

Johann Donabaum

may be only 28 years old, but he is a rising star of the Wachau. Despite his youth, he has been winemaker of his family estate for a number of years. He already commands a wealth of knowledge and feeling for wine and wine growing, and is not even close to realizing his potential. Having trained for this all of his life, Donabaum graduated from the Krems School of Viticulture while still in his teens. Upon returning home, his father gave him the go ahead to "do it your way", and the young man decided to bet on quality first and foremost. A seven-month apprenticeship with F X Pichler gained him a great deal of new ideas and insights into the practices of a great wine producer.

The history

The house where the Donabaum estate is situated dates back to the 16th century, when it was used as a forge, or blacksmith workshop. A few centuries later, Johann Donabaum's great-grandfather began mixed agricultural farming and winemaking. In the 1960's Johann's father began concentrating primarily on the wine, opening a Heurigen (wine tavern), and bottling and marketing the wine for the first time. In 1996, they decided to focus almost exclusively on sales and marketing, though the Heurigen is still open seasonally.

The philosophy

The vineyard gives birth to the quality of the wine. Only with careful cultivation is it possible to create wines of the highest standard. The wines should be mirrors, reflecting origin and terroir, and the meticulousness and signature of the vintner himself. For example, each of the three quality designations of the Wachau -- "Steinfeder", "Federspiel" and "Smaragd" -- should reflect its own potential and unique characteristics. Despite the difference in price, Steinfeder and Federspiel are not inferior in quality to Smaragd, just different. Johann Donabaum is particularly taken with Grüner Veltliner, because of its extraordinary versatility, and makes many different styles.

The Vision

Donabaum believes traditional knowledge combined with a modern way of thinking is the key to the highest quality wine. Some of his ideas for the near future include: Returning to vinification of Smaragd in big wooden barrels; Using yeast stems originating from his own vineyards to increase the complexity and shelf life of the wines; Increasing cultivation of the Neuburger grape, by diligence and selection, to showcase its amazing, inherent potential. His goal is to make Donabaum's Neuburger the ultimate representative of this powerful grape varietal; Expand his base by further lease and purchase of vineyards; Increase exports from 15% to 30%.

Important facts:

Size: 4.5 hectares/11 acres, plus grapes from other growers (1.5 hectares/3.7 acres)

Production: 45,000 bottles

Grape varietals:

60% Grüner Veltliner

35% Riesling

5% Neuburger

Single vineyards: Spitzer Point, Spitzer Offenberg, Spitzer Biern, Spitzer Setzberg,

Berglage Loiben

Where the wine grows: Spitzer Graben

Spitzer Graben is a small narrow valley at the western end of the Wachau, leading into the Waldviertel. Because of low level irrigation, the high potential of the soil of Spitzer Graben was unknown until vintage 2000 when drip irrigation was installed. The wines of this region are influenced by the chilly air masses of the autumn nights and the terroir of bare mineralic primary

rock soil. Donabaum realized his goal of making a variety of distinct, delicate, aromatic, mineralic and fruit driven wines, reflective of this unique terrain. The most important vineyards in Spitzer Graben are: Spitzer Point, Spitzer Offenberg, Spitzer Setzberg, Spitzer Biern

Top Wines:

Grüner Veltliner Spitzer Point Federspiel,

Grüner Veltliner Spitzer Point Smaragd

Riesling Offenberg Smaragd

Riesling Setzberg Smaragd

Neuburger Spitzer Biern Smaragd

Loiben

Since 1998, Donabaum also possesses vineyards located around Loiben, in the midst of the Wachau.

Counterpoint to the wines from Spitz, these wines impress with their complexity, power and expressiveness, due the richer soil and warmer climate. The grapes ripen 1-1 1/2 weeks earlier than in

the Spitzer Graben. Only Grüner Veltliner is grown at Loiben.

Top Wines:

Grüner Veltliner Loibner Garten Smaragd

Grüner Veltliner Berglage Loiben Smaragd