

WINE TOURISM —MAG—

18



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CONTENTS

04

EDITOR'S NOTE

05

HEROIC VITICULTURE
OF ETNA

12

A MONTEFALCO

17

DOMAINE LABRANCHE

19

OTW

30

BRUNDELMAYER

33

ALLRAM

EDITOR'S NOTE

WHEN TERROIR COMPREHENSION BECOMES A MASTERCLASS

There are wine tastings where you simply taste wines. And then there are tastings that make you stop, compare, question and rethink what you know. The ÖTW Single Vineyard Summit in Grafenegg is definitely the second kind.

For four days in September, Grafenegg Castle became a meeting place for winemakers, sommeliers, journalists and wine professionals from around the world. More than 500 wines from some of Austria's most important single vineyards were presented under one simple but ambitious motto: Decoding Terroir.

What we love about the summit is that it doesn't try to give you easy answers. The silent tasting format allows you to concentrate, taste across regions and producers, and really ask yourself what makes one vineyard different from another.

Some wines were immediate standouts. Others were less convincing. But that is exactly what makes the experience so interesting. When you taste so many wines side by side, patterns begin to appear, and you start to understand why certain sites have earned their reputation.

Beyond the wines, the people make the event special. Meeting the growers, hearing their stories and tasting wines poured by the winemakers themselves creates a connection that you simply don't get at a typical trade fair.

This year also marked an important moment for the ÖTW. After almost 20 years leading the organization, Michael Moosbrugger will hand over the chairmanship to Michael Malat in January 2027. Under Moosbrugger's leadership, the ÖTW grew from 25 to 91 member wineries, playing an important role in putting the idea of vineyard classification and origin at the heart of Austrian wine.

For us, the Single Vineyard Summit was ultimately less about finding the "best" wine and more about understanding why a place can produce something unique.

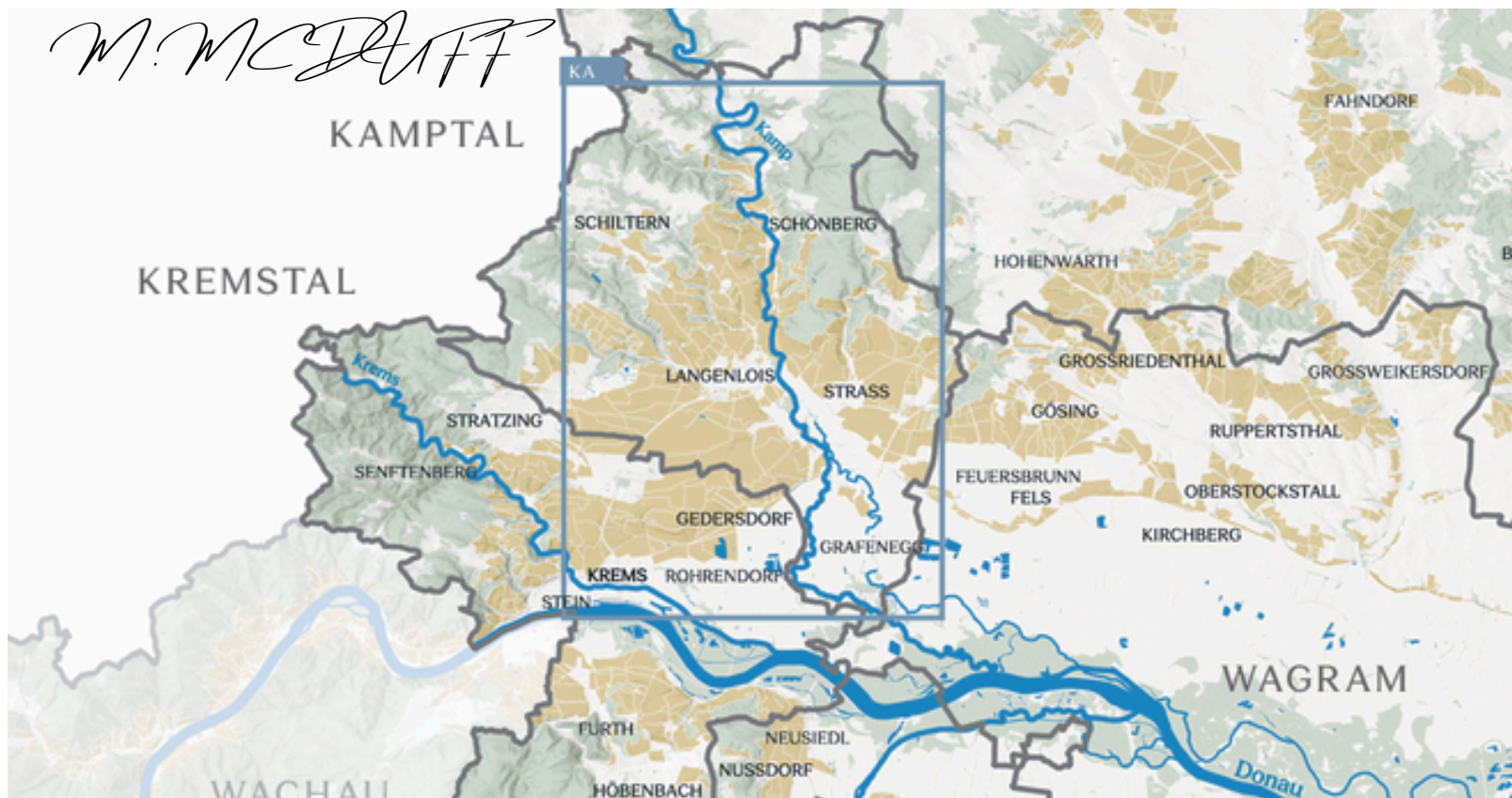
A huge thank you to the ÖTW, particularly Michael Tischler-Zimmermann, for an unforgettable few days in Grafenegg. Great wines, great conversations, and plenty of questions to take home with us.

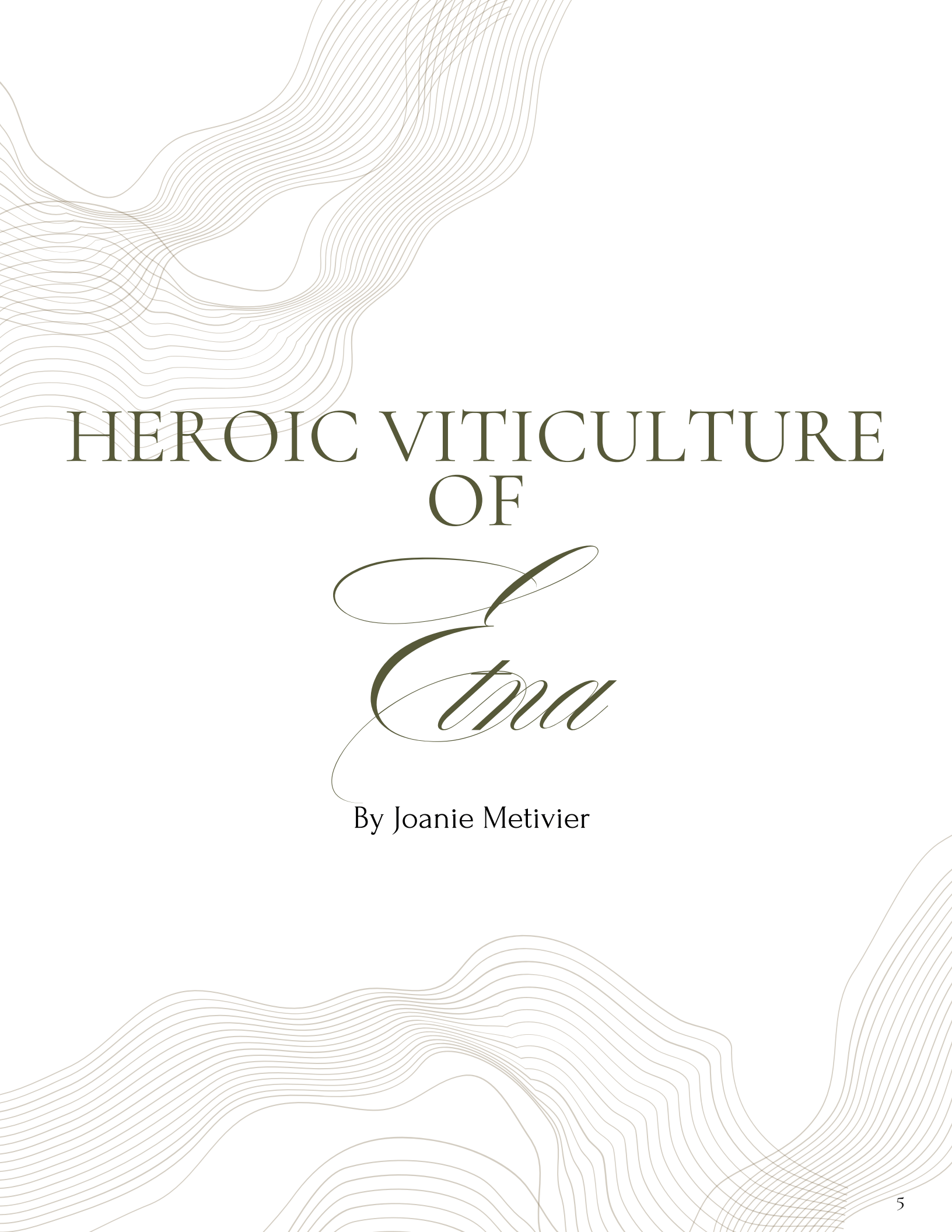
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HEROIC VITICULTURE OF

