

JULIAN HAART | KARTHÄUSERHOF | LAUER | STEIN | LUBENTIUSHOF | VOLLENWEIDER | WEISER-KÜNSTLER

vom Boden

importer of fine wines

fall 2013 | issue 001

WWW.VOMBODEN.COM

INFO@VOMBODEN.COM



[@VOMBODEN](https://twitter.com/VOMBODEN)



[VOMBODEN](https://www.instagram.com/VOMBODEN)

vom Boden

#nextlevelRiesling

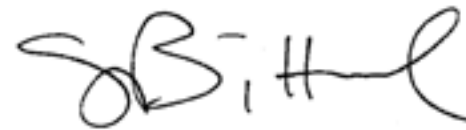
“Rieslings for advanced learners”

Florian Lauer

Florian’s quote has always struck a chord with us; it suggests a category of Riesling beyond the most obvious.

Germany’s Mosel Valley paces back and forth for over 150 miles. In the U.S., we have been presented with only a small piece of the puzzle. We’ve been limited to a couple of twists, a few big names, a story based solely in sugar.

With this focused collection of growers, we go beyond.



Stephen Bitterolf
New York, fall 2013

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: HIGH UP IN THE ELLERGRUB VINEYARD, LOOKING DOWN TO THE MOSEL RIVER BELOW.



#whereisvomBoden?

we are a national importer, with a presence from California to New York
to find a vom Boden wine near you, email info@vomboden.com

Susanne Barth of Lubentiushof in the Gondorfer Gäns vineyard, Lower Mosel



homage to Frank Schoonmaker

Frank Schoonmaker dropped out of Princeton University in the 1920s and boarded a steamship for Europe. The next several years were spent traveling the continent and exploring its greatest wine regions. In 1935, only two years after Prohibition ended, Schoonmaker founded “Frank Schoonmaker Selections.” The iconic green and yellow Schoonmaker neck tag has graced some of the finest wines of the world; Schoonmaker’s contribution to the history of wine appreciation in the U.S. is profound. He published his *The Wines of Germany* in 1956; it remains, more than 50 years after its publication, one of the classics of German wine literature.

#inspiration

“This may, incidentally, be as good a time as any to point out once more that the name is pronounced Reece-ling, not Rye-sling.”

Frank Schoonmaker
The Wines of Germany



Julian Haart

#Egontaughtmewell

1.4 hectares (3.5 acres)

under vine

(as of vintage 2012)

Village

Piesport

Top Vineyards

Goldtröpfchen, Ohligsberg

For pricing and
availability information
for the wines
of Julian Haart,
please email
sales@vomboden.com

The names associated with Julian Haart allude to the level at which he operates: Andreas Adam, Klaus Peter Keller, Egon Müller and Werner Schönleber. Keller, in fact, was the person who introduced us to Haart, writing simply: “You *have* to taste this kid’s wines.”

Julian is one of many Haarts living in Piesport (Theo Haart, of Weingut Reinhold Haart, is Julian’s father’s cousin... got it?). Julian farms both the Goldtröpfchen and the Ohligsberg. However, if you’ve come across Julian’s name before, it was likely in reference to a craggy, terraced, 0.15-hectare parcel of the Goldtröpfchen that he bought along with Andreas Adam in 2009. The wine is a collaborative effort; with the 2011 vintage, there is a new masthead on Adam’s label: “Adam and Haart.”

While the estate is growing, 2010 was vintage numero uno and Haart farmed only 1.1 hectares. Though the German wine critic David Schildknecht tasted and reviewed the wines, they were essentially all privately sold in Germany. The first commercial release came in 2011; yet the word “commercial” here is something of a twisted joke – exactly 31 cases came into the U.S. Julian has recently acquired a few top parcels from his uncle’s estate (Weingut Johann Haart) bringing the estate to just over 4 hectares for the 2013 vintage. The 2013ers will be released in the spring and summer of 2014 and will represent his first *real* U.S. commercial release.

Julian does produce Prädikat wines, but the focus is on dry-tasting wines and the hierarchy is based on the Burgundian model. There is a basic “Mosel Riesling” followed by village wines (Piesporter and Wintricher) crowned by two single-vineyard wines (Goldtröpfchen and Ohligsberg). These are all fermented naturally and they find their own balance.

The style from Haart is perplexing and dynamic; the wines can at times seem both flashy and serpentine, fine curve after fine curve. Other times, they are more linear, a shade ruthless. They are always crystal clear, relentlessly mineral.



“[Ruwer Valley Wines] are in general
the lightest of all the fine wines in the world,
and an obscure local poet has described them as
a combination of ‘the fire of the sun,
the gold of the stars, and the cool moonlight.’”

