

Wein/  
Steiermark

Wine from the hills,  
with hand & heart



*The Steiermark's winegrowers are poster children for steep slope viticulture, but also models of courageous reimagining. Seizing a historic opportunity, they conquered Austria with novel wine styles. Now, a new generation is blazing its own stylistic trails, reclaiming international renown for a region once known as the innovation hub of European viticulture.*

David Schildknecht



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# Three wine regions, innumerable terroirs



The Steiermark is a WINEGROWING REGION of great importance, both for Austria and for Europe. Although industry strongly moulded the form and substance of the Steiermark in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and still dominates the ALPINE VALLEYS, the federal state itself has never abandoned its agrarian tradition, but has remained a region with a self-aware and SELF-ASSURED AGRICULTURAL SECTOR. The Steiermark is the second-greatest in area of Austria's nine federal states, and is bordered to the south by Slovenia.

## WINEGROWERS AS MOUNTAIN FARMERS

The Steiermark is a mountainous winegrowing region, Austria's most mountainous agricultural region, packed onto a spur of the Alps. Here the roads always go up, go down or follow along one of the many ridges. Viticulture here is heavy work, comparable to farming crops in the mountains; winegrowing here cannot be mechanised, all harvesting and the often tedious preparatory work must be done by hand. More than a quarter of the slopes show a gradient of between 40-70%, while another 62% of the sites have an incline of more than 26% - perfectly level acreage is seldom encountered. Here mostly white wine grapes grow to maturity, along with a few dozen hectares of red wine grapes.

## TRADITION COMMITTED TO HUMANITY

Viticulture in the Steiermark, which encompasses 4,633 hectares, is truly a special feature of the land here; it is a viticulture that is mostly focussed upon those people who live in the Steiermark. Here folks still visit the producers on the weekend to pick up their wine. Also typical of the Steiermark are the many wine taverns, in which growers offer home-made and local products.

## A FAN CLUB FROM NEW YORK TO SHANGHAI

The winegrowing regions of the Steiermark spent many years in a kind of dormancy. Except within the borders of the federal state and in Austria itself, Styrian wines were hardly known in the world at large. This has changed radically in the last fifty years: Styrian wines are now found on the wine lists of the world's best restaurants and are being drunk from New York to Shanghai by an enthusiastic and ever-growing group of devotees. There is a simple reason for this: the wines of the Steiermark are unique. And this is not just a cliché, because it is the combination of the site, the climate and the Styrian grape varieties that make wines from the Steiermark so unmistakable. For example, a Styrian Sauvignon, Muskateller or Traminer can be recognised by its aroma. These wines do not put on airs - they are straightforward and full-bodied, juicy and mineral-driven - all the way from the entry level up to the *grand cru*.

## LOOK TO THE LAND

Simultaneously with the rapidly developing international career of Styrian wines, the Steiermark has also enjoyed discovery as a destination for tourism. The astonishing thing is that the remarkably attractive landscape of the winegrowing regions – which without any doubt can be ranked among the most beautiful in the world – was (like the wines) only known to a dedicated group of connoisseurs. Of course, this has changed completely: today you can spend the night in comfort on the slopes and gaze out upon the land, stretching out in every direction to hills in the distance.

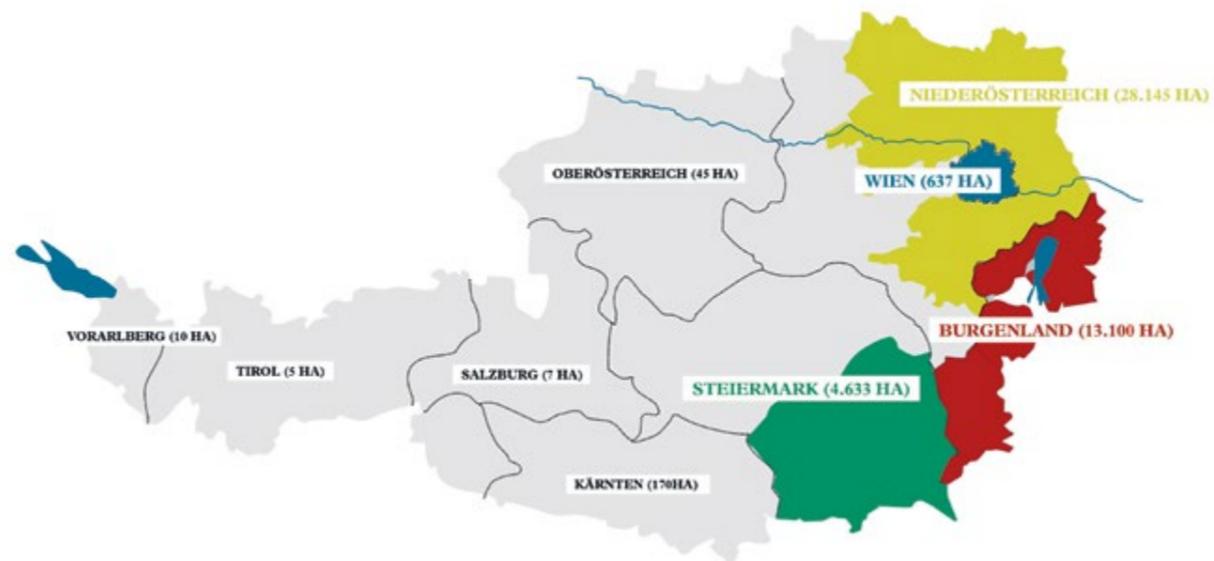
## LUSH & VERDANT, SUN-DRENCHED HILLS

The hills that host the vineyards here are immensely important for the Styrian wines and their flavour. Vineyards laid out on the steep slopes allow the sun's rays to shine fully upon every vine. As warm as it gets in the summer and even in the autumn, the hills also channel the desirable coolness of the night with their downdrafts, giving Styrian wines their famous and delicate refinement.

The Steiermark's winegrowing regions are rich and verdant country. They emerge lustrous and inviting from out of the surrounding woods. To see this, you do not have to book a helicopter – it is enough to just climb one of the tall hills. And then look down. Best done with a glass of wine in hand. Plenty of that here...



© Toni Muhr



source: [www.oesterreichwein.at](http://www.oesterreichwein.at)

The Klapotetz is not a Styrian bird, but rather a clattering wooden pinwheel, and the noise is supposed to spoil the birds' appetite for devouring the precious grapes. Many regard the Klapotetz as the secret emblem of the Steiermark.

# The short story about a long time

Organised viticulture throughout Europe, as well in the Steiermark, has its origins with a duty-minded and industrious people who liked to drink wine and who grew grapevines, who expanded their native territory and developed it into an empire – and wherever climatically feasible, planted vines for its officials and soldiers, who fired amphoras and bound barrels – the Romans.



## 2000 YEARS OF VITICULTURE

The Romans brought institutionalised winegrowing with them – evidence for this is abundantly seen in the south of the region. However, the Celts were already settled in the Steiermark before the Romans arrived. And they drank, like many of the peoples at that time, a kind of wine made from the fruit of vines growing wild. (By the way, the variety Blauer Wildbacher, from which the Styrian Schilcher is now vinified, is a mutation of one of the ‘original grapes’ of that era.)

Of all the wine-loving Romans it was Emperor Probus (276-282 AD), who gave winegrowing in his empire a special status. He promoted the planting of the vine and certain high-yielding grape varieties. These were

usually planted in an *ad hoc* field blend so that there were hardly any vineyards growing just a single variety. Although Probus (according to reports) happily drank wine himself and allowed wine from the provinces to be brought to Rome (although usually dead on arrival), his decision to promote viticulture had quite a pragmatic background: he needed more soldiers (the empire was overextended) and these soldiers required wine to keep them content.

Incidentally, Probus, who was born just a few hundred kilometres from the Styrian border in the Serbian province of Vojvodina, was the first godfather of Styrian viticulture. It would take a few centuries for his successor to follow: Archduke Johann.

With the fall of the Roman Empire, much of its agricultural technology was lost. Techniques and practices were simply forgotten, including the ways of viticulture, revived only around 800 by Charlemagne and the church. It was the church and its monasteries that expanded winegrowing to a considerable extent in all their spheres of influence. The Little Ice Age, the plague and other epidemics – as well as the accompanying long epoch of many wars – put an end to the still young and popular wine culture of the Steiermark.

### THE BUSCHENSCHANK PATENT

The economic upswing under Maria Theresia and Josef II, which began to take hold properly around 1770, revived viticulture in the Steiermark. Josef II was also the ruler who implemented the Buschenschank Patent in 1784, and thus gave the hundreds of small winegrowers who practised viticulture as a sideline the opportunity to earn money – an economically sensible measure, which also promoted the growth of villages and communities. At that time, however, there was no question of an independent winegrowing society – any basis for that had to wait until the secularisation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But Josef's old Buschenschank decree has developed into a distinctive Austrian cultural asset.

### ARCHDUKE JOHANN, GODFATHER OF THE STEIERMARK

Archduke Johann, alias Johann of Austria, a half-Spaniard, came to the Steiermark during the time of Napoleonic turmoil. And stayed. He loved the land and people. And they loved him, because Johann was a man with the attitude of 'live and let live' (as well as this could be practised in those days). Vienna was not his city, so Graz grew into its special role, which it still retains today in Austria. Johann dealt with many things very well; he was a man of many interests and also a stickler for details. He donated an estate for the purposes of research to Styrian viticulture – which then had about 35,000 hectares under vines (at that time the Steiermark included large parts of today's Slovenia) – which had become a considerable and important economic factor in the region. Here, in 1854, his growers planted 425 different grape varieties, to see what results might come of the various sorts of grape juice.

Most varieties were quickly forgotten, but Sauvignon Blanc and Morillon (Chardonnay) took hold in the region. With every passing year, Sylvaner diminished its acreage in more and more vineyards and migrated almost completely to Franconia, a unique passage in viticultural history. Styrian white-wine production during these years of blossoming – unfortunately interrupted by the phylloxera

catastrophe – was as significant as that of the Prussian Rheingau and the Mosel. In addition, the wineproducing region of the Steiermark figured as a leader in both quantity & quality – in Europe and in the world – a role it has reassumed today.

### ONE OF THE FIRST REGIONS TO PROTECT ORIGINS & GRAPES

After phylloxera, which almost completely laid waste to European viticulture, the Steiermark began to plant new vines grafted onto resistant American rootstocks. The Steiermark also owes its boom years after the phylloxera catastrophe to intensive research at the Marburg (then part of the Steiermark) viticultural school, where director Hermann Goethe published his handbook on ampelography in 1878 (studying the description and definition of grape varieties). The Steiermark was thus the pioneer in this new research and was also the first region to benefit from it.