Ena

By Joanie Metivier

There are few wine regions where the word *terroir* feels as literal as it does on Mount Etna. Here, the vineyard is not simply shaped by soil, climate and altitude. It is shaped by fire.

Etna is a landscape in constant negotiation with itself: lava flows through centuries, terraces carved into black stone, ancient bush vines clinging to steep slopes, clouds forming and disappearing around the mountain, and winds arriving from virtually every direction. At elevations where viticulture becomes physically demanding, generations of growers have continued to work the land.

Today, Etna is experiencing an extraordinary revival. But the story is not simply one of a fashionable wine region suddenly discovered by the international market. It is a story of abandonment, survival and rediscovery—and of a new generation recognizing the extraordinary potential of vineyards that had been cultivated for centuries.



The relationship between Etna and viticulture is ancient. The Consorzio Etna DOC traces the first evidence of viticulture in eastern Sicily back to the Neolithic period, while more firmly documented wine production developed following Greek colonization, from around the eighth century BC. By the third century BC, Theocritus was already writing about the widespread cultivation of vines in the area. So when we talk about Etna as a “new” wine region, the irony is considerable.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the province of Catania was one of Sicily's great wine-producing areas. Between 1880 and 1885, more than 90,000 hectares were planted with vines. Then came phylloxera, followed by economic and social upheaval and the gradual abandonment of difficult mountain vineyards.



Much of Etna's viticultural heritage survived almost by accident. Old vineyards were maintained by families, some vines escaped phylloxera because of the particular conditions of the volcanic soils, leaving behind old, ungrafted vineyards that today are among the region's greatest treasures.

Beginning particularly in the late 1990s producers began returning to Etna. Old vineyards were reclaimed, abandoned terraces restored and new investment arrived from both Sicily and abroad. Around 30 years ago only five to eight wineries were producing and bottling wine for distribution. Today, we can count approximately 200 wineries producing Etna DOC wines.

This growth continues rapidly, with young, dynamic producers as well as family dynasties continuing to demystify the mysterious and unique aspects of the volcano hillsides.



PALMENTI



Before stainless steel tanks, pneumatic presses and temperature-controlled cellars, Etna had the palmento.

A palmento is an old Sicilian winemaking building traditionally constructed close to the vineyard, often from the same dark volcanic stone that dominates the landscape. On Etna, these buildings were much more than simple wineries. They were pieces of rural engineering designed around the natural slope of the land.

Grapes arrived directly from the vineyard and were placed into elevated stone pressing vats. Traditionally, they were crushed by foot. Gravity then did the rest.

Must travelled through channels carved into the stone into fermentation vessels below, while the different levels of the building allowed the wine to move naturally through the production process.

The palmento was adapted to the mountain rather than forcing the mountain to accommodate the winery. Many of these structures fell into disuse during the twentieth century, and was even made illegal with the Gorria Law, but a number have been preserved or restored. Today, they offer a tangible connection to an agricultural culture that existed long before Etna became an international wine destination.

Standing inside one, it becomes easier to understand that Etna's wine identity is not something recently invented for the export market. It is built into the landscape.

ETNA'S GRAPE VARIETIES ARE INSEPARABLE FROM THE MOUNTAIN. THEY HAVE EVOLVED WITHIN ITS DIFFERENT EXPOSURES, ELEVATIONS AND MICROCLIMATES, AND THE SAME VARIETY CAN BEHAVE REMARKABLY DIFFERENTLY FROM ONE CONTRADA TO ANOTHER.

CARRICANTE



The name itself is thought to come from the Sicilian expression *u carricanti*, referring to the variety's historical productivity—plants capable of filling carts with grapes. Today, however, some of the most prized Carricante comes from precisely the kind of high-elevation, difficult vineyards where controlling yields is far removed from its historical reputation for abundance.

It is particularly associated with the eastern side of Etna and with the municipality of Milo, where the Etna Bianco Superiore designation is exclusively permitted. Under the DOC regulations, Etna Bianco must contain at least 60% Carricante, while Etna Bianco Superiore must contain at least 80%.

Carricante performs particularly well at elevation, where cooler temperatures and dramatic diurnal variation preserve its acidity and aromatic precision. The higher vineyards around Milo are among its most compelling expressions.

CATARRATTO

It is an ancient Sicilian variety traditionally associated with high productivity. The grape exists in several recognized forms, including Catarratto Bianco Comune, Catarratto Bianco Lucido and the more obscure Extra Lucido/Lucidissimo forms.

On Etna, Catarratto has a supporting role to Carricante. It can contribute body, fruit and breadth while retaining freshness when grown in the mountain's cooler conditions.

NERELLO MASCALESE



Then there is the grape that has become almost synonymous with Etna. Nerello Mascalese takes its name from the area around Mascali, on the eastern side of the volcano. It is the principal red grape of the mountain and must constitute at least 80% of Etna Rosso.

What makes it fascinating is how profoundly it reflects its surroundings.

At altitude, with large temperature differences between day and night, volcanic soils and intense sunlight moderated by mountain and maritime influences, Mascalese can produce wines of remarkable perfume, transparency and tannic structure.

It can look almost Burgundy-like in its pale colour, yet behave more like a mountain wine—salty, smoky, floral, structured and deeply marked by place.

NERELLO CAPPuccio

If Nerello Mascalese is the lead singer of Etna's reds, Nerello Cappuccio is the backup singer who should not be underestimated.

It rarely commands the same attention, but it can bring colour, fruit, spice and a slightly more generous texture to the blend.

The DOC permits up to 20% Nerello Cappuccio in Etna Rosso, alongside a minimum 80% Nerello Mascalese.

The vineyards of Etna are not one continuous landscape.

They climb from lower elevations toward 1,000 metres and beyond, with some plantings reaching approximately 1,300 metres. The result is an extraordinary vertical variation in climate, exposure and soil.

Most traditionally trained vines are grown as alberello, or bush vines, often planted in a quinconce arrangement rather than in perfectly aligned rows. The vines are low to the ground, compact and adapted to the difficult terrain.

This is not a vineyard designed for machinery. Many parcels must still be worked by hand. Terraces are separated by volcanic stone walls, slopes can be steep, and individual plots can be remarkably small.



Volcanic soils can be rich in minerals but relatively poor in available nitrogen. Rather than leaving the vineyard completely bare, growers often allow vegetation to develop between the vines. The cover crop is then worked into the soil, with vegetation changing from year to year according to the conditions.