Frank Schoonmaker
The Wines of Germany

Karthäuserhof

#hallowedground

19 hectares (47 acres)
under vine

Village

Eitelsbach

Top Vineyard

Karthäuserhofberg

For pricing and
availability information
for the wines
of Karthäuserhof,
please email
sales@vomboden.com

The tiny Ruwer Valley is a magical place; it is one of the smallest winemaking regions in Germany. Although it is administratively grouped together with the Mosel and the Saar, it is unique. It gives Riesling a signature unlike any other on planet Earth. The Ruwer is wild, as much a home to horses and wild boars as it is to vines and vineyards. The wines reflect this. While the vocabulary of the Ruwer includes the notes common to Riesling, the stone and citrus fruit, at their heart, Ruwer wines are about the forest. They contain a range of flavors that include forest floor notes, resin, pine needle, dried herbs. These notes emerge even more pronouncedly with age. Ruwer wines are famously structured and, as such, famously age-worthy.

Karthäuserhof is one of the oldest and most prestigious estates in Germany, and it is located here. While winemaking on this land can be traced back to Roman times, most consider the “official” founding of the estate as we know it to be 1335. This is when the Elector of Trier gave the vineyards to Carthusians monks – thus the name of the estate, Karthäuserhof, meaning farm of the Carthusians. Napoleon secularized the region in 1811 and the property was auctioned off in Paris. Miraculously, the family that bought the estate over 200 years ago still owns it.

Karthäuserhof is one of two estates that essentially define the Ruwer Valley. It’s funny that in this place, the two most famous estates are a stone’s throw apart. This is hallowed ground, and you can taste it. The wines of Karthäuserhof sing. They have a fine-ness that eerily balances generosity with austerity, bracing notes of stone fruit skin with a piquant green streak, steely slate that is toothsome and gripping. In every bottle, you find extreme detail, pinpoint accuracy. And while these wines were winning awards throughout Europe in the 19th century and have been imported into the U.S. for decades, they remain off the beaten track, both literally and figuratively. This is a Riesling geek’s paradise.



“In these great and exceedingly rare wines of the Saar, there is a combination of qualities which I can perhaps best describe as indescribable: austerity coupled with delicacy and extreme finesse, an incomparable bouquet, a clean, very attractive hardness tempered by a wealth of fruit and flavor which is overwhelming.”

Frank Schoonmaker
The Wines of Germany

Lauer

#purists

7.5 hectares (18.5 acres)
under vine

Village
Ayl

Top Vineyards

Kupp, Saarfeilser, Schonfels

For pricing and
availability information
for the wines
of Peter Lauer,
please email
sales@vomboden.com

David Schildknecht must be given credit for “discovering” Lauer; Lars Carlberg and the influential Mosel Wine Merchant deserve the credit for reintroducing these wines in the U.S. We should get credit for following our own obsession, which seems to be shared by many of you. Since their return to the U.S. market, Lauer’s wines have achieved an almost cult-like status.

For purists, there is nothing like the Saar – it is arguably one of the greatest wine-growing regions on Earth. The core of greatness in the Saar is intensity without weight, grandiosity without size. Lauer is currently one of the top estates in this sacred place.

The style at Lauer is 180 degrees from his famous Saar neighbors Egon Müller and Hanno Zilliken – the focus is on dry and off-dry Rieslings as opposed to the Prädikat wines of the latter two. Yet the hallmarks are similar: purity, precision, rigor, mineral. While the majority of wines are sourced from the Ayler Kupp, this is really an intricate tapestry of vineyards whitewashed by a German wine law more concerned with simplicity than complicated truths. Florian Lauer, the fiery genius who took over the estate from his father beginning with vintage 2005, prefers complicated truths.

Thus the labels, the internal designations, can seem inscrutable. A user’s guide is in order. Focus on the parcel/vineyard names: Kern, Neuenbersch, Saarfeilser, Schonfels, Unterstenbersch. These names are grounded in history, in soil. Kern and Neuenbersch tend to be more lavish and exotic; Schonfels is a glacier of slate, monumental, chiseled, unforgiving. The two exceptions to the rule are the playfully titled “Barrel X” and “Senior.” The former is the estate’s “basic” Saar Riesling. The latter is actually a single-vineyard wine. According to family lore, Florian’s grandfather would taste through the year’s wines and select one barrel for his personal consumption. On this barrel, he would write “Senior.” Eight or nine times out of 10, says Florian, his grandfather would pick Fass 6, which held wine sourced from a western parcel of the Kupp. Thus, today, the wine from this parcel is called “Fass 6 – Senior.” It is the signature bottling of the estate, and the foundation of Lauer’s renown in the U.S.