The Steiermark never entirely recovered its former expanse of vineyard area after the phylloxera scourge; in addition, after the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy in 1918 it lost more than 30,000 hectares of vineyards to the state of Slovenia in the newly established kingdom of Yugoslavia. In the 1980s, however, Styrian wine succeeded in achieving extraregional importance and becoming a subject for conversation. This took place thanks to the »Schutzring für Wein aus steirischen Trauben«, founded in 1977, which at the beginning ensured that Styrian winegrowers only produce wine exclusively from Styrian grapes, a regulation subsequently adopted by the Austrian Wine Law. What sounds self-evident today was a rarity in Europe at the time.

At present, the Steiermark's winegrowing regions are among the most innovative in Europe: here, all investments in near-to-nature and ecologically sound winegrowing have paid off, giving Styrian wine a position that is writing a promising new history for itself.

# Concerning the origins of great wines



The **TERROIR OF THE STEIERMARK** is **ONE OF A KIND** – although actually there are many kinds: the unique interplay of climate, soils, vineyard sites and the character of the land allows the winegrowers to produce **UNMISTAKABLE PREMIUM WINES** with their own totally distinctive character.

# TERROIR STEIERMARK

In other wineproducing countries of the world, there are more than a couple regions where fatter, heavier, more alcoholic and – above all – more fashionable wines are produced. Wines that belong to a different concept of viticulture. However, Styrian winemakers have been defining their own, self-determined modern aesthetic for years now: they follow a long tradition of Austrian wine production, which also integrates a few influences from southeast European and Pannonian viticulture into the Steiermark.

## TERROIR STEIERMARK: THE CLIMATE, THE SOILS

Styrian wines are known for their fragrance and their explosive flavour, for their spiciness and minerality, for their simplicity and their sophistication. And the nature of Styrian wines is determined to a great extent by their origins: from the temperate, not so windy but rainy climate, which has developed a plethora of microclimates, from soils of weathered volcanic stone (tuff, basalt), soils from weathered solid rock such as slate, schist and gneiss, soils on limestone, on gravel and conglomerate, on sand and sandstone as well as »Opok«. This is a soil that is only thusly named in the Steiermark – a common term for solidified, sometimes slaty and predominantly fine-grained sedimentary rocks, including marl, clay and silt, but also with layers of sand, gravel, limestone and shale. Opok is very dense and difficult to cultivate, and so the grapevines need strong roots to break it up. For all the hard work demanded by wines grown in Opok, there is a special, sensorially perceptible saltiness ('minerality') in the finish.

The six primary soil types and their main distribution areas:

### SLATE, SCHIST & GNEISS

Weathered solid rock

Südsteiermark<sup>DAC</sup> & Weststeiermark<sup>DAC</sup>

### VOLCANIC STONE (TUFF, BASALT)

Weathered solid rock

Vulkanland Steiermark<sup>DAC</sup>

### LIMESTONE

Fossil-rich marine deposits & reef limestone (Leithakalk & Korallenkalk)

Südsteiermark<sup>DAC</sup>

### OPOK

Limestony marl ('Styrian Schlier'): Solidified, formerly muddy, mostly calcareous marine & alluvial deposits

Südsteiermark<sup>DAC</sup>

### GRAVELS & SANDS

Coarse & grainy, partly loose or partly solidified alluvial sediments

Südsteiermark<sup>DAC</sup> & Vulkanland Steiermark<sup>DAC</sup>

### SAND/SANDSTONE

Sand, both loose and solidified as sandstone, often containing quartz

Südsteiermark<sup>DAC</sup>, Vulkanland Steiermark<sup>DAC</sup> & Weststeiermark<sup>DAC</sup>



Winegrowers in the Steiermark are going up – and rather steeply, at that!

## TERROIR STEIERMARK: THE GRAPE VARIETIES

In the western growing region, the so-called »Schilcherland«, the rare, autochthonous variety Blauer Wildbacher yields a well-known and beloved rosé: Schilcher, a total terroir-wine, which is being vinified as sparkling wine with increasing regularity. This specialty is now in demand internationally as a rare delicacy. In the southern growing region, Sausal and the Südsteirische Weinstrasse, vineyards are dominated by Sauvignon, Welschriesling, Gelber Muskateller and members of the Pinot family, mostly vinified in an imposing style.

Styrian Sauvignons, as one might say, are the most diverse in the world, although they hail from a comparatively small winegrowing region. Here one has everything: from prancing light to grassy-herbal textures, to wines of truly grand stature, matched only by the heavyweight Sauvignons of the Loire Valley. Something similar can be said of the region's Morillon (Chardonnay), some of the best in the world when matured in cask. In the small southeastern growing area Vulkanland there are also many hectares of Traminer – here, like all other wines, wearing typical Styrian garb: no make-up, no disguise.

## TERROIR STEIERMARK: THE WINEGROWERS

And last but not least, the many first-class growers also contribute significantly to accentuating the typical Styrian sense of place, because it is their time-honoured mode of vinification that can always bring tradition into sharper focus without ever making it seem outdated. Styrian winegrowers pursue a clear and common style that gives wines of the region a sense of shared character. But they are – each one for him/herself – a guarantee of individuality and distinctiveness. In no other wine region are so many like-minded winegrowers vinifying such varied & different wines, which are then always recognisable as coming from the region. This evolves without a great deal of palaver, but rather from a primal instinct to do the appropriate thing on one's respective patch of soil – and then daring in the cellar to conduct some rather sensational experiments, based on natural methods.



# GEOLOGY & FOUNDATIONS

by Dr Maria Heinrich, geologist

About 18 million years ago, towards the end of the formation of the Alps, the earth's crust began to stretch eastward due to plate tectonics. This was the starting point for the formation of the Styrian Basin, here on the edge of the Alps, which in turn prepared the terrain for Styrian viticulture. If we had high mountains as far as the state border or beyond, the Steiermark would scarcely have suitable topography and climate for the vigorous growth of the vines today.

The basin first filled with deposits from rivers that led rocky rubble down from the rising mountains into the valley, and then, with further downward expansion, eventually with seawater that was in contact with the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. Geologists call this body of water the Paratethys Sea. At the edges of the basin, alluvial fans, delta compositions and subaquatic mass movements of coarse sediments (pebbles, gravel & block gravel) were formed and in shielded coastal areas created lakes, bogs and coal seams. Great layers several hundred metres thick collected in the interior of the basin, mostly of fine-grained and more or less calcareous

sediments such as silts, clays and marls, which today are mostly solidified and called Schlier or Opok. Calm and shallow marine areas around crystalline thresholds and islands offered the best conditions for the development of a rich marine fauna and reef formation: this is where the Leithakalk (Leitha limestone) was created. About 11 million years ago, the sea was increasingly desalinated by separation from the eastern Paratethys, forming a landscape of lakes where sand, silt and clays were deposited, followed by complete silting, marked by the sandy/gritty deposits left by meandering rivers. Increased geologic activity with erosion in the mountains and depositing of gravel and pebbles in the basin then brought with them the cold phases of the Ice Age. During this time, the landscape was moulded into its present form.

With the stretching-out of the earth's crust toward the east, not only was the basin formed, but the two phases are related to volcanic activity as well, bringing major eruptions of rock from the earth's interior and giving Vulkanland Steiermark its name. About 16 million years ago, the volcanic rock at Wildon and the Gleichenberger

Kogel emerged: an exchange of lava flows and volcanic tuffs (solidified volcanic ash) built a shield volcano of about thirty kilometres in diameter, which was largely surrounded by the sea. The second volcanic phase dates from approximately 3.5-1.8 million years ago and is marked by approximately forty volcanic funnels and charted lava flows. The volcanic eruptions of this time created the Klöcher Massif and the Steinberg of Mühldorf (both about 2.6 million years ago), as well as the Stradner Kogel (about 1.7 million years ago). In the pyroclastic materials explosively flung out of the earth's core, one can sometimes find semi-precious stones. An example of this is the olivine, which comes from a depth of up to 60 kilometres and can be found today on the Kapfensteiner Kogel.

The edges of the basin toward the north, west & southwest are formed by the mountains in Joglland, the Weizer Bergland, the Koralpe Range, the Radlgebirge and the Remschnigg in the south, all formed from crystalline rocks of the so-called Eastern Alpine unit of the Alps. They are appreciably older than the rocks of the basin, transformed during the process of mountain-formation into metamorphic rocks; the inventory consists mainly of quartz-rich gneisses, mica schists,



phyllitic & calcareous schists and slates, quartzites and green slates. All together, more or less weathered, they form the substratum of acidic, predominantly limestone-poor soils. The Sausal, also made up of schists, forms an island in the basin, which continues to the east into the Hungarian lowlands.



## SOILS & SOIL FORMATION

The sort of rock from which the soils emerge largely determine the properties of soils in the vineyards. Soil formation and its further development take place over long periods of time under the influence of other, site-related factors such as climate, precipitation, surface gratings, vegetation, soil organisms and changes caused by human habitation.

Important features and characteristics of the soils and rocks include their humus content, organisms living in loose and firm soil, and - concerning the parent rock - the mineralogic and chemical composition with regard to the natural nutrient supply - especially limestone content, which is quite relevant to the choice of rootstock and grape variety.