Scientific studies of Etna's soils reveal extraordinary diversity because the mountain is essentially a collection of lava flows of different ages, overlain by varying deposits of ash and tephra. Soil development is strongly influenced by the age of each flow, rainfall, vegetation and the accumulation of volcanic material.

One of the most fascinating materials found in some areas is allophane, an amorphous mineral associated with volcanic soils. These soils can be remarkably porous and absorbent, contributing to the very particular physical behaviour of Etna's vineyards.

Then there are the highly localized soils that make Etna's contrade so compelling.

In Contrada Calderara Sottana, for example, the soil contains ripiddu—small pumice fragments—alongside volcanic stones and mineral material. The vineyard sits on Etna's northern flank at around 680–700 metres.



EAST SLOPE



CONTRADA: Caselle, villagrande, feudo di Mezzo, calderara Sottana

The eastern slope of Etna is one of the coolest, wettest and most maritime parts of the volcano. Facing the Ionian Sea, it receives considerably more rainfall than the rest of Sicily, while constant sea breezes and high elevation keep the vineyards ventilated and temperatures moderate. In Milo, particularly, the combination of altitude, rain, cool temperatures and sea influence creates exceptional conditions for Carricante.

Benanti, one of the pioneers of Etna's modern revival, founded by Giuseppe Benanti in 1988. The estate farms all four slopes, with its high-altitude Carricante in Milo producing some of Etna's most precise and age-worthy whites.

Guido Coffa: A small producer based in Milo, focused on expressing the elegance of the eastern side through Carricante. His wines show the classic combination of freshness, tension and salinity.

Barone di Villagrande: A historic family estate in Milo, with more than 300 years of viticultural history. Its vineyards around 700 metres benefit from the cool, rainy climate and sea influence, producing particularly elegant and long-lived Carricante.

SOUTH SLOPE



CONTRADA: Cavaliere, Biancavilla, Spadatrappo

The southern slope of Etna stretches toward Catania and is generally characterized by greater exposure to sunlight and warmer, drier conditions than the northern and eastern sides of the volcano.

On Etna's southwestern side, in Biancavilla, **Masseria Setteporte** is a family estate run by Piero Portale. Its south-facing vineyards sit at 650–800 m, on volcanic terraces, and the estate is certified organic. Piero continued the modernization begun by his father Ferdinando, expanding the estate and bringing its wines into bottle.

Further east on the southern slope, around Santa Maria di Licodia, **Feudo Cavaliere** is an estate belonging to the Platania D'Antoni family since 1880, revitalized in recent years by descendant Margherita Platania. Its vineyards are exceptionally high, around 900–1,000 m, some of its vines are pre-phyllloxera, including very old Nerello Mascalese and Carricante. Their Millemetri wines are a great illustration of how altitude on the southern slope can produce wines with intensity but also striking freshness and salinity.



NORTH SLOPE



CONTRADA: San Lorenzo, Calderara Sottana, Santo Spirito, Nave, Cottanera, Milo

Tenuta delle Terre Nere : One of the major forces behind Etna's modern revival, with around 45 hectares across 30 plots and nine contrade, between 600 and 1,000 metres. Since 2002, the estate has bottled its contrade separately, helping establish the idea of Etna as a collection of distinct terroirs rather than one homogeneous volcanic region.

Pietradolce : Founded in 2005, Pietradolce has become one of the reference producers of Etna, particularly through its old vines and high-altitude sites such as Contrada Rampante. Its wines are known for their finesse, tension and transparent expression of place.

Tascante : The Etna project of the Tasca d'Almerita family, founded in 2007 after research and microvinifications began in 2004. Its northern vineyards include Sciaranuova and Pianodario, with old vines producing structured yet elegant Nerello Mascalese. The Sciaranuova Vigna Vecchia comes from vines planted in 1961.

The northern slope is generally considered Etna's great red-wine country. It is cooler and drier than the east, with high elevations, steep terraces and an extraordinary concentration of historic contrade. Nerello Mascalese thrives here, producing wines that combine perfume, fine tannins, acidity and remarkable transparency.

Federico Graziani : A former sommelier who became a grower, Graziani works vineyards around Passopisciaro and Montelaguardia, at 650–800 metres. His wines combine old-vine traditions with a very elegant, delicate interpretation of Nerello Mascalese and Cappuccio.

Graci : Based around Passopisciaro, Graci focuses on native varieties and individual sites, producing wines with remarkable purity, freshness and precision. Its Arcuria is one of the estate's best-known expressions of the northern slope.



A MONTEFALCO 2026

THREE DAYS IN THE HEART OF UMBRIAN WINE

BY FILIPPO MAGNANI



The fourth edition of A Montefalco ran from April 26 to 28, bringing national and international press and trade professionals to the medieval hilltop town for three days of tastings, masterclasses, and winery visits. Thirty-one wineries participated, presenting the full range of Montefalco and Spoleto denominations alongside the newly released 2022 vintage of Montefalco Sagrantino DOCG. Organized by the Consorzio Tutela Vini Montefalco with the support of CSR Umbria SRG10, and held under the patronage of the municipalities of Montefalco and Bevagna, the event has grown from a single-variety preview into a three-day immersion in the region's wine culture. The Strada del Sagrantino collaborated on the program's winery visit component, routing guests across the denomination's five producing communes.

The formal presentation of the 2022 Montefalco Sagrantino DOCG took place on the morning of April 28 at the San Francesco Museum Complex. The Consorzio rated 2022 at four stars and 92/100, placing it in the excellent category. It follows a strong run of vintages: 2019 at 95/100, 2020 at 96/100, and 2021 at 94/100. The four-year gap between harvest and release reflects the discipline's mandatory 37-month aging requirement, which includes 12 months in wood and a final 4 months in bottle.



THE WINES

The tasting room presented the full denominational spectrum: Montefalco Sagrantino DOCG in both dry and passito versions, Montefalco Rosso DOC and Riserva DOC, Montefalco Bianco DOC, Montefalco Grechetto DOC, and the Spoleto DOC wines including still, Superiore, Spumante, and Passito expressions of Trebbiano Spoletino. Sagrantino's case for international attention rests partly on science. Research commissioned by the Consorzio in 2008 from the Agricultural Institute of San Michele all'Adige found the variety ranks among world leaders in polyphenol content. Its tannins, despite their volume, are less astringent than those of all other red wine grapes. The variety is grown exclusively across Montefalco and parts of Bevagna, Castel Ritaldi, Giano dell'Umbria, and Gualdo Cattaneo. Trebbiano Spoletino drew sustained attention in the tasting room. Harvest runs from late September through early November depending on altitude and exposition, making it one of the latest-ripening white varieties in central Italy. The grape's natural acidity and thick skin give it unusual resilience in warm years. Across the Superiore, Spumante, and Passito versions, the variety demonstrated a versatility rare among indigenous Italian whites.

THE GRAPES

Sagrantino

Sagrantino grows only in Montefalco and four neighboring communes, and nowhere else in the world. Its thick skins produce wines with exceptionally high polyphenol levels. Research commissioned by the Consorzio in 2008 found that despite this concentration, the tannins are less astringent than those of any other red wine grape. They have a structural quality that allows them to integrate and refine over decades rather than simply softening. The DOCG requires 37 months of aging before release, including 12 months in wood. That timeline is not arbitrary. Sagrantino genuinely needs time.

Sangiovese

Sangiovese is the primary grape in Montefalco Rosso DOC, making up 60 to 80 percent of the blend. In this territory, the variety takes on more color and body than it shows farther north, without losing the acidity and freshness that make it food-friendly. The addition of Sagrantino (10 to 25 percent) gives the blend structure and depth. Montefalco Rosso is the denomination's most approachable wine and, for many visitors, the natural starting point.