“The labor is hand labor,
and there is no end to it.”

Frank Schoonmaker
The Wines of Germany



Lubentiushof

#lowermoselmystery

4 hectares (9.8 acres)
under vine

Village

Niederfell

Top Vineyards

Gäns, Uhlen

For pricing and
availability information
for the wines
of Lubentiushof,
please email
sales@vomboden.com

These are mysterious Rieslings. In the muscular, high-alcohol world of the lower Mosel, the wines Andreas Barth crafts from old vines in this forgotten place are feminine. They have breadth and size, yet they are cooling, airy and restrained. They can have an almost creamy textural quality, yet remain crystal-clear and supremely fresh. They are animated, seemingly alive, detailed and finessed. (Perhaps it makes little winemaking or geographical sense, but the wines can remind one of the Austrian producer Nikolaihof, with their magical, quixotic complexity.)

Lubentiushof, a tiny, four-hectare estate, has staked its heart and soul on a fantastically interesting, painfully steep, completely unknown site in the lower Mosel, the Gondorfer Gäns. This is a near-monopole: The Barth family owns 3.5 out of 3.7 hectares. It is also a treasure-trove of old vines, many of them at or beyond their 80th birthday. The terroir is fascinating – a bizarrely complicated mish-mash of rocks and stones. Slate is there in abundance (and we’re talking big, threatening shards of slate) along with a more irregular cast: polished sandstone, quartzite, big, smooth, ponderous rocks that make you wonder if someone from Châteauneuf-du-Pâpe didn’t come through the vineyard at one time, scattering “galets” while playing a rather absurd trick on someone.

The work here is detailed oriented – nearly obsessive. In the vineyards, yields are painfully low, harvests are late; the vineyard treatments are minimal. They work as closely as possible to organic and never use pesticides. In the cellars, Barth is also a minimalist. The wine goes into stainless steel; it ferments. Wild yeasts and spontaneous fermentations are used exclusively and in Barth’s cellar this takes a long time. Many tanks are still fermenting into the spring and summer. Bottling usually takes place in the fall, when most are busy sending their wine into the market (including the “elite” VDP and their late-released “GG”s). Thus Lubentiushof is usually about a vintage behind.

While the focus is on dry and dry-tasting wines (spontaneously fermented wines pay no attention to the 10-grams-per-liter German wine law), Barth makes beautiful, old-school Prädikat wines with lower residual sugars than most. Twenty-five grams of residual sugar in the 2011 Gäns Kabinett? That is refreshing.



“To the uninitiated layman,
the label on a really distinguished bottle
of German wine appears at first sight
to be as intelligible as so much Sanskrit.”

Frank Schoonmaker
The Wines of Germany



Stein

#absurdandsublime

5.5 hectares (11.1 acres)

under vine

Village

Alf

Top Vineyards

Himmelreich, Hölle,
Palmberg-Terrassen

For pricing and
availability information
for the wines of
Stein, please email
sales@vomboden.com



No one has met Dr. Ulrich Stein without developing a slight crush on the guy. He is brilliant, passionate, incredibly fun and does nothing, *nothing*, that is easy or obvious.

Ulli is a true bohemian. He and his wife live in a beautiful inn on the top of a mountain overlooking the Mosel. While the inn doesn't really function as an inn (you can't actually book rooms there), it's always filled with people – a random assortment of thoughtful eccentrics, famous musicians and artists, a couple just back from photographing Jewish delis in New York, a family making a month-long journey from Berlin to Sicily and back.

The common thread? They all love Stein wine; they all love Ulli.

While Ulli's wines are not (yet) widely known in the U.S., he has nothing less than a fanatical following in Europe. He could likely sell every last bottle to his friends in Germany alone, yet there are places of some importance, like Noma in Copenhagen, that put in sizable orders for Stein wine.

Ulli specializes in the absurd and the sublime. He farms meaningful parcels of land that have a few important things in common: They are not easy to work. They are commercially unknown. Most importantly, Ulli loves them.

In fact, Stein is more than a winemaker – he is a passionate advocate for the traditional steep slate vineyards of the Mosel. In 2010, Ulli published a manifesto warning of the threats to the region's 2,000-year-old viticultural tradition. Dan Melia wrote a beautiful summary of Stein's manifesto for Edward Behr's *The Art of Eating* – it can be found **online** with kind permission from the author and publisher.

It's perhaps difficult to speak of an overarching "style" at Stein; or maybe it's that the word, the concept, just doesn't feel right. Winemaking with Ulli is refreshingly light on "style," on some idea projected into the vineyards; it's about what the vineyards say to him. Certainly there is a focus on wines that are dry; lightness and zip are more important than gobs of fruit. Complexity is good, but not at the expense of the whole – better to be simple and well-done than overdone and, well, a mess. Cut is more important than size. Paramount to it all: a happy vineyard, a happy customer, a good bottle of wine, laughter.