### ROOT PENETRATION

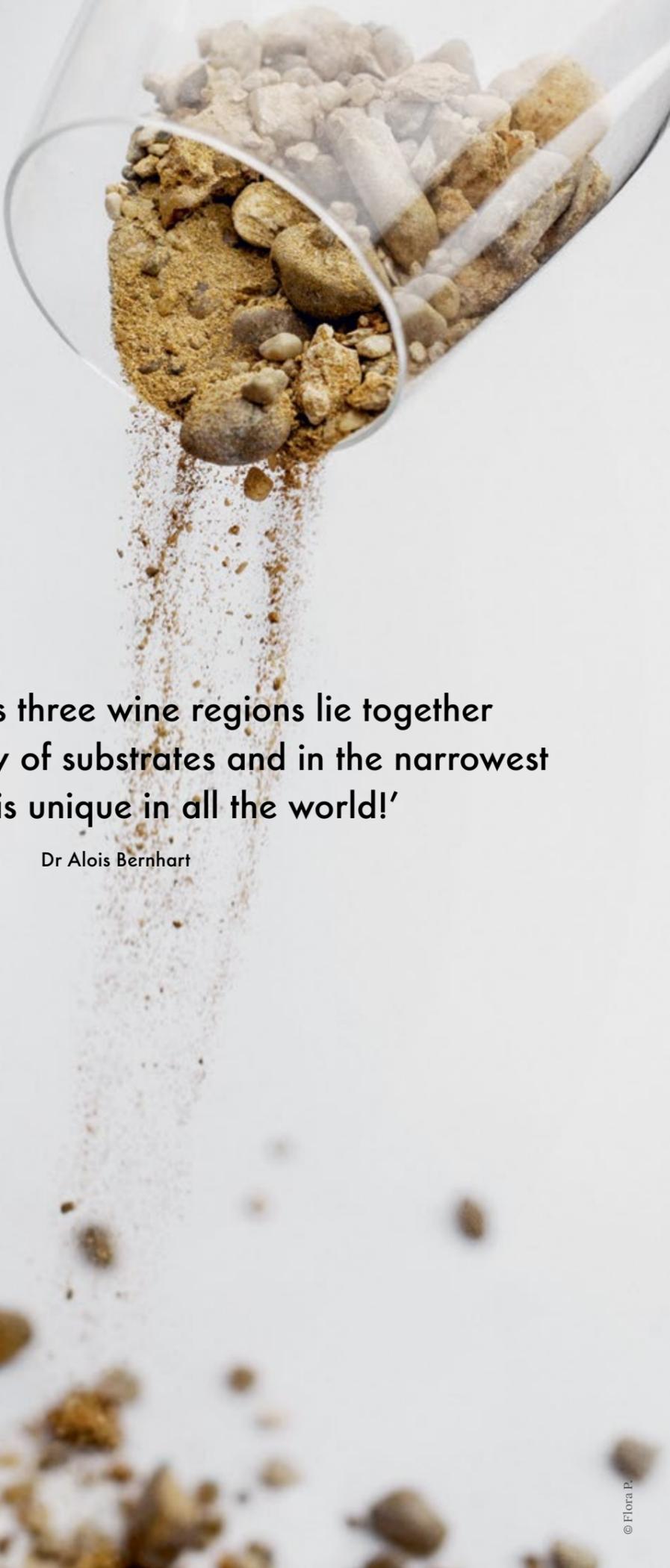
Further essential properties of rock & stone include density, division level and grain size distribution, as well as the clay mineral content. These properties affect the soil's water and temperature balances, as well as the exchange processes of mineral materials, the stability of the terrain and the rooting of vines in the soil. The depth of this zone, which extends from the surface to the solid rock, determines the size of the root space and thus the size of the accessible storage space for nutrients and water - a very important factor.

Old, deeply rooted vines, however, also find water in narrow joints and clefts in solid rock. In general, soils that lie upon loose rock and volcanic rock are usually more deeply developed than those on solid rock.

# The basis of soils

Dr Alois Bernhart, court expert for agriculture,  
author of technical publications, Wine Academy graduate

In Styrian viticulture there are SIX essential FORMS of SOIL. In addition to the type, composition and density of the parent rock, the grain size (or particle-size distribution) of the soil is an important factor. The grain size indicates how fine or coarse the substrate is. This is crucial for the capacity of the soil to store WATER and WARMTH and to ensure NUTRIENT TRANSPORT. GRANULATION of the soil has a big impact on the growth of the vines and the FLAVOUR of the WINE.



'The Steiermark's three wine regions lie together on the widest variety of substrates and in the narrowest area. This is unique in all the world!'

Dr Alois Bernhart

## The essential soils:

### SLATE, SCHIST & GNEISS

Limestone-free soils tend to form on weathered crystalline schists and gneisses with a high proportion of coarse stone, which retains the warmth of the sun well. The laminar-stony coarse part goes back to the starting material, the crystalline slate and gneiss with their characteristic fissility, which results from the steady & compressed storage of tabular-leafy minerals.

Slate soils are mainly found in the Südsteiermark municipality Kitzreck-Sausal (reddish to bluish-black schist partly with high quartz content, with fine-leafed green schist). Occasionally, however, they also appear in Weststeiermark (grey, plate gneiss and mica schist) and in the northern part of Vulkanland (gneiss & schist).

These soils allow the grapes to ripen for a long time each day by releasing warmth – from them the growers produce big & lithe yet powerful wines with rich mineral salts and intense varietal aromas.



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### VOLCANIC STONE (BASALT & TUFF)

Volcanic soils form on cooled, solidified & weathered lava flows & cinder cones (basalt), or on fossilised volcanic ashes (tuffs). Volcanic rock stores heat and water well, is often finely grained and usually has a high proportion of iron (black & red earth). Wines vinified from grapes that grow on volcanic rock have a mineral-driven character, a rather full-bodied texture and powerful fragrance (especially Traminer and other aromatic varieties).

Volcanic soils are found in the Vulkanland Steiermark region, above all in the municipality of Klöch (iron-rich hard red basalt). In other communities, such as Kapfenstein, there are porous tuffs with fragments of entrained sediments and olivines from the interior of the earth.

Wines originating in volcanic rock usually have a very vivid mineral character and particularly expressive aromas.

'There is no doubt that soil characteristics have an impact on wine quality'.

Jancis Robinson MW, wine journalist, *Financial Times*, London

### LIMESTONE

Some communes in the Südsteiermark are markedly characterised by mostly dry calcareous soils on Leithakalk. Leithakalk is a marine sediment formed by reef-building corals, red algae, bryozoans and foraminifera (chambered microorganisms) with fossil remains of shells, sea urchins and sharks' teeth. The soils are sandy-silty and often exhibit a high clay content.

Wines made from grapes grown in limestone soils are generally extremely long-lived and are attractive for outstanding varietal typicity and a firm, almost linear structural acidity with chalky-soft textures.



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### OPOK

Opok is the common regional name for a typical Styrian soil formed from calcareous marl. One finds silty clay soils, mostly with medium limestone content, on weathered marl, mainly in Südsteiermark. Opok is a mostly fine-grained, calcareous sedimentary rock, a marl also known as Schlier – of brown, but also grey or blue colour – ranging from well-hardened to slaty in appearance. Layers of sand or sandstone and gravels can occur. These are formerly muddy maritime deposits into which rivers of coarser material such as sands and gravel have flowed. Opok is a very dense substratum that is difficult to work with.

The wines that grow on Opok soils are mostly opulent, from soft to even creamy on the palate, and impart a sense of warmth. The high limestone content of many Opok soils also brings a sensorially perceptible salty minerality. The element of finesse and the fine fruit flavours also are augmented with this increase in limestone content.

## GRAVEL

Gravel soils have developed from sediments (alluvial deposits). They are found mainly in the Südsteiermark, where the grains are sometimes solidified into hard conglomerate, but also in the Vulkanland. The grain-size of the gravel can range from 2mm to the size of a fist; usually a proportion of finer, sandy grains is present. Gravel soils have the ability to absorb and store heat well and to transfer it to the vines, especially in the evening and at night.

The wines grown in gravel soils shine with distinctive varietal aromas and a marked sense of typicality. Clear citrus notes and the floral tones of certain grape varieties come to the fore. Gravel soils tend to produce wines with expressive, elegant body and prominent acidic structure.



## SAND/SANDSTONE

Sands, as loose sand or solidified as sandstone – often with marked quartz content – developed from alluvial & marine deposits. Sandy soils can be found in some areas of the Südsteiermark, Vulkanland and in the Eibiswalder area of the Weststeiermark. Sands are sediments with a particle size between 0.063–2 millimetres, which are transported and deposited by rivers, with hard quartz enriched over longer transit times with other minerals. Over time, and overlaid with other and younger strata of rock, loose sand will compact into solid sandstone. The colour of the sands and sandstone – beige, brown or red – is usually determined by its iron content.

These vineyard soils can usually be cultivated without undue hardship. An additional advantage is also provided by the good ventilation and thus a good heatability of the soil, which in turn promotes maturation.

Wines produced from grapes grown on sandstone usually have rich and ripe fruit flavours with notable finesse.

## THE PALETTE OF GRAPE VARIETIES

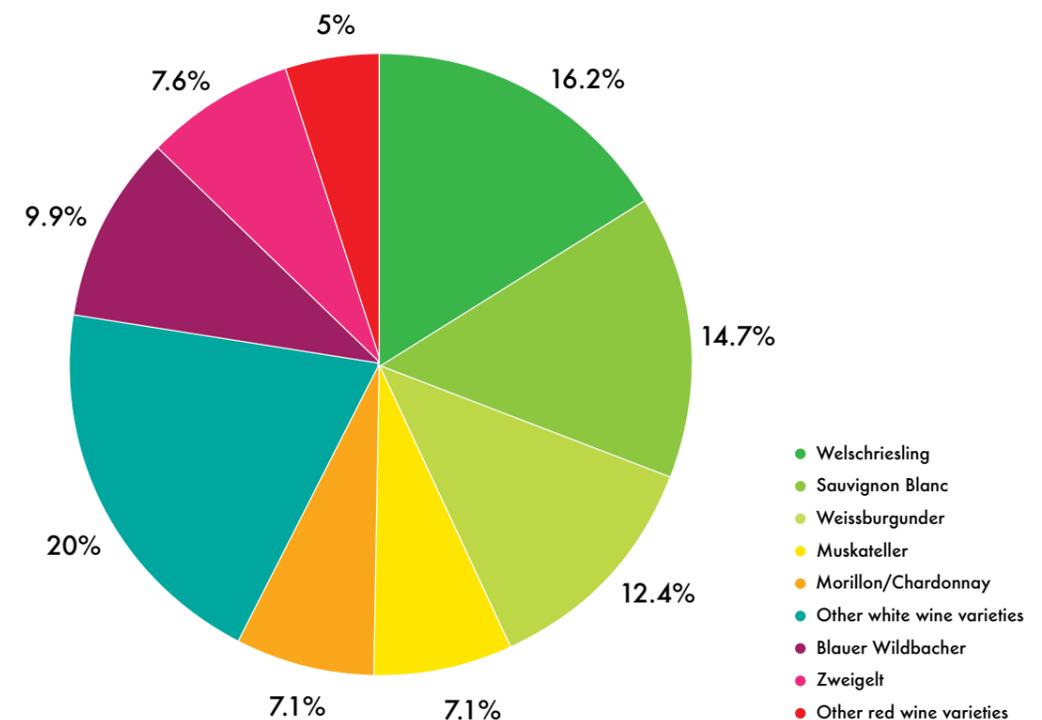
### OUT OF THE WEALTH OF MANY SOILS GROWS THE DIVERSITY OF THE MANY VINES

It was Archduke Johann – so it is said – who wanted to drink more monovarietal wines in the Steiermark. He had observed this trend in other countries, especially in France, and it appealed to him. In order to obtain monovarietal wines, more emphasis must be placed on the individual grape variety. Unlike common practice at that time, these now got cultivated separately, instead of being assimilated into the traditional field blend, the »Gemischter Satz«.

On the current 4,633 hectares under cultivation in the Steiermark, 78% of the vines produce grapes for the production of white wine. The red grapes of the remaining 22% mainly produce rosé-coloured Schilcher, along with some interesting red wines, which have gained a well-respected niche existence. More than forty different grape varieties in total are planted in the Steiermark.

