chilly. For Gaby, our apprentice from Venezuela who is on the road to becoming a Master of Wine, early mornings at zero degrees called for the layered look (see below, middle photo).

When slow ripening combines with moderate alcohol levels, this is the sort of year we love because it promises the greatest potential for drinking pleasure. Extremely careful and labour-intensive work in the old vines (you had to be up close) in conjunction with pretty much ideal autumn weather is a gift we might well call a miracle of nature.

The Burgundy varieties – both red and white – were hanging on the vine in loose, perfectly healthy bunches. The must weights of the Pinot Blanc and Chardonnay were between 90 and 93 ° Oechsle, the acidity in the must between 7 and 8 g/l.















The vines, in a constant fight with nature, performed amazingly well. Wines of character that would not have developed if we'd had nothing but sunshine. What was important was for the winemaker to be ready to take up the fight. It is clear that this vintage will sort the wheat from the chaff. A year that demanded everything from us ended up smiling on us.

Heartfelt thanks to all the team and friends who have supported us throughout the year.

It is a pleasure to work with you, you are the soul of our business and without you even the best that nature could give would not result in such wines.

*A big thank you!*