“No reluctant country schoolboy ever took
so devious a route on his way to school
as the Mosel on its way to join the Rhine at Coblenz.”

Frank Schoonmaker
The Wines of Germany



Vollenweider

#forceofnature

4.5 hectares (11.1 acres)

under vine

Village

Traben-Trarbach

Top Vineyards

Goldgrube, Steffensberg

For pricing and
availability information
for the wines
of Vollenweider,
please email
sales@vomboden.com

So the story goes, a bottle of 1990 Egon Müller Auslese was enough to convince the young Daniel Vollenweider that the Mosel was the place to be. So that's where he went.

Yet, no matter how critical this holy bottle of Egon Müller was to the young Vollenweider, two things cannot be doubted: 1) It takes more than a bottle of wine to inspire this sort of Mosel-fanaticism and 2) The story *after* Egon Müller is the more interesting one.

In 1999, Vollenweider purchased a one-hectare plot of very old vines in the once-famous Wolfer Goldgrube. The results were extraordinary. Right from the beginning, the wines showcased explosive energy, monumental depth and purity of fruit, whiplash acidity. In 2003, with only three vintages under his belt, Daniel was named "Discovery of the Year" by the influential wine publication *Gault Millau*. By 2009, the same publication had awarded him four stars, putting him in the same league as heavyweights Karthäuserhof, Willi Schaefer, Schloss Lieser and Zilliken. This is serious company.

Vollenweider clearly has "the touch" for sweet wines – these are among the most thrilling Prädikat wines you will ever taste. They are full-throttle, jet-fighter Rieslings with dense mid-palates and seductive curves. They have weight, yet they also have 100,000 volts of electricity coursing through them; this gives them a lift, a length that is, well, uncommon. If the focus early on was the Prädikat wines, Vollenweider has since shown a similar gift with dry Riesling.

Steep slate viticulture. Hand-done everything. Natural yeasts, spontaneous fermentations. No shortcuts. The phrase "idealistic and masochistic" is used to describe Vollenweider in Stephan Reinhardt's *The Finest Wines of Germany*. It's as appropriate as any we've heard. To describe the wines, we'd also add "delicious as hell."



“The Mosel’s best publicity agents
are those that travel, in bottle, the world over,
and perhaps the highest compliment is
to say that the country is as lovely as its wines.”

Frank Schoonmaker
The Wines of Germany



Weiser-Künstler

#detail

3 hectares (7.4 acres)
under vine

Village

Traben-Trarbach

Top Vineyards

Ellergrub, Gaispfad, Steffensberg

For pricing and
availability information
for the wines
of Weiser-Künstler,
please email
sales@vomboden.com

At the dawn of the 20th century, the vineyards that Weiser-Künstler now farms were at the apogee of their fame. Indeed, they were once regarded as some of the absolute greatest sites in the Mosel. The Lintz map of the Mosel (1897) gives all of the vineyards that Weiser-Künstler work the highest ranking possible.

If this stretch of vineyards fell into obscurity in the latter half of the 20th century, that is not entirely a bad thing. These places have not seen the “modernization” that many sites in the Mosel have, which means that these cliff-vineyards still have their jutting, ladder-like terraces. And on these terraces, they have an uncommon density of very old, un-grafted vines (up to, and beyond, 100 years old). This is a place where the roots run (literally) extremely deep. Konstantin Weiser and wife Alexandra Künstler farm a minuscule three hectares. They do nearly everything by themselves and on their own terms.

They are quiet, deeply kind people, as meditative and soulful as the vineyards they farm, and the wines they make. There are few Rieslings that are as delicate or as uncompromising, as dazzling in their detail and nuance. David Rayer and Jean Fish, in their scholarly insider’s newsletter *Mosel Fine Wine Review* write matter-of-factly: “These are consistently among the top wines produced anywhere in the Mosel.”

Many compare the wines of Weiser-Künstler to those of Willi Schaefer. The comparison is apt. Both estates are tiny. Both estates seem unable to make anything that is not ethereal and haunting and a bit magical. As at Willi Schaefer, Weiser-Künstler makes exceptional Prädikat wines, Kabinetts with true delicacy and lightness, Spätlesen with vigor and depth, Auslesen with flair, and true, old-school “stickies” with more of it all. However, Weiser-Künstler also makes incredible dry wines – dainty angels carved from mineral and slate that feel porcelain in their weight and purity.

In other words, Weiser-Künstler does it all, and does it all beautifully.