Trebbiano Spoletino

Trebbiano Spoletino ripens later than almost any other white variety grown in central Italy, often extending into November for valley-floor plots. High natural acidity and a thick skin make it resilient in both wet and drought years. The wines combine citrus and tropical fruit with a smoky mineral character that intensifies with age. The 2026 event confirmed its range across four distinct styles: still DOC, Superiore, ancestral-method Spumante, and Passito. No other indigenous white variety in the region covers that ground.

Grechetto

Grechetto is the most widely planted white grape in Umbria. The variety produces full-bodied wines with stone-fruit character, noticeable structure, and enough acidity to hold their shape at the table. In Montefalco it appears both as a single-variety DOC and as a blending component with Trebbiano Spoletino. The style is unambiguously Mediterranean: weight and generosity over delicacy.

VISITING MONTEFALCO



Montefalco sits at 472 meters above the Umbrian plain, 50 kilometers from Perugia and 25 from Spoleto. The town is compact enough to cover on foot in an hour. The church-museum of San Francesco, which holds frescoes by Benozzo Gozzoli and Perugino, anchors the historic center and doubles as one of the event's institutional venues. The Strada del Sagrantino connects Montefalco with Bevagna, Gualdo Cattaneo, Castel Ritaldi, and Giano dell'Umbria. Most participating estates accept visits by appointment outside the event period. Several offer accommodation: Antonelli's restored Casale Satriano farmhouse has six apartments and a pool; Tenuta Bellafonte near Bevagna has seven rooms, an indoor pool, and 2,500 olive trees; Arnaldo Caprai runs tastings on a panoramic terrace above the vineyards. Spring and autumn are the best seasons to visit. Harvest begins in late September and can extend through November for Trebbiano Spoletino. The Consorzio Tutela Vini Montefalco, now in its 45th year, represents 118 members and 66 winery members. Full program details and winery listings are at consorziomontefalco.it.



Thirty-one estates opened their doors across the three days, ranging from historic cooperatives to small family producers.

ANTONELLI SAN MARCO

One of Montefalco's most respected family estates, Antonelli San Marco has been a benchmark producer in the region for generations. The winery is known for both innovation and respect for tradition, particularly in their work with indigenous varieties. Rather than a traditional cellar tour, Antonelli hosted an elegant dinner paired with their wines, showcasing both their current releases and older vintages. This format allowed for a more relaxed exploration of their portfolio while demonstrating how their wines pair with local cuisine.

ARNALDO CAPRAI

Founded in 1971 by Arnaldo Caprai, a textile entrepreneur, the winery was passed to his son Marco in 1988 when Marco was only 21. Marco has expanded the estate from just 12 acres to a thriving 370-acre vineyard. Early on, he chose to drastically reduce the quantity of grapes to focus on quality. Believing in Sagrantino's full potential, he began exporting dry Montefalco Sagrantino to the U.S. even before it achieved DOCG status, paving the way for an international revival of Sagrantino. The state-of-the-art winery in Montefalco offers multiple tours and tastings on its panoramic terrace or in the vineyards.

LE CLIMATE

The winery represents the culmination of over 200 years of agricultural dedication by the Bartolini family. Beginning with farming in the 1800s, transitioning to viticulture in the 1960s, and strategically purchasing land in 1992, the family finally began building their winery in 2011. Located 400 meters and nestled against the Martani Mountains, the winery benefits from an excellent diurnal temperature shift and regular winds that keep the vines healthy. Surrounding their 23 hectares of vineyards are 33 hectares of olive groves and 15 hectares of hazelnut orchards. Utilizing the latest technology, the winery produces wines from an impressive array of grapes, including native varieties and international favorites such as Chardonnay, Viognier, Vermentino, Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon.

LUNGAROTI

Founded in the 1960s by Giorgio Lungarotti, the family estate is located in Montefalco and Torgiano, just 30 minutes northwest of Montefalco towards Perugia. The winery is a family affair, now run by Giorgio's two daughters, Chiara and Teresa. Their mother, Maria Grazia, was a pioneer in wine tourism, creating the region's first wine museum in the 1970s and, more recently, an olive and olive oil museum. Teresa was one of Italy's first female oenologists, and her children, Francesco and Gemma, manage the estate's sales and events. All their wines have been organic since 2010.

PARDI

The three Pardi brothers, Alfredo, Francesco, and Alberto started making wine in 1919 at the local hospital in Montefalco. Eventually their wines were shipped all over Italy, including the Vatican. Today their great-grandsons Gianluca Rio and Alberto Mario keep the family tradition alive. With 11 hectares of vines, they grow the local varieties Sagrantino, Sangiovese, Grechetto and Trebbiano Spoletino, but also international grapes like Merlot, Cabernet and Chardonnay.



ROMANELLI

Originally owned by the Bishop of Spoleto for over 600 years, the property was bought by Francesco Antonelli in 1883. Today, the Antonelli estate spans 430 acres in the heart of the Montefalco territory. The variety of terrain, from rich clay deposits to rocky limestone, results in several microclimates, with each plot expressing its own nuances. The cellars are completely underground, allowing for the use of gravity flow during production. The grapes—mostly Sagrantino and Sangiovese for reds and Grechetto and Trebbiano Spoletino for whites—are all organic. Visitors are welcomed in the beautifully restored antique farmhouse, Casale Satriano, which includes six apartments and a swimming pool

TABARRINI

Giampalo Tabarrini, the fourth generation of his family, took control of their agricultural estate in the late 1990s and transformed it into the winery it is today. His vision is focused on terroir, with three bottlings selected from distinct vineyard parcels to highlight their unique expressions. In addition to 15 hectares of vineyards, the estate includes olive groves and wheat fields, from which they produce their own stone-ground flour, perfect for making pizza, pasta, and desserts.



TERRE DE TRINCI

Terre de Trinci holds a unique place in Sagrantino history as the cooperative that pioneered dry Sagrantino production. Founded in 1968, this cooperative of 100 members farms 120 hectares plus an additional 50 hectares of estate-owned vineyards. In 1972, they released the first bottles of dry (non-passito) Sagrantino di Montefalco, helping establish what would become a DOCG in 1992. Located in Foligno rather than within Montefalco's borders, they're the only consortium members authorized to vinify outside the denomination's territorial boundaries due to their historical significance. The cooperative transitioned to member ownership in 1992 after initially being managed by the local agricultural consortium.

VALDANGIUS

Valdangius represents the new generation of Montefalco family wineries. Owner Danilo Antonelli works alongside winemaker Alessandro Meniconi, with daughter Jessica already participating in operations while pursuing her enology degree. This multi-generational approach reflects the estate's commitment to both tradition and innovation.

DOMAINE LABRANCHE

By Claude Lalonde

Six Years of Growth and a Decisive Shift Toward *Vitis vinifera*

In 2020, I sat down for the first time with Louis Desgroseilliers, president and winemaker of Domaine Labranche, the family-run estate in Saint-Isidore that brings together a maple grove, orchard and vineyard. Six years later, I reconnected with him to take stock of the estate's remarkable evolution. One detail summed up that growth particularly well: when we spoke, he was waiting for the delivery of three new 8,600-litre stainless-steel tanks.

Since 2020, the vineyard has grown from five to 12 hectares, now evenly divided between northern-hardy varieties and *Vitis vinifera*. Riesling was planted in 2021, followed by Gamay in 2022 and Chardonnay in 2023-2024. This year will mark the Chardonnay's first full-scale vinification.

The move toward European varieties is closely tied to the particularly favourable growing conditions around Saint-Isidore. According to Desgroseilliers, the area benefits from some of the highest heat-unit accumulations in Québec. In warm years, northern varieties can reach 14 or even 15% potential alcohol if harvested too late. The *Vitis vinifera*, meanwhile, generally reaches between 12.5 and 13.5%, allowing the wines to retain a more natural balance.

Wind is another important advantage. Constant air movement helps reduce humidity and disease pressure, while also mitigating the risk of spring frost. These conditions make organic viticulture more manageable across the estate's 12 hectares, which are Ecocert certified. The family's orchard and market-gardening operations are also farmed organically.