As much as one associates the Steiermark with Sauvignon Blanc, Welschriesling – with 753 ha – claims the largest area of all Styrian grape varieties. However, the qualitative top dog Sauvignon Blanc follows just behind with 683 hectares. Weissburgunder is harvested in the Steiermark from the considerable area of 576 hectares: a special guest artist in the concert, because in no other winegrowing region in Austria does Weissburgunder, today an international variety, achieve this status. In fourth place is the indigenous red wine variety Blauer Wildbacher, which is vinified for the rosé wine Schilcher. Behind these four follow other grapes, which can also be considered as typically Styrian. For example, Morillon (Chardonnay), Muskateller, Traminer or Riesling, (which is considered an indigenous variety, since it has been growing in the Steiermark for some 200 years).

### AREA UNDER CULTIVATION, ORGANISED BY GRAPE VARIETY



## AREA UNDER CULTIVATION IN HECTARES, ORGANISED BY GRAPE VARIETY

WHITE VARIETIES	HECTARES	PROPORTION	RED VARIETIES	HECTARES	PROPORTION
Welschriesling	752.48	16.20%	Blauer Wildbacher	457.30	9.90%
Sauvignon Blanc	682.91	14.70%	Zweigelt	350.50	7.60%
Weißburgunder	576.26	12.40%	Merlot	20.60	0.40%
Morillon/Chardonnay	327.71	7.10%	Blauburger	18.23	0.40%
Muskateller	328.59	7.10%	Pinot Noir	18.23	0.40%
Müller-Thurgau	245.34	5.30%	Cabernet Sauvignon	14.29	0.30%
Scheurebe	152.44	3.30%	Sankt Laurent	13.88	0.30%
Pinot Gris	96.85	2.10%	Blaufränkisch	13.55	0.30%
Traminer	69.72	1.50%	Roesler	6.42	0.10%
Riesling	63.05	1.40%	Syrah	2.02	0.00%
Goldburger	29.50	0.60%	Blauer Portugieser	1.99	0.00%
Gemischter Satz	17.37	0.40%	Cabernet Franc	0.76	0.00%
Sylvaner	8.26	0.20%	Rathay	0.67	0.00%
Muskat-Ottonel	4.37	0.10%	Gemischter Satz	0.05	0.00%
Bouvier	1.36	0.00%	Others	121.06	2.60%
Furmint	0.15	0.00%			
Others	237.44	5.10%			
<b>TOTAL WHITE</b>	<b>3,593.80</b>	<b>77.60%</b>	<b>TOTAL RED</b>	<b>1,039.60</b>	<b>22.40%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>4,633 HECTARES</b>	

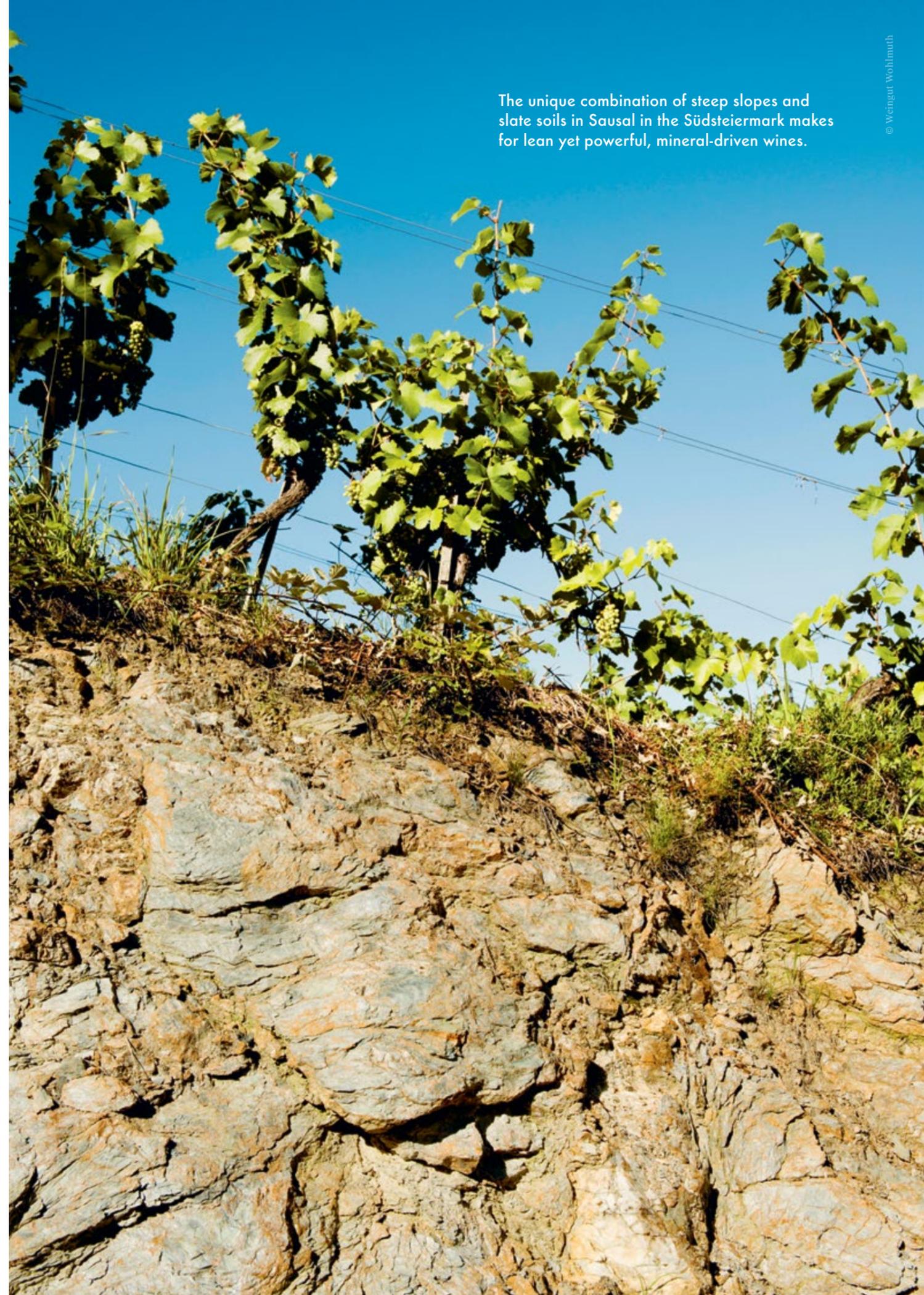
source: Weinbaukataster Landwirtschaftskammer Steiermark; 2016

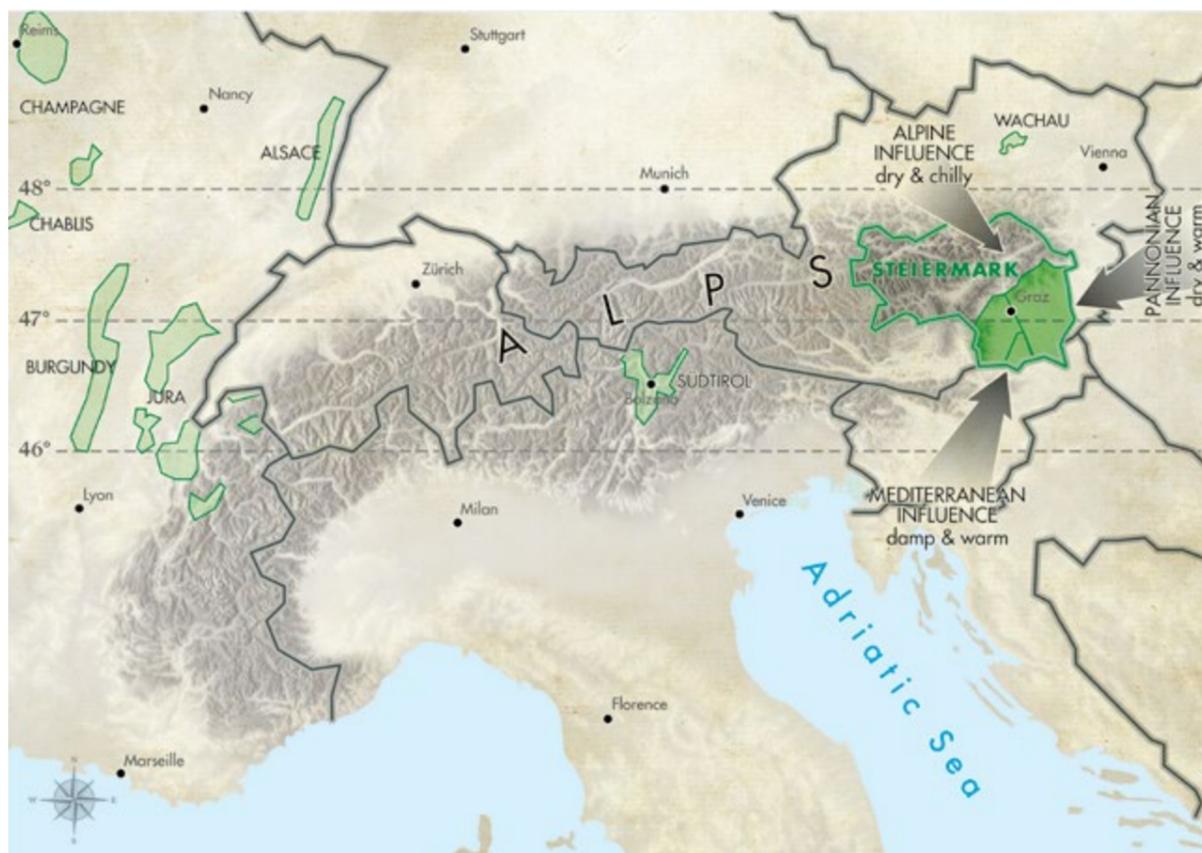
## THE NATURE OF THE CLIMATE

The Styrian winegrowing areas are located south of the main Alpine ridge. This provides a shield against west and northwest air currents and protection against cold winds. Thus, the Steiermark lies at the intersection of the warm and humid (Illyrian) Mediterranean climate in the west & south, and a Pannonian influence with hot & relatively dry

summers to the east. Vines grow particularly well here between 280–600 metres above sea level. In sites below 280m, viticulture is usually endangered by the accumulation and persistence of cool downward winds, and frost damage can occur, nor can the sun shine upon the vines for the entire period of its daily celestial circuit.

The unique combination of steep slopes and slate soils in Sausal in the Südsteiermark makes for lean yet powerful, mineral-driven wines.





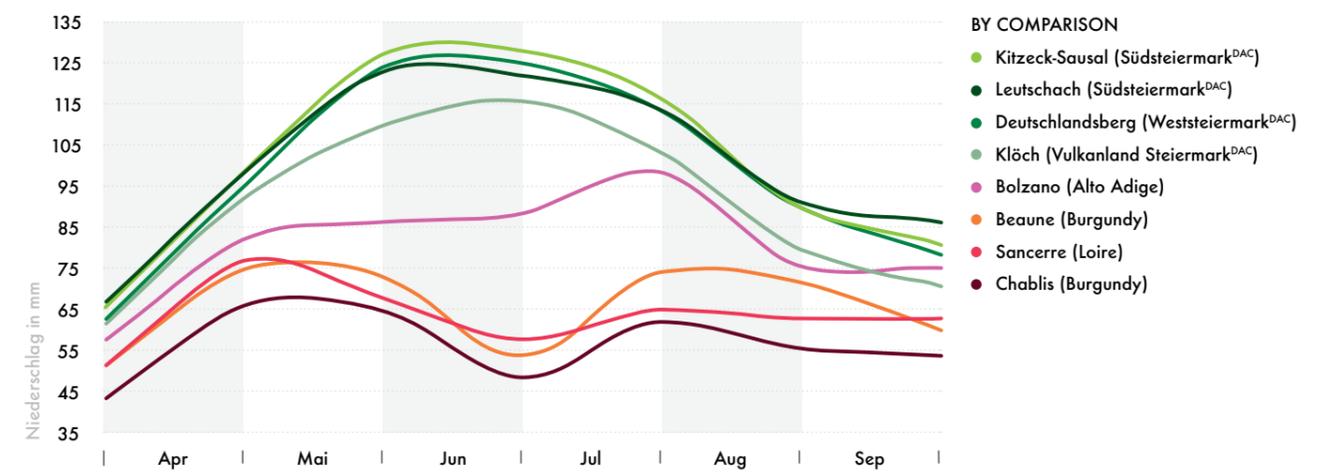
© Anna Stöcher

### WILD WEATHER

Annual rainfall in the Weststeiermark, near the Alps, averages 1,200 mm per year & square metre. This figure decreases headed east, in Vulkanland Steiermark, to 800 mm. As a result of these climatic opposites, wines with a variety of bouquet and of flavour are vinified in the Steiermark to a degree that is matched in hardly any other wineproducing land. The rainfall, especially in Weststeiermark and Südsteiermark, may seem very great compared to other European winegrowing regions and may not always make cultivating the vine easy, but this will prove beneficial if climate change becomes more intense and brings longer periods of drought.

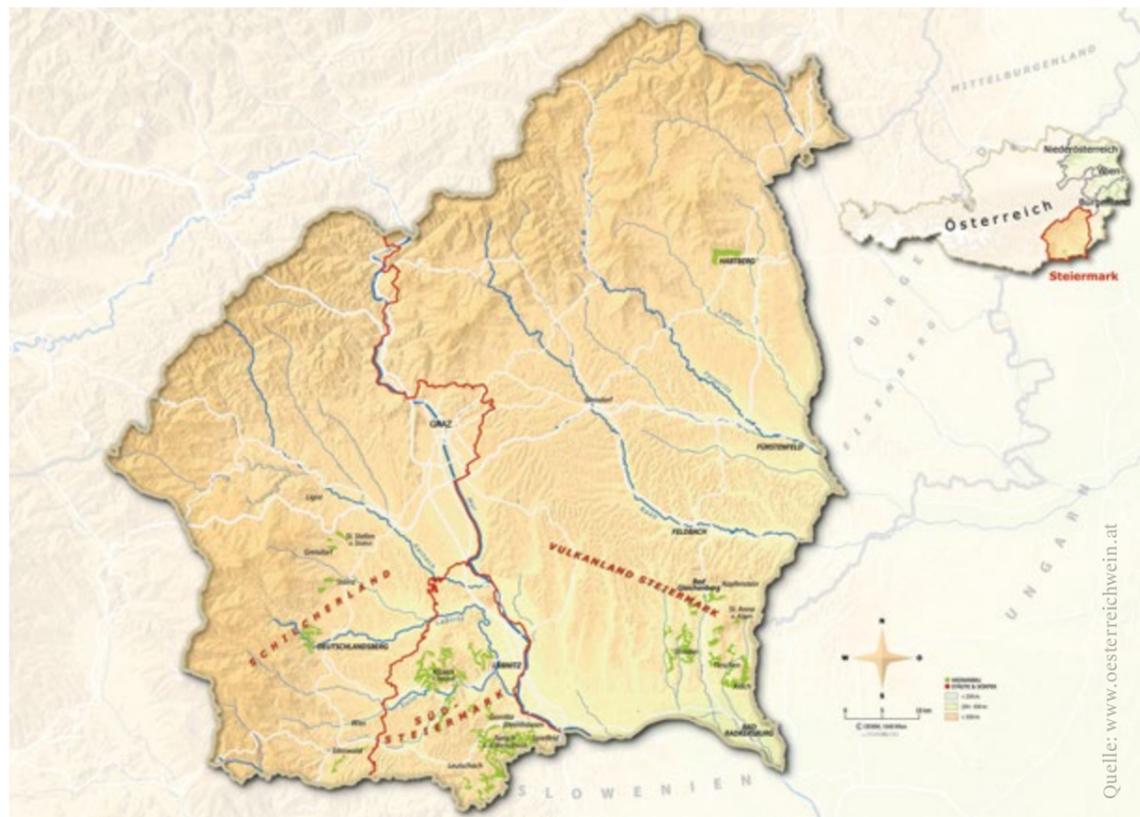
Further special features of the Styrian climate interface are the severe thunderstorms, often in combination with hailstorms, and the many foggy days in the year. In autumn, intense sunlight bathes the steep slopes and warms up the soil and the vines. The cold, which sets in at night, flows down from the vineyards into the valleys, causing a sometimes substantial temperature swing, which exerts a telling effect upon the aromatic substances in the grapes. Due to these vacillations in temperature, which occur almost daily in autumn, wines are produced in all three regions of the Steiermark showing an element of variety that is difficult to find elsewhere in the world.

VOLUME OF RAINFALL DURING THE VEGETATION CYCLE (in mm)



# The three regions of the Steiermark

Towering hills, steeply sloped vineyards and a marquee player: Sauvignon Blanc



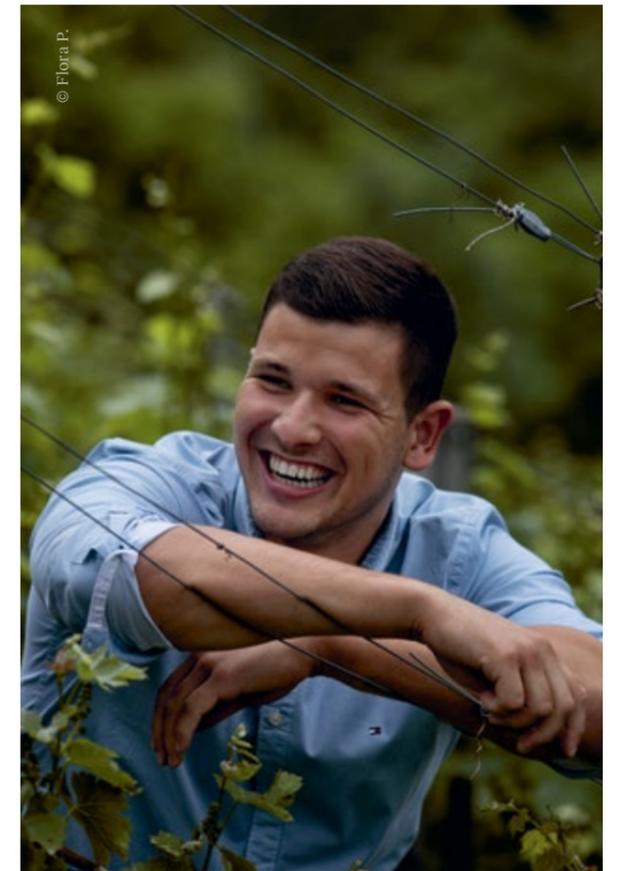
The Steiermark is divided into three individual DAC regions (Districtus Austriae Controllatus): Südsteiermark<sup>DAC</sup>, Weststeiermark<sup>DAC</sup> & Vulkanland Steiermark<sup>DAC</sup>.

The Südsteiermark is the largest winegrowing region in the federal state. The region is home to many wine estates of varying sizes, all producing high-quality wines and achieving an admirable standard. At first glance, the cultivated land looks like a small, densely packed, compact, quickly surveyable and well-arranged garden, but despite numerous forests and meadows, which interrupt the flow of the vineyards, it is one of the larger winegrowing regions in Austria, with 2,563 hectares under vines.

The picturesque wine country is one of the most beautiful and inviting wine regions in Europe with its wild and hilly landscape - a refreshment for both the eyes and the soul. However, viticulture here is downright hard work, because most vines are planted on extremely steep slopes, where one must work almost exclusively by hand and mechanical assistance is hardly possible. But it is precisely this complex and labour-intensive agriculture that guarantees individualistic wines, because every winegrower in the Südsteiermark must work out his own concept for his hillsides and his vineyard parcels. He can never rely on quick and easy approaches, as is the case elsewhere, where vines are commonly planted by the thousands on an open plain.

## HOME TO THE FRESHEST & MOST SOPHISTICATED SAUVIGNONS IN CENTRAL EUROPE

The Südsteiermark is well-known for fragrant and refreshing wines, as well as more profound bottlings vinified in the Burgundian style. Sauvignon Blanc, the variety that made the Steiermark internationally famous, is cultivated here the most widely with 21% of the area under vines. Welschriesling follows with 16.5%, Weissburgunder with 11.4%, Muskateller with just under 10%



and Morillon with 8.6% of the cultivated area. Besides these, one can still count small parcels of Riesling & Grauburgunder - and even some Scheurebe. Sauvignon Blanc was developed as the leading variety of the region, owing to continuously progressive teamwork on the part of the winegrowers. Today, these wines constitute a memorable episode in the saga of the world's finest Sauvignons.

Red varieties do not play any major role in the Südsteiermark and occupy only 13% of the vineyard land. But even if domestic and international attention does not focus on the region's red wines, some winegrowers are sure to be enthusiastic and avant-garde in preparing their surprises. Thus, one may dare to make the prognosis that some red wines from the Südsteiermark – especially Pinot Noir, Zweigelt and even Cabernet Franc – will open another chapter of new and unusual, elite wines in the near future.

## ALL THE GOOD EARTH ONE COULD WANT

The soils of the Südsteiermark are as varied as the grape varieties – from sand to slate, from marl to limestone. A warm and humid Mediterranean climate, with little influence from the Pannonian plain, determines the long vegetation cycle; warm summer and autumn days are followed by cool nights, which encourage the development of a rich aromatic profile and gives the white wines a wealth of nuance as well as an element of nobility. This is true of both the light and fruit-forward young wines, the so-called »Junker«, those harbingers

of each new vintage, and to the wines that follow, particularly the regionally typical white wines bearing the protected designation of origin Südsteiermark<sup>DAC</sup>. With rainfall of between 1,000 and 1,200 mm per square metre per year, aridity is generally not an issue in the Südsteiermark. Thanks to the innumerable hills there is a wealth of differences in microclimate, amplified or attenuated here and there by woodlands ranging from sparse to dense.