Variety selection is deliberate. Riesling, Gamay and Chardonnay were chosen for their ability to reach full maturity in Québec, their relative hardiness and their behaviour under disease pressure. "If I expand the vineyard, it will definitely be with *Vitis vinifera*," says Desgroseilliers. Another hectare of Chardonnay is already planned for 2027.



Production has grown just as significantly. From approximately 50,000 bottles in 2020, Domaine Labranche now produces more than 100,000 bottles annually, with the vast majority made from estate-grown grapes. Maple-based spirits, ciders and other products that once represented a larger part of the business have gradually given way to still and sparkling wines.



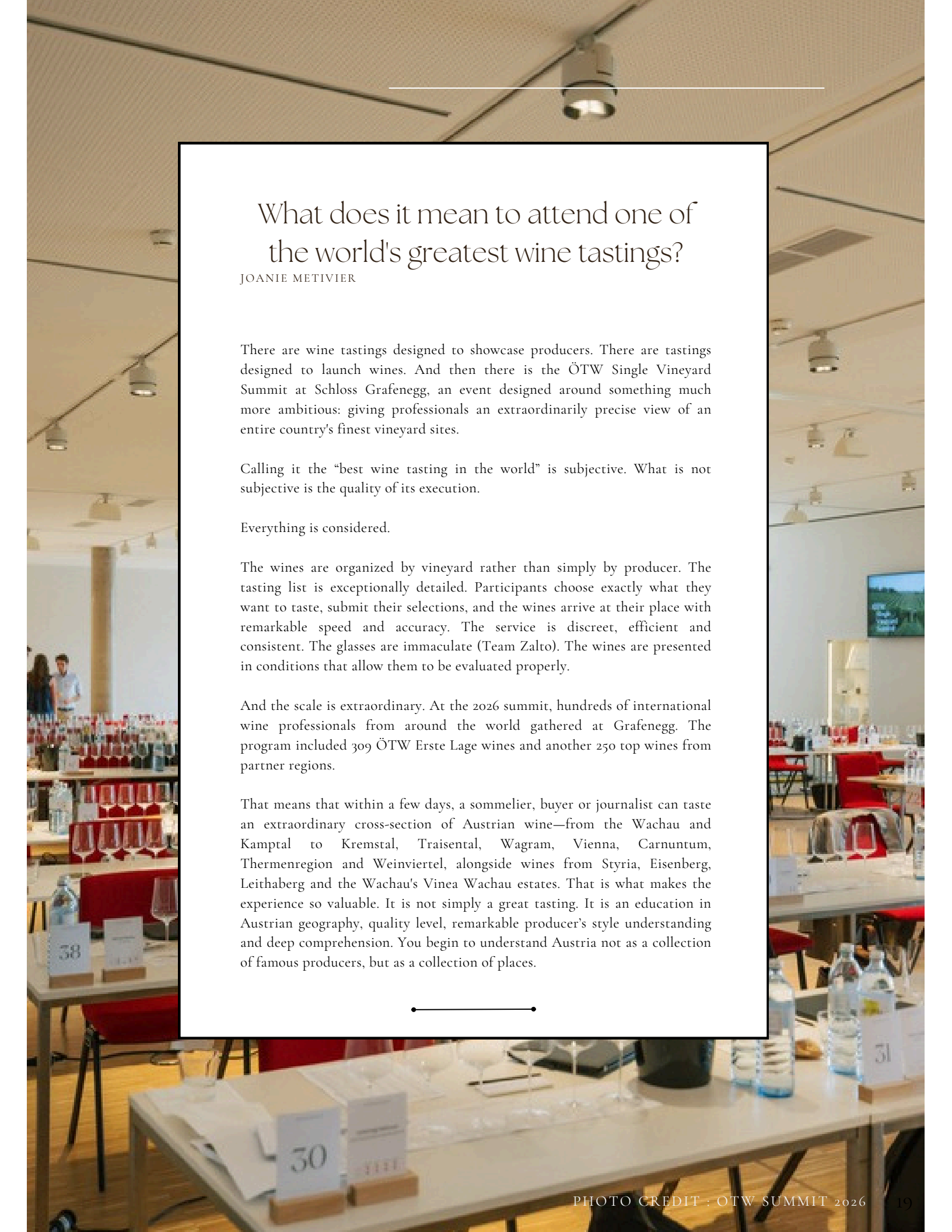
The portfolio is now clearly structured around two tiers. The more accessible wines are built around northern varieties: Frontenac Noir and Petite Pearl for the red, Frontenac Blanc and St-Pépin for the white, and Frontenac Noir and Marquette for the rosé. The estate's higher-end wines are single-variety bottlings made from *Vitis vinifera*: Riesling, Gamay and, soon, Chardonnay. Domaine Labranche also produces traditional-method sparkling wines, including a rosé made entirely from Gamay. The winemaking philosophy has evolved alongside the vineyard. Whereas Labranche once relied more heavily on oak, the wines are now raised primarily in stainless steel. The intention is straightforward: preserve fruit and freshness while producing dry, energetic wines designed to be both precise and immediately enjoyable. None of the wines are chaptalized or sweetened, with residual sugar kept below 2 g/L. Olivier Lemay, an oenologist trained in Toulouse, now oversees production full-time, continuing to work with the guidance of Jérémy d'Hauteville.

The vineyard itself requires two very different approaches to winter protection. The northern varieties need none, while all six hectares of *Vitis vinifera* are protected with geotextile covers. Remarkably, the estate does not use bird netting anywhere across its 12 hectares.

This growth is supported by a clearly defined commercial strategy. Wines made from northern varieties are distributed through approximately 600 IGA, Metro and Loblaw locations, while the *Vitis vinifera* wines are more heavily directed toward the SAQ, independent specialty shops and direct sales at the estate.

And the expansion is far from over. Desgroseilliers is targeting a 20-hectare vineyard in the medium term. His philosophy remains simple: develop the market first, then increase production to meet demand.

At Domaine Labranche, the shift toward *Vitis vinifera* is no longer an experiment. It has become a central part of the estate's future.



What does it mean to attend one of the world's greatest wine tastings?

JOANIE METIVIER

There are wine tastings designed to showcase producers. There are tastings designed to launch wines. And then there is the ÖTW Single Vineyard Summit at Schloss Grafenegg, an event designed around something much more ambitious: giving professionals an extraordinarily precise view of an entire country's finest vineyard sites.

Calling it the “best wine tasting in the world” is subjective. What is not subjective is the quality of its execution.

Everything is considered.

The wines are organized by vineyard rather than simply by producer. The tasting list is exceptionally detailed. Participants choose exactly what they want to taste, submit their selections, and the wines arrive at their place with remarkable speed and accuracy. The service is discreet, efficient and consistent. The glasses are immaculate (Team Zalto). The wines are presented in conditions that allow them to be evaluated properly.

And the scale is extraordinary. At the 2026 summit, hundreds of international wine professionals from around the world gathered at Grafenegg. The program included 309 ÖTW Erste Lage wines and another 250 top wines from partner regions.

That means that within a few days, a sommelier, buyer or journalist can taste an extraordinary cross-section of Austrian wine—from the Wachau and Kamptal to Kremstal, Traisental, Wagram, Vienna, Carnuntum, Thermenregion and Weinviertel, alongside wines from Styria, Eisenberg, Leithaberg and the Wachau's Vinea Wachau estates. That is what makes the experience so valuable. It is not simply a great tasting. It is an education in Austrian geography, quality level, remarkable producer's style understanding and deep comprehension. You begin to understand Austria not as a collection of famous producers, but as a collection of places.

145 ERSTE LAGEN

Today, the ÖTW recognizes 145 Erste Lagen, or Premier Cru sites. But classification is not simply based on reputation. The association evaluates sites through historical evidence, expert knowledge and, importantly, repeated tasting of wines from those vineyards. Contrary to other regions in the world, they started classification building up, starting with foundation, and Erste Lagen compared to just identifying the top Grand cru sites. The ÖTW's long-term ambition makes this even more interesting. Its next stage of classification is intended to identify the very best sites among the Erste Lagen and potentially elevate them to Grosse Lage, Austria's Grand Cru level. The crucial principle is that a Grand Cru site cannot be established from one exceptional bottle; the quality must be demonstrated repeatedly across wines from that specific terroir.