Sauvignon Blanc may be spread all over the world and might indeed be a world-famous variety, but there are only a few areas besides the Südsteiermark, such as the French Loire Valley, that can be associated with such fine quality. Sauvignons from the Südsteiermark are impressive for their aroma, freshness, delicacy and concentration; hardly any variety has so many facets to its flavour. Scents of elderberries, nettles and peppers dominate the region's fresh and comparatively early-harvested Sauvignons. Grapefruit & passion fruit characterise the wines of the mid-range, while gooseberries, redcurrants and intense herbal aromas come into play with top-of-the-line Sauvignons.

## WELSCHRIESLING & MUSKATELLER: HERE AS WELL, SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Welschriesling epitomises the fresh & fruity, extremely drinkable type of Südsteiermark wine; the variety is characterised primarily by apple-like flavours with a bit of citrus. However, Welschriesling definitely has potential for more: some estates have begun to mature their Welschrieslings in wooden casks and thus to vinify rich wines that exceed the usual expectations. These wines prove that in the Südsteiermark you can also think outside the box and exploit possibilities that are not considered elsewhere.

Fresh, fruity and extremely drinkable: this also applies to Gelber Muskateller. This savoury, highly-scented and aromatic variety is the regional favourite for easy-drinking summer wine. Some time ago, however, winegrowers in the Südsteiermark also discovered the technique of matching the Muskateller to particular soils, which can yield high-grade, cellarworthy single-vineyard bottlings. In addition to the typical and popular Muskateller aromas, one encounters hints of dried fruits and the flavours of mineral salts in the wine. And as easy to drink as the Südsteiermark Muskateller may be, it is every bit as complex and demanding for the winegrower at work in his vineyard.

## THE PINOT FAMILY DEMANDS THE RIGHT SOILS

Interaction with the soil is completely different with the Pinot family varieties, which are very popular in the Steiermark as a complement to the customary palette of vines, and which require high-quality rootstocks. The numerous stretches of limestone-laced vineyards in the region offer optimal conditions for growing Morillon (Chardonnay), Weissburgunder and Grauburgunder; wines from these sites draw a goodly part of their power of persuasion from the soils.

Some grapevines in the Südsteiermark are grown in soils called Opok, which are among the special features of the growing region. These are basically sedimentary materials, predominantly fine-grained, calcareous soils of solidified marl, clay, fossil limestone, silt, sand, gravel and sometimes also chalk & slate. Schist is the basic rock in the area of Kitzreck-Sausal, in the north of the Südsteiermark. Kitzreck-Sausal forms an island of metamorphic solid rock of the ancient Earth, embraced by sediments of the Styrian Basin, all of which were formed, geologically speaking, in relatively recent time. The vines are rooted here on phyllitic clay slates with layers of green schist and quartzite, as well as on sericite and calciphyllite, all belonging to the Eastern Alpine unit of the Alps, which emerges here from the basin. Slate is the optimum soil for growing Rieslings as well, and so it turns out that in Kitzreck-Sausal – an exception for the region – a few hundred Riesling vines are cultivated. Südsteiermark Rieslings from these grapes figure among the most extraordinary, rarest and finest Rieslings in the world.

## HOMELAND OF THE WOODEN CASK, HOME OF THE BUSCHENSCHANK

The Südsteiermark is also a characterised by intensive cellar work utilising wooden casks. Almost all high-quality single vineyard wines from the growing region are being matured in new and used barrique barrels (225 or 300 litres) and now increasingly in larger casks of Burgundian dimensions (500 & 600 L). There are also many massive casks, so-called »Stückfass« barrels (1,200 litres). It is one of the arts of the regional cellar masters, to gauge and then utilise the flavour-forming element of toasting the barrels in such a way that it enriches the



© Manfred Klimek



The reward of work for many winegrowers – can you believe it? A cold beer in the evening.

wines without at the same time diminishing the character of the variety. In the Südsteiermark, this culture of vinification in cask has a history of more than thirty years. The cellar masters can rely on their many years of experience in creating cuvées, blending the wines in the casks.

The Südsteiermark could easily be considered the very prototype of a captivating tourist destination: its combination of a spectacular landscape and a finely articulated network of culinary delights can without any doubt be described as distinctive. Also impressive: the many wine taverns here, in which far more than a hundred winegrowers offer their wonderfully tasty wines to accompany excellently prepared regional specialties – the knack for culinary invention is one significant element of the Südsteiermark's DNA.

The sustainable success of Südsteiermark wines is guaranteed by a winegrowing community that is oenologically open – both technologically active and near to nature – that has gained experience by travelling and during internships served in the international wine world. Along with the high density of winegrowers here, the programme of the viticultural school in Silberberg also fits the coming generation with the best in qualifications.

Nowhere else – and this is no exaggeration – has the wine boom made itself felt as keenly over the past thirty years as in the Südsteiermark. Small winegrowers grew into self-confident, nationally & internationally successful entrepreneurs who were able to realise their individual visions. And their image has changed profoundly – they are now the stars of the scene.

# Vulkanland Steiermark<sup>DAC</sup>

## Rolling hills, Pannonian climate, untouched nature and vines sinking roots into volcanic stone

Vulkanland Steiermark is not a contiguous area in which the vineyards of the various hills and valleys are connected, as is the case in the Südsteiermark; it is rather a region made up of a few small & medium-sized islands. These islands, which are often very different in terms of soil and grape varieties – some of which are many kilometres distant from one another, such as Hartberg and Klöch – embody the diversity of Vulkanland Steiermark, where the vines do not only grow on volcanic soils, as the name of the region might suggest.

### THE LAND OF MANY ISLANDS

A considerable variety of grapevines grows on the 1,524 hectares of Vulkanland Steiermark. Friends of the Traminer find here, next to Südtirol, the second largest area of plantings and old vines as well. And there is another marriage between hillside and variety in the Vulkanland: in Straden and environs, Grauburgunder is cultivated as the primary variety – with sometimes astonishing results for this often misunderstood grape variety. And if Traminer (37 hectares) and Grauburgunder (35 ha) hold pride of place in the neighbourhood, another variety stands at the head of the class in terms of vineyard area: Welschriesling, with 310 hectares (20.3%). This is followed by parcels of Weissburgunder, which grows well in the calcareous soils of the region, with 239 hectares. The white varieties are rounded-out with Sauvignon Blanc (108 ha), Morillon (92 ha), Gelber Muskateller (66 ha), Riesling (23 ha), and the red variety Zweigelt, with about 77 hectares, occupies third place

in terms of area. All of the white varieties just listed are marketed as 'Vulkanland Steiermark', while the reds are sold with the Denomination of Origin 'Steiermark'.

The most important wine villages, islands of cultivation and centres of the local wine industry are Bad Radkersburg, Feldbach, Gleisdorf, Hartberg, Kapfenstein, Klöch, Riegersburg, Sankt Anna, Sankt Peter, Straden, Tieschen & Weiz. In the north of the region, at the summit of the Ringkogel (about 600 m above sea level) near Hartberg, there are vineyards that reach from some 400–520 metres above sea level and thus figure among Austria's highest-elevation vineyards. While many medium-sized and large establishments are to be found in the Südsteiermark, growers in Vulkanland Steiermark often cultivate vines as a sideline and sell their wines in their own taverns. This engenders an agreeable & lively regional wine culture, which primarily benefits the locals themselves. With the exception of a few larger and internationally successful operations, the size of most smallholders' estates runs about one hectare.

Vulkanland Steiermark includes the districts of Hartberg-Fürstenfeld, Südoststeiermark and Weiz, as well as the municipalities on the left bank of the Mur in the political districts of Metropolitan Graz and Leibnitz. The land here, which is contiguous to the winegrowing area of what was formerly Styrian territory and now part of Slovenia, has been hotly contested and embattled as borderland for long periods of time, from the middle ages to the present day. Fortified castles and bastions on towering basalt cliffs attest to this, such as the spectacular

Riegersburg, which is visible from afar in all directions. Kapfenstein Castle – which incidentally also houses an estate that focuses on red wine – and other noble residences that emerged in these troubled times have become the scenes of cultural and often vinous/culinary events after retirement from their previous roles in defence.

## NEW LIFE ON DEAD VOLCANOES

Vulkanland Steiermark owes its name to the geology in the south of the region and its extinct volcanoes – a unique feature among Austria's winegrowing regions. But overall, these volcanic soils make up less than ten per cent of the basis rock in the vineyards of Vulkanland. The majority of the vines grows on varying deposits left by the Paratethys Sea and the long-since dried-up lakes and rivers of the Styrian Basin, as well as upon quaternary terrace gravels, which usually have a top layer of clay.

Volcanic rock occurs in Vulkanland as tuff and basalt. Tuff is a material that was launched explosively out of volcanoes millions of years ago, which then fell to earth as a precipitate of larger and smaller substances called

pyroclasts and as ash rain, which solidified over time to become rock, mostly porous. Basalt, on the other hand, is cooled magma, liquid rock from the interior of the earth, which cooled down after emerging, solidified into a dense and hardened form, forming a new layer of rock and soil.

## GNEISS & SCHIST

In the northern part of the Vulkanland Steiermark, on the south-eastern slope of the so-called »Jogllandes« near Hartberg, vines grow on the crystalline rock of the Eastern Alps, for the most part on gneisses & schist, with less frequent instances of amphibolites and granites. Further towards the southeast the soils are dominated by mostly loose and quite variable sand and gravel from the aforementioned Styrian Basin.

Vulkanland Steiermark is therefore a land of diverse soils. This also applies to volcanic rock itself. For example, a vine growing on tuffs experiences a completely different nutrient uptake than a vine planted in hard basalt, two soils that are found, among Austrian vineyards, only in Vulkanland Steiermark.

## TRAMINER: WITH THE INFLUENCE OF THE PUSZTA

The climate of Vulkanland Steiermark is characterised by the transition from the hot & dry Pannonian climate to the warm & humid, Illyrian Mediterranean climate. The region borders Slovenia in the south and Burgenland to the east. Across this border, hot winds from the Pannonian steppes reach far into the south of Vulkanland Steiermark – thus the region is also the warmest of all Styrian winegrowing real estate.

In the south of the Vulkanland one also finds production of Traminer centred around the village of Klöch. Here it is very warm for most of the year with very little rainfall – ideal for Roter Traminer and Gewürztraminer, whose vines grow at Klöch on nutrient-rich volcanic soil.

Gelber Traminer is peripheral in terms of volume, but figures as a specialty here. Its clusters ripen a few days earlier than those of the notably spicy Gewürztraminer. Thus the wines show a slightly higher alcohol content. Gelber Traminer is appealing for its intense citrus aromas and a somewhat higher degree of acidity, which brings the needed freshness to the wine. All different types of Traminer are cultivated throughout Vulkanland Steiermark, and not only in Klöch.

Basically, the grapes coming from volcanic soils here are always a bit riper because of the omnipresent heat, but even in the Vulkanland, the coolness rising from the surroundings at night provides the desirable freshness in the wines, as is the case throughout the Steiermark.

## POTENTIAL FOR ROBUST RED WINES

The warmer climate in the vicinity was reason enough to cultivate red wines in the region even before the onset of global warming. The terrain around the volcanic cone Konigsberg is especially dominated by red soils with iron oxide. In addition to the Zweigelt, some Sankt Laurent vines – cultivated more extensively in Burgenland – grow here as well.

Vulkanland Steiermark is not only a singular wine region, but also one tourism destination in Austria that has remained in its unspoiled natural state. Four wine trails lead through the romantic hilly landscape, while perfectly-marked hiking paths offer further possibilities for crossing the country and learning about its special features. On these paths, small taverns with welcoming hosts invite the traveller to stop for a short break (or even a long one), where visitors not only enjoy the wine but also encounter the other great culinary delicacy of the region: the distinctive Styrian pumpkin seed oil.



Schloss Kapfenstein – outstanding, not only for its scenic beauty, but also for the quality of the wines.



Straden is not only beautiful, but also a fascinating varietal island in Vulkanland Steiermark, where Grauburgunder yields wines held in high regard the world over.

When Schilcher-lovers see Stainz Castle, they know: they have arrived.



## Schilcher, sparkling wine & beautiful presshouse/cellars: the most important rosé region in Central Europe.

The winegrowing region Weststeiermark is special for two features. With only 546 hectares of cultivated land, it is the smallest winegrowing region in the Steiermark (and thus one of the smallest of all Austria), and it produces a unique and autochthonous wine in the form of Schilcher, cultivated there in the majority of vineyards. Many other winegrowing regions are probably envious of Weststeiermark, for Schilcher can only be vinified here, and here only in this manner.

Weststeiermark is ancient wine country and was, like all the other winegrowing regions of Steiermark, also cultivated by the Romans, as well as the Celts and the Illyrians living there before the Romans came. The vineyards of Weststeiermark extend like a long and narrow band from the foothills of the Koralpe Range and the Reinischkogel southward to the Slovenian border. Some cultivated parcels begin on the slopes at 420 metres above sea level and end atop the hills at an elevation of about 600 metres - among the highest-situated vineyards in the state and in Austria.

### TAKE TIME TO MAKE THE TOUR

On the way from Ligist in the north of the region, via Sankt Stefan ob Stainz to Deutschlandsberg & Eibiswald, steep slopes, with small, picturesque cellarhouses line the curvy roads - the »Kellerstöckel« - as they are called, built into the hillsides - is the regional variant of the cellar house and winery of small winegrowers. Taking a detour to villages such as Greisdorf, Gundersdorf, Wildbach or Wies leaves vivid impressions of the traditional, Styrian foundation upon which viticultural in the region is built. Weststeiermark is a modern winegrowing region with an extremely rustic setting, which - one can say - represents another type of legacy in world viticulture. And because the region has not

(yet) been overrun by the caravans of tourism, one should only mention the beauty and unspoiled nature of Weststeiermark to those who will appreciate it and preserve it.

The colour of Weststeiermark is pink, and most of the wines bottled here are rosé: the aforementioned Schilcher. These Schilcher are obtained exclusively from the variety Blauer Wildbacher, a grape which already carries with it something of an eternal tradition, but which has only been propagated to a greater degree since the mid 1980s. The region's winegrowers realised that it is not the cultivation of international varieties that promotes the development of a region, but that only the cultivation of regional specialties can best express the distinctive nature of the Weststeiermark. The rosé wine boom of the last twenty years certainly contributed to the success of the Schilcher to a certain extent, and the appreciably growing processing of Schilcher-wines to Sekt and other sparkling wines prepared the ground for a considerable export of these wines from this then quite small growing region.

### THE LAND OF THE BLAUER WILDBACHER

And because Schilcher is typical for the region, the Blauer Wildbacher dominates the vineyards of the Weststeiermark today, with approximately 450 of the 546 hectares under vines. Incidentally, the name Blauer Wildbacher is a derivation from »Herrschaft Wildbacher«, the former lords who ruled the land; the name Schilcher derives from the iridescent (in German, »schillernd«) rosé colour of the wine. For decades, Schilcher was merely a rustic, acidulous and fruity country wine, which was all drunk up by the farmers in the region, the other inhabitants and travellers spending the night. After the construction of

the Southern Railway under Emperor Franz Joseph, a few bottles also found their way via Graz to Vienna and from there to Prague, all places where the Schilcher did not earn a good reputation.

Ironically, this classification of Schilcher as a rustic farmer's wine, as an acidic drink of simple virtues, provides an attractive biography for it today, giving it (appropriately) a proletarian history, which is also a history of which the land can be proud.

The Schilcher that are vinified today can only be roughly compared to those of forty or more years ago. This is above all due to the winegrowers of Weststeiermark, who accentuate nuances in the variety Blauer Wildbacher with modern and various viticultural techniques, which half a century ago were either neglected or simply unknown. In addition to the rapidly increasing number of sparkling Schilcher, there is also a bit of outstanding nobly sweet Auslese-level Prädikatwein from Blauer Wildbacher – wines that represent an absolute rarity on the international sweet wine market. And then – this is of course a consequence of global warming – the winegrowers of Weststeiermark produce a few concentrated and robust, fruit-forward, mineral-driven and full-bodied red wines from the otherwise rather lightweight Wildbacher in some vintages. This will probably increase in the next few years in the number of bottles and will provide a novel surprise. But all wines of Weststeiermark remain rarities, thanks to the small acreage under vines.

### SCHILCHER REMAINS A RARITY

The fact that Schilcher was and remains a rarity on the whole is also due to the variety itself, as Blauer Wildbacher demands a lot from growers in the vineyard – and not only because of the steep slopes. The variety is vigorous and needs a lot of foliage canopy management. In addition, it is susceptible to the fungal disease downy mildew (*Peronospora*). It buds very early, and the harvest takes place between mid-September and late October, with most of the work in normal years is done in early October.

The winegrowing region Weststeiermark includes the city of Graz and the districts of Deutschlandsberg and Voitsberg, as well as the municipalities in the suburbs of state capital Graz – with the exception of the communities on the left bank of the River Mur. The vines of Weststeiermark are usually found growing on acidic, crystalline, solid rock of the Eastern Alps, and toward the east on coarse and predominantly loose rock of the Styrian Basin. The so-called Schwanberger Blockschutt with its cubic metre-sized blocks of crystalline stone reaches deeply in

channels into the Koralpe Range and supports the vineyards around Sankt Stefan, Wildbach and Schwanberg. The Paratethys Sea, dried up for millennia, and the rivers leading into the sea made their contributions to the soil of the Weststeiermark; they also deposited greenish sands, which modulate into fine-grained layers of sandy clay. Hard, flat gneiss (so-called plate gneiss) is the defining rock of Weststeiermark. Its coarse weathered debris and rubble passing into the basin, its greenish sands and sandy-clay deposits, as well as the sandy-conglomerate deposits in the south, complete the predominantly limestone-poor lithic suite of Weststeiermark.

The various soils of West Styria and the respective situation in the area itself make themselves noticed in the bouquet, in the aroma and in the flavour of the wines. The range extends from wild strawberries to currants to grapefruit. Especially in the south, the wines are somewhat more opulent. The flavour of the Schilcher is popularly described as 'fruity & lively'.

### HOT SUMMERS, MILD WINTERS

Climatic conditions are also responsible for this typical Schilcher fruitiness. The region is characterised by the so-called Illyrian climate: summers are hot and rainy, the winters mild. Average annual temperatures are between 9–10.5°C, the average annual rainfall between 800 and 1,200 mm per square metre. Protected from the wind by the Koralpe Range, the region profits from robust warming on the slopes during the summer and autumn, which ensures optimal ripening of the clusters. In addition: during the day the air currents are directed uphill, while at night they bring powerful cooling as downdrafts. This climatic feature favours the expression of fresh fruit and lively acidity.

Despite the dominance of the Blue Wildbacher, one should not forget the other varieties that are grown here, such as Weissburgunder or Sauvignon Blanc. These wines are similar in their style to the fresh white wines of Südsteiermark and are as necessary here as they are welcome, rounding out the wines of this already very distinctive winegrowing region Weststeiermark.

# Origin Steiermark



In 2018 the DAC regions of the Steiermark were created, and the first DAC WINES of the STEIERMARK were bottled, available as of 2019.



The Styrian DAC regions are the only winegrowing regions in Austria in which harvesting by hand is mandatory and where Ortswein and Riedenwein stand in the foreground.

## LEITMOTIF: DAC

### Give the wine the security of its origins

Austria's wine industry has not always had only good times... In 1985, when Austria's wine industry plunged into a severe crisis that in many cases threatened its very existence, the Republic of Austria decided to give winegrowers and wine merchants a powerful organisation to literally pull the cart out of the mud. This organisation, called the Austrian Wine Marketing Board (AWMB for short), together with a young generation of winemakers, all of whom knew what great wines could be produced in Austria, managed to save the wine industry.

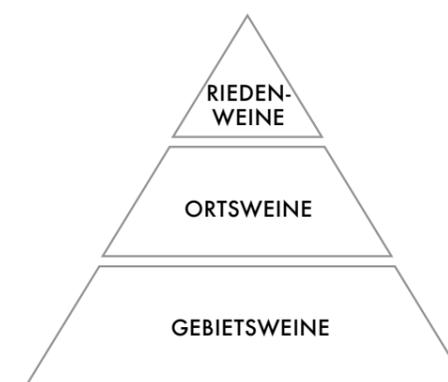
At that time, 'zero hour' 1985, the new Austrian Qualitätswein culture was born, which today celebrates international successes. This story is particularly noteworthy because, for the first time (and so far the only time) in Europe, a group of farmers - the Austrian winegrowers - managed to reinvent themselves, to prepare themselves for new markets, to guarantee their own survival. This has moulded Austrian winemakers into self-assured entrepreneurs who are open to innovation, while uniting tradition and modernity.

#### CONTROLLED AND PROTECTED ORIGIN

One such innovation is the DAC system, founded in 2002. DAC means 'Districtus Austriae Controllatus'; the abbreviation appended to a wine guarantees controlled and protected areas of origin. The DAC system was created to emphasise the origin of the wines more than the respective grape variety, and was created to collect & organise the regionally typical wines of a region under one common brand. The DAC system was also developed to vinify larger volumes of wine exhibiting a recognisable style. The DAC system ensures security and serves the consumers, the trade - and not least the winegrowers themselves, who are finally able to refer to standards substantiating the origins of their wines and the typicity of their region.

The Steiermark has three DAC-regions, each of them unique, which will be described in detail: Südsteiermark<sup>DAC</sup>, Weststeiermark<sup>DAC</sup> & Vulkanland Steiermark<sup>DAC</sup>.

#### THE STYRIAN WINE PYRAMID



In the pyramid shown here, the classification of the wines as well as the special characteristics of their production are listed. The three DAC regions of the Steiermark are, seen both altogether and individually, distinct, of different weight, and characterised by the collectivity of the Qualitätswein expressing the respective terroirs: the handicraft of caring, sustainable and environmentally conscious winegrowers. The Styrian DAC regions are the only DACs in Austria where harvesting by hand is compulsory and in which Ortswein & Riedenwein claim the foreground.

## 'GEBIETSWEIN' (REGIONAL WINE)

### The first, widest and most comprehensive level of the Styrian DAC pyramid: these are the DAC regional wines

The DAC regional wines are the young, fresh & fruit-forward wines from the three DAC regions Südsteiermark<sup>DAC</sup>, Vulkanland Steiermark<sup>DAC</sup> & Weststeiermark<sup>DAC</sup>. They are conceived to give an initial, grounded impression of the general picture (i.e. soils, climate, cellar & craftsmanship) of the respective region and present the respective grape variety (or grape varieties in a cuvée) with the greatest possible clarity in terms of flavour.

Regional wines are the ambassadors of a light & lively pleasure inherent to wine; they must be finished dry, with no more than four grams of residual sugar per litre. All regional wines are only released to the market – after a maturing-period of several weeks in tank and bottle – on the first of March in the year following the harvest. As an exception – because these are wines that offer their particular freshness as an attractive factor – wines vinified from Welschriesling and the West Styrian Schilcher (variety: Blauer Wildbacher) may be, as the winegrower prefers, released to the market immediately upon receipt of the federal control number (from mid December).

#### THE FRESH & FRUIT-FORWARD WINES OF THE STEIERMARK

The popular »Steirischer Junker«, the young wines that are the first harbingers of the new vintage, are not DAC regional wines; they are released and sold as wines without DAC classification.

Although the Styrian DAC regional wines are fresh and fruit-driven in character, and designed to be consumed in the year following the harvest, some examples show a striking capacity for aging. It is therefore quite a pleasurable experiment to keep a few of them in the cellar for a while and observe their development, which typically demonstrates remarkable finesse. In this way, these DAC regional wines also attest to the substance & stability of even young, fresh & fruity Styrian wines.

Approved varieties are: Welschriesling, Weissburgunder, Morillon, Grauburgunder, Riesling, Muskateller, Sauvignon Blanc, Traminer & Schilcher (Blauer Wildbacher, Weststeiermark only), as well as cuvées composed from these varieties.



© Flora P.

## THE ACE: ORTSWEINE

### The second level on the DAC Pyramid, narrower in scope but broadest in appeal, is DAC Ortsweine, the villages wines.

The Steiermark's DAC Ortsweine represent the local & regional flavour of the three wine regions, Südsteiermark, Vulkanland Steiermark & Weststeiermark. The Styrian DAC Ortsweine are also intended to capture the differences between the respective municipalities and areas of production; to illustrate them in wines that speak of the respective soils, the microclimatic conditions and sometimes also of the leading grape varieties in the 'islands'. The Styrian DAC Ortsweine are ambassadors of the often unfamiliar but rich variety of viticulture in this state.

Styrian DAC Ortsweine are dry wines; they may contain a maximum of four grams of residual sugar per litre. Exceptions are (because the residual sugar is an integral part of the character of these wines) Traminer from Klöch – including those finished halbtrocken (halfway dry), or vinified as Prädikatswein (*Auslese*, etc.) – are marketed without any limit to residual sugar as DAC regional wines.

Styrian DAC Ortsweine are only made available for purchase from the first of May in the year following the harvest – after several months of maturation in tank or cask and in bottle. Excluded here – because an earlier release date corresponds to the character of the wine – is Schilcher from the Weststeiermark. It may be sold as DAC regional wine as of February first in the year following the harvest.

The individual municipalities of the DAC Ortsweine are: Südsteiermark<sup>DAC</sup>: Kitzreck-Sausal, Eichberg, Leutschach, Gamlitz & Ehrenhausen.

Vulkanland Steiermark<sup>DAC</sup>: Oststeiermark, Riegersburg, Kapfenstein, Sankt Anna, Tieschen, Klöch, Straden & Sankt Peter.

Weststeiermark<sup>DAC</sup>: Ligist, Stainz, Deutschlandsberg & Eibiswald.



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Permissible grape varieties: Welschriesling, Weissburgunder, Morillon, Grauburgunder, Riesling, Muskateller, Sauvignon Blanc, Traminer & Schilcher (Blauer Wildbacher, Weststeiermark only), as well as cuvées (except Blauer Wildbacher) composed from these varieties.

Primary varieties have been established for Ortsweine; these can be found listed on the following pages.



## Südsteiermark<sup>DAC</sup> has five viticultural districts.

Here they are listed from north to south:

### KITZECK-SAUSAL

#### THE COMMUNES

Kitzeck in Sausal, Lang, Lebring-Sankt Margarethen, Sankt Andrä-Höch, Sankt Nikolai in Sausal and Tillmitsch. From Gleinstätten, the cadastral commune of Sausal near Pistorf. From Heimschuh, the vineyards of the Sulm. From Leibnitz, the cadastral communities Grottenhofen, Kaindorf an der Sulm & Kogelberg.

#### AREA UNDER VINES

419 hectares

#### PRIMARY VARIETIES

Sauvignon Blanc & Riesling

#### SOILS

Predominantly slate (red, blue-black, green & grey), formed from crystalline schistic stone. Occasionally limestone soils (Leithakalk, in the eastern border area [Sankt Nikolai/Sausal]).

#### LANDSCAPE

The Kitzack-Sausal district is the northernmost part of the Südsteiermark and open to the nearby Alps. The Kitzack-Sausal area is made up of much older sorts of rock than those of the surrounding hilly landscape of the basin. They came into existence during ancient geologic time and belong to the Eastern Alpine unit, which here stands out from the basin's alluvial deposits in a threshold area, as one of the easternmost manifestations. The landscape is therefore somewhat rougher here.

Differences in elevation from the highest point of a particular hill to the bottom of the valley are typically more than 200 metres. Most of the vineyards are planted at altitudes of between 380–650 metres, which contributes to good ventilation of the vines and prevents their contact with the morning fogs. The steepest vineyards, with an inclination of more than 70 per cent in Kitzack-Sausal, can almost exclusively be cultivated only by hand.

#### STYLE

The vegetation period in Kitzack-Sausal is longer than in the rest of the Südsteiermark; the harvest takes place on average one to two weeks later. The meagre slate soils give the wines a cool, spicy and firm minerality.

### GAMLITZ

#### THE COMMUNES

Gamlitz, with the exception of the cadastral community Sulz. From Ehrenhausen an der Weinstrasse, the cadastral commune Unterpultitscheni. From Leibnitz & Wagna, the winegrowing areas to the right side of the Sulm.

#### AREA UNDER VINES

693 hectares

#### PRIMARY VARIETIES

Sauvignon Blanc & Muskateller

#### SOILS

Predominantly sandy & gravel soils, originating from sandy and pebbly

source material; limestone/marl soils (eastern area).

#### LANDSCAPE

The winegrowing district Gamlitz features a gently undulating landscape with steep vineyards, orchards and small mixed forests. The vineyards are situated between 320–550 metres above sea level; orientation ranges from east to south to west. Vineyards are partly warm and wind-protected kettle-shaped sites, while some exposed steep hills (so-called »Kogel«) rise above other parts of the landscape. There are two streams in rift valleys (Steinbachgraben & Kranachgraben) that influence the microclimate and widen the difference between daytime and nighttime temperatures; a circumstance that leads to increased expression of fruit in the grapes.

#### STYLE

The rich and ripe fruit aroma (yellow & red fruits) is produced in the warm and kettle-shaped vineyards, which – especially in Sauvignon Blanc – yield very expressive wines. Delicately vegetable aromas develop here in the cooler vineyards above 400 metres elevation. The Gelber Muskateller are sculpted by the warm, porous sand and gravel soils, showing marked elements of herbal spice (meadow herbs). The wines show great finesse on the palate and are richly detailed in flavour.

## EICHBERG

### THE COMMUNES

Arnfels, with the cadastral communities Arnfels & Maltschach. Leutschach an der Weinstrasse with the cadastral districts of Eichberg-Trautenburg & Kranach. From Sankt Johann/Saggautal, the cadastral communities Eichberg-Arnfels & Sankt Johann/Saggautal. From Grossklein, the cadastral communities Oberfahrenbach, Nestelberg, Nestelberg bei Grossklein & Matelsberg. From Heimschuh, cadastral communities Nestelberg bei Heimschuh & Unterfahrenbach.

### AREA UNDER VINES

355 hectares

### PRIMARY VARIETIES

Sauvignon Blanc & Muskateller

### SOILS

Light gravel & sandy soils from alluvial deposits, or sandstone.

### LANDSCAPE

The hill-chain of Eichberg lies between Gamlitz & Leutschach at 450–600 metres above sea level and is characterised by steep, exposed locations with high crests. The vineyard areas are often surrounded by cooling forests, and the proximity to the Koralpe Range contributes to the cool microclimates here.

### STYLE

The grapes ripen very late because of the elevation and the coolness of the climate; the wines feature herbal/spicy notes in the aromatics arc, show appreciable finesse and are characterised by moderate alcohol content.

## EHRENHAUSEN

### THE COMMUNES

Ehrenhausen an der Weinstrasse, with the exception of the cadastral community Unterlupitscheni. From Gamlitz, the cadastral community Sulz. From the village of Strass, the vineyards on the right side of the Mur.

### AREA UNDER VINE

426 hectares

### PRIMARY VARIETIES

Sauvignon Blanc & Morillon

### SOILS

Predominantly medium-heavy to heavy limestone soils (Leithakalk, also known as coral limestone); source material Leitha-limestone. Some Opok (calcareous marl) in the southwestern portion.

### LANDSCAPE

Ehrenhausen is the southeastern-most municipality in the Südsteiermark. Adjacent to the Pannonian plains and the River Mur, there are massive vineyards of coral limestone and calcareous marl. The south-facing, steep vineyards open wide in each direction and lie at about 300–530 metres above sea level