And once you begin tasting this way, the famous names start to make sense. These is an uncomplete list of the most famous Ried in Austria, the one's that has shown consistency of quality and personality, the one's that are cherished by winemakers and often taken more seriously. Maybe some day, one of these may attain the new level of Grosse Lagen.

ACHLEITEN



PHOTO CREDIT : VINEA WACHAU

While Wachau is not part of the OTW association, they have their own called Vinea Wachau, the vineyards of the region definitely has the recognition to be impressively reliable.

Achleiten rises steeply above Weißenkirchen, overlooking the Danube. Its terraces combine several geological formations, including paragneiss, amphibolite and Gföhl gneiss.

It is a classic site for both Grüner Veltliner and Riesling, producing wines with concentration, mineral structure and remarkable precision. Its complexity comes partly from the diversity within the vineyard itself: elevation and geology change as you move through the site.

Achleiten is a perfect introduction to the idea that a famous vineyard can still contain enormous internal diversity.

KELLERBERG

Few names in Austrian wine carry the same weight as Kellerberg. Above Dürnstein, its steep southeast-facing terraces combine Gföhl gneiss with pockets of loess. The site produces both Grüner Veltliner and Riesling, but its Rieslings are particularly renowned for their concentration, structure and ageing ability. Kellerberg can produce wines of extraordinary density without losing the freshness that defines great Wachau.



PHOTO CREDIT : VINEA WACHAU

SCHÜTT



PHOTO CREDIT : VINEA WACHAU

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LOIBENBERG

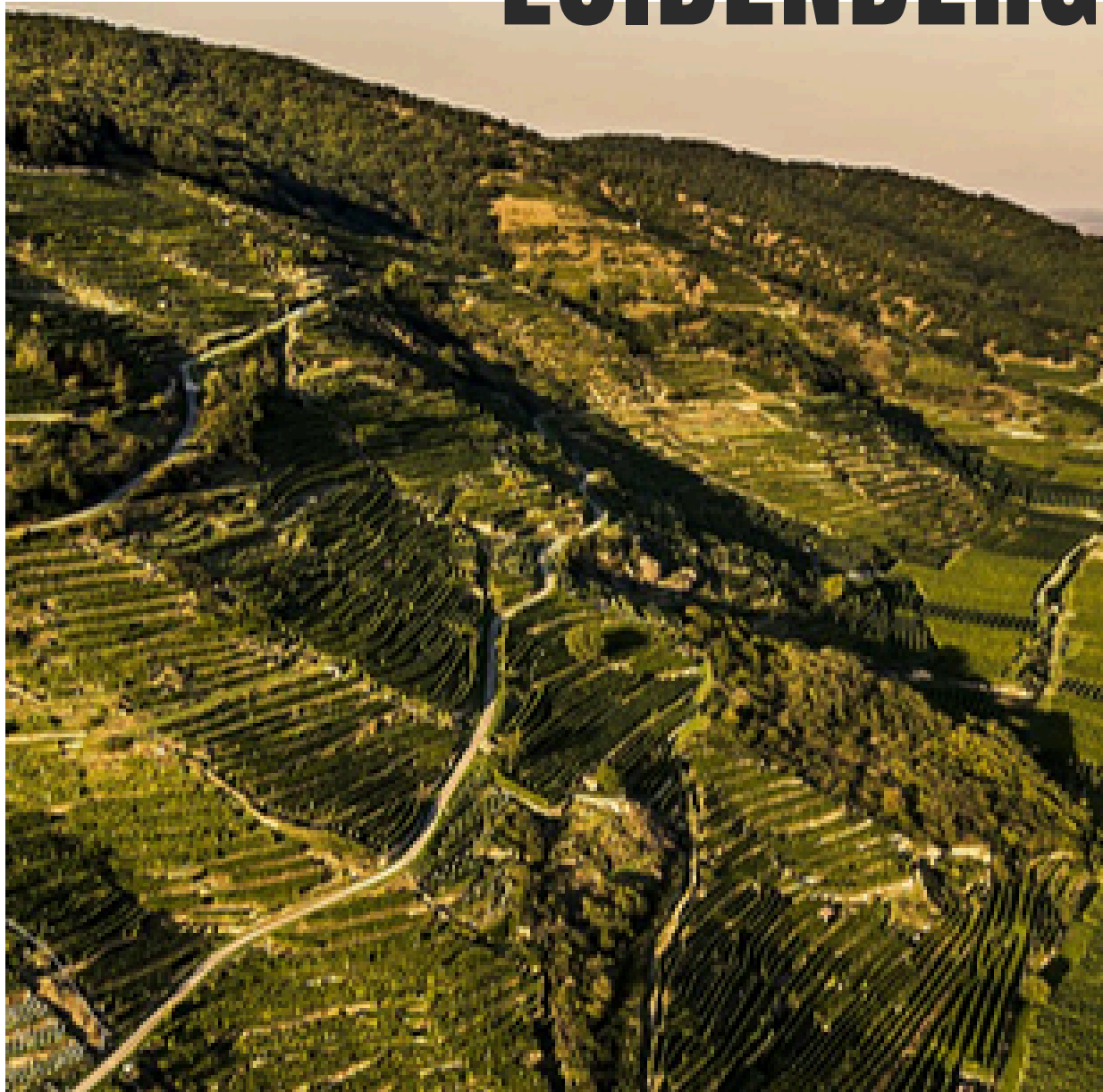


PHOTO CREDIT : VINEA WACHAU

Loibenberg is one of the Wachau's great warm sites.

Its steep, south-facing terraces receive intense sunlight, while the Pannonian influence contributes warmth. Gföhl gneiss dominates, with areas of loess providing additional variation.

The wines can be rich and concentrated but retain the freshness necessary for balance.

For Grüner Veltliner, Loibenberg can bring impressive breadth and texture; for Riesling, the site can deliver concentration and mineral depth.

Its size also makes it a useful reminder that “single vineyard” does not automatically mean “uniform vineyard.”

Heiligenstein is one of Austria's great Riesling sites.

Above Zöbing, its unusual geology includes the Zöbing Formation, with Permian sandstone and volcanic material. Its warm southern exposure is balanced by the cooling influence of the surrounding landscape.

The wines are typically intensely aromatic and structured, with ripe citrus and stone fruit, spice, mineral character and firm acidity.

Heiligenstein demonstrates how geology can become almost immediately recognizable in the glass.



PHOTO CREDIT : VINEA WACHAU

PHOTO CREDIT : KAMPTAL WINES

HEILIGENSTEIN

KÄFERBERG

Above Langenlois, Käferberg combines crystalline rock with younger marine sediments.

The vineyard's geology includes gneiss, amphibolite and mica schist, while clay, sand and gravel from the ancient Paratethys Sea appear in other sections. It is particularly associated with Grüner Veltliner.

Warm exposure gives the wines concentration, while cooling air from the Waldviertel helps maintain freshness.

The result is a combination of ripe fruit, peppery spice, minerality and energy.



PHOTO CREDIT : KAMPTAL WINES

LAMM



PHOTO CREDIT : KAMPTAL WINES

If Käferberg is about balance, Lamm is about depth.

Located at the foot of Heiligenstein, this warm, southeast-facing site has deeper loam and loess soils, with sandstone and siltstone closer to the hillside.

It is one of Kamptal's great Grüner Veltliner sites.

The wines tend to have considerable substance: broad, powerful and textured, but with enough acidity to remain precise.

Lamm demonstrates how soil depth can translate into a very different interpretation of the same grape



PHOTO CREDIT : KAMPTAL WINES

GAISBERG

Gaisberg is another great Kamptal site, particularly for Riesling.

Its soils combine mica schist, gneiss, amphibolite and loess, while its south and southeast exposure gives the vines excellent ripening conditions.

The wines tend toward floral aromatics, mineral precision and fine acidity.

It is sometimes compared with neighbouring Heiligenstein, but tasting the two side by side is exactly why single vineyards matter: they may share a region and climate, yet produce recognizably different wines.

PFAFFENBERG — KREMSTAL



PHOTO CREDIT : KREMSTAL WINES

Above Stein, Pfaffenberg is dramatically steep, dry and exposed. Gföhl gneiss dominates the site, with mica schist and amphibolite. The soils are shallow and rocky, while the Danube contributes cooling influences. The vineyard is particularly suited to Riesling, producing wines that are often taut, mineral and energetic. And here, the physical difficulty of the vineyard is part of the story. Terraces must be maintained by hand, and the combination of steepness, poor soil and exposure makes this unmistakably heroic viticulture.

ZIEREGG – SÜDSTEIERMARK



PHOTO CREDIT : TEMENT

Zieregg takes us south, into Styria, and into another interpretation of Austrian terroir.

The vineyard is particularly associated with Sauvignon Blanc and the Tement family. Limestone and calcareous marl, steep slopes and a cool Styrian climate produce wines that are less about tropical Sauvignon character and more about tension, texture, salinity and length.

The Tement family's subdivision of Zieregg into more precise parcels goes even further, demonstrating that even a famous vineyard can contain different expressions of terroir.

Zieregg is proof that Austrian single-vineyard culture extends far beyond Grüner Veltliner and Riesling.

Bründlmayer

Major, Historical, but also modern thinking

BY MICHAEL MCDUFF

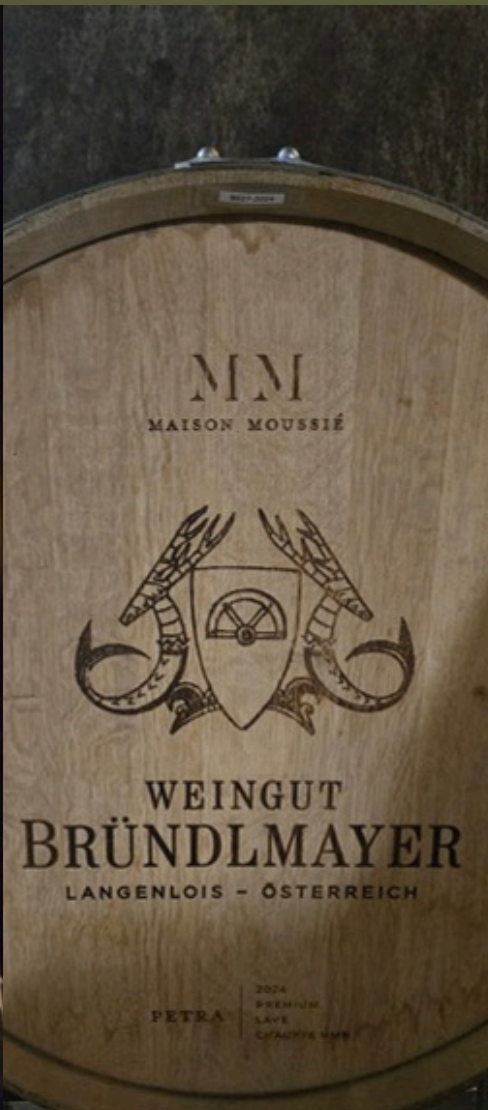
There are wineries where the history is almost as impressive as what is in the glass. Bründlmayer, in Langenlois, is certainly one of them.

We visited the estate during the ÖTW Single Vineyard Summit, and what stayed with me was not only the quality of the wines, but the people behind them. Bründlmayer has a long history, but there is nothing nostalgic about the estate. Behind the historic name is a modern winery, equipped with state-of-the-art technology and very much focused on what comes next.

The story begins in 1581, when the property was already connected to winegrowing. For centuries, it was a traditional mixed farm, as was common in Lower Austria. In the 1950s, Willi Bründlmayer's parents decided to focus entirely on wine, and in 1980, Willi took over the management of the family estate.

Today, Willi remains at the heart of Bründlmayer, but the winery is very much a team effort. His wife, Edwige, works alongside Thomas Klinger and Master of Wine Andreas Wickhoff, who joined the estate as general manager in 2019.

Meeting Andreas during the Summit gave me a different perspective on Bründlmayer. His role is not simply about bringing an international perspective to a historic Austrian estate. He is deeply involved in the day-to-day decisions and in translating the potential of the vineyards into wines that can speak beyond their immediate place of origin.



It is a particularly interesting combination: a family estate with deep roots in Langenlois, paired with an international level of wine experience. The result is not a departure from tradition, but an evolution of it. You can feel that especially in the Sekt.

Bründlmayer farms around 90 hectares, with vineyards across some of Kamptal's most important sites. Zöbinger Heiligenstein is one of the region's reference points for Riesling, while Käferberg is particularly associated with Grüner Veltliner. The vineyards benefit from the contrast between warm days and cool nights, with the forests of the Waldviertel bringing cooler air into the Kamptal.

That combination of site and climate is central to the estate's identity. And it is also why the wines are not treated simply as products of a vintage, but as expressions of individual vineyard sites.

Andreas is closely involved in communicating that potential. When discussing the exceptional recognition received by the Heiligenstein Riesling, he made an important point: the wine was already showing what the vineyard could deliver, but its full expression would require time. That patience is a recurring theme at Bründlmayer.

The estate has been making its Brut since 1989, using Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc and Grüner Veltliner. The grapes are hand-harvested, and the bottles undergo traditional riddling. But during our visit, what interested me most was not simply tasting the finished Brut. It was seeing the wine at different points in its life.

Standing with Andreas and tasting the F25 alongside different tirages of the Brut was a fascinating way to understand the process. The F25 is not another base cuvée or a different wine. It refers to the base wine from the 2025 harvest, before its second fermentation in bottle. From there, the same sparkling wine can be followed through different tirages and stages of ageing, allowing us to taste how time on the lees changes the wine.



It is one thing to taste a finished sparkling wine and appreciate its texture, complexity and length. It is another to taste it at different stages and actually follow its development. You begin to understand that the character of the Brut is not only in the blend or the vineyard. Time is an ingredient too.

Bründlmayer has been part of the development of quality Austrian Sekt for decades. When Willi began pushing the category forward, the ambition was never simply to produce sparkling wine. It was to make serious wine, with the same attention to origin, precision and ageing that would be given to a still wine.

That philosophy is also visible in the vineyards. Bründlmayer was a founding member of the Österreichische Traditionsweingüter, the organization working to identify and classify Austria's historically significant vineyard sites. Willi was also its first chairman.

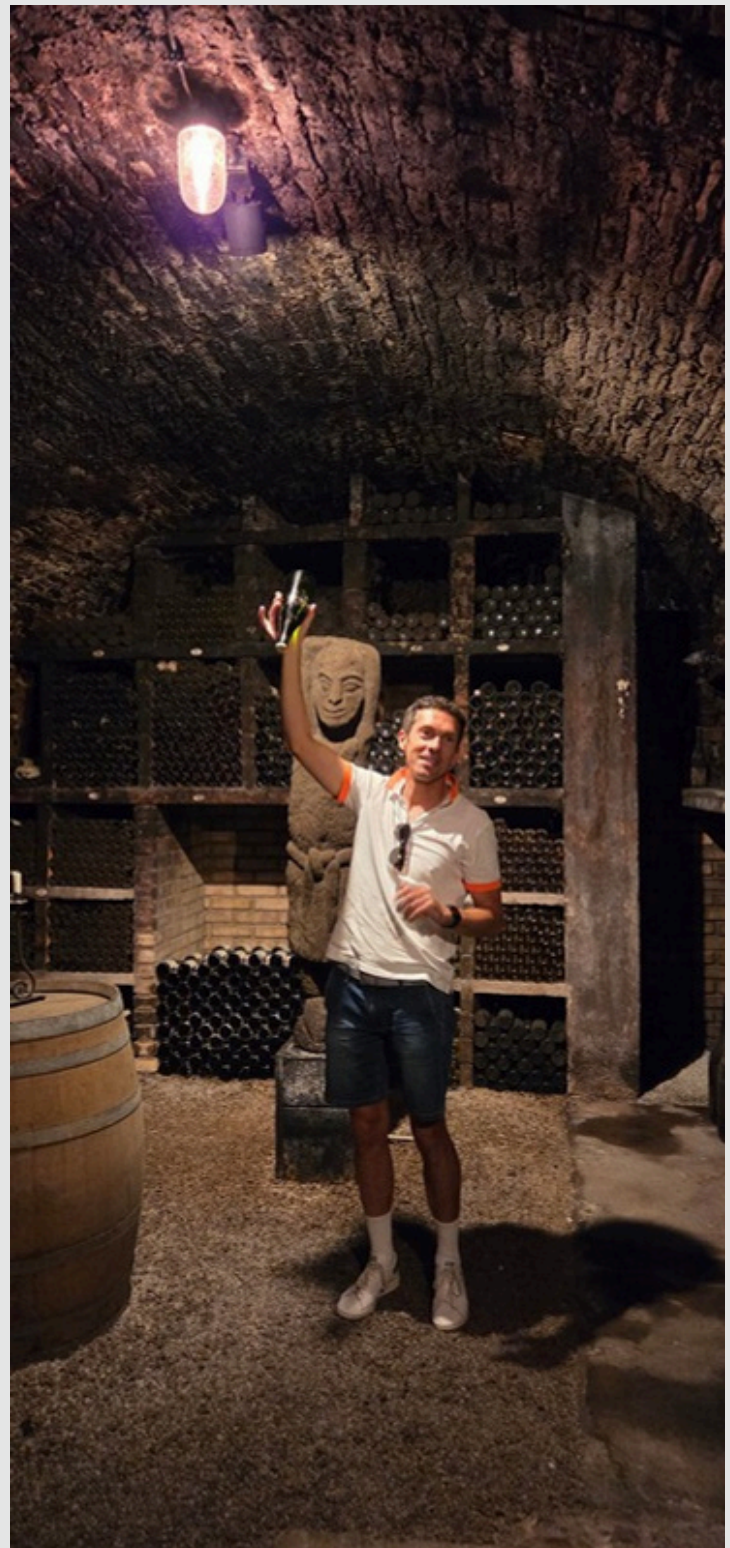
There is a nice continuity in that story.

Willi helped establish a vision for what Austrian wine could become. Today, people like Andreas are helping move that vision forward, without losing the identity of the estate or the importance of its history.

That was perhaps what I enjoyed most about the visit. Bründlmayer has the history, the vineyard sites, the awards and the reputation. But when you are standing in the cellar with Andreas, disgorging Sekt and tasting the F25 alongside Brut at different stages of ageing, the conversation is not really about looking back.

It is about understanding where the wine is today – and where it can still go.

And perhaps that is one of the most interesting things about Bründlmayer: the history is not the destination. It is the foundation.





ALLRAM

SIBLINGS CONTRAST

By Joanie Metivier



In Straß im Straßertale, in the heart of Kamptal, Weingut Allram is a family estate with deep roots and a very contemporary sense of where wine can go. Today, the fourth generation is represented by siblings Lorenz and Magdalena Haas-Allram. They work from the same family estate, share the same vineyards and the same respect for their origins, yet they approach wine from noticeably different directions. And that is precisely what makes Allram so interesting.

The estate today encompasses around 30 hectares and has been shaped over generations by a combination of ambition, attention to detail and a willingness to evolve. The family's history as a dedicated wine estate began with Walter Allram in the 1950s, followed by Michaela Haas-Allram and Erich Haas, who expanded the winery and developed a strong international presence. Since 2015, Lorenz has been responsible for vinification at the family estate, while Magdalena joined the operation more permanently in 2019. The winery is also progressively moving toward biodynamic farming.



LORENZ HAAS-ALLRAM: PRECISION, PLACE AND REFINEMENT

Lorenz's work is rooted firmly in the classical identity of Kamptal.

His approach is one of precision. He is deeply involved in the vineyards, with an almost analytical attention to detail, and his wines are increasingly defined by finesse, structure, mineral character and clarity. His winemaking education took him through Austria and Spain, followed by stages in the Pfalz, Styria, New Zealand, South Africa and Wachau. That international experience gave him the opportunity to bring together techniques from both traditional European and New World winemaking.

But the influence of those experiences does not make his wines feel international in style. Quite the opposite. Lorenz seems to use that broader experience to become more precise about what Kamptal can be.

His focus is particularly clear in the estate's site-specific wines, including the important Rieden Gaisberg, Heiligenstein and Renner. These are wines in which vineyard origin takes centre stage. The goal is not simply to make technically impeccable Riesling or Grüner Veltliner, but to show the personality of the site through those varieties.

There is a certain restraint to the wines. Ripeness is present, but rarely becomes the central point. Instead, Lorenz seems interested in the space between concentration and freshness: texture without heaviness, intensity without excess, and aromatic detail supported by structure.

This is the side of Allram that represents discipline, precision and the continual refinement of an established estate.

Magdalena works from the same family environment, but her path is more independent.

Alongside her work at Allram, she created her own small project, Jugend by Magdalena Haas, giving herself a space to work outside the expectations of the family estate. The wines come from approximately two hectares in the Straßertal, on loess soils over ancient Danube deposits, and are made with a deliberately minimal-intervention philosophy. This is where her personality becomes particularly visible.

The Jugend wines are not an attempt to reproduce the Allram style on a smaller scale. They are an opportunity to ask different questions. Fermentation can be spontaneous, wines can remain unfiltered, and time on the lees becomes part of the process. Her White Jugend, for example, brings together Grüner Veltliner and Müller-Thurgau and is spontaneously fermented, unfiltered and matured on its lees.

Where Lorenz is constantly refining and sharpening, Magdalena seems more interested in allowing things to happen. That does not mean a lack of precision or care. Rather, the precision lies in knowing when not to intervene. It is a very different kind of craftsmanship.

The name Jugend itself feels appropriate: there is something youthful, curious and open-ended about the project. It gives Magdalena the freedom to explore natural wine, different varieties and less conventional winemaking without having to fit every bottle into the established identity of the family estate. And that makes Jugend an important part of understanding the Allram family today. It demonstrates that tradition does not necessarily mean doing things the same way.





AUSTRIAN WINE MAFIA: WHEN THE TWO APPROACHES COLLIDE

Then there is Austrian Wine Mafia, perhaps the most playful expression of this family's willingness to step outside conventional boundaries. Created in 2021 by Magdalena and Lorenz together with Kamptal winemaker Matthias Warnung, AWM functions as an experimental project — a deliberate departure from the rules and expectations normally associated with an established Austrian winery. The concept is particularly interesting because it brings different philosophies together: classic Austrian wine knowledge, natural-wine thinking, low intervention and experimentation.

The wines are not designed to fit neatly into the traditional hierarchy of Austrian wine. Instead, they are meant to be playful, expressive and sometimes deliberately provocative. Names such as *Dolce und die Japaner*, *Fruit of the Doom* and *Karambolage* immediately signal that this is a different conversation. The project has also developed a distinctive visual identity, with labels conceived almost like book covers and each wine treated as its own story.

The AWM wines bring together natural and classical approaches, with organic vineyard practices, indigenous-yeast fermentations and low-intervention cellar work.

In many ways, AWM is where the two siblings' different personalities become complementary. Lorenz brings his understanding of precision, structure and technical detail. Magdalena brings curiosity, freedom and a willingness to challenge convention. Matthias Warnung adds another perspective from the natural-wine world. The result is not simply a collection of experimental wines. It is a laboratory for ideas.

What I find most compelling about Allram is that these different projects do not feel contradictory. They reveal a family winery comfortable enough with its own identity to allow different voices to emerge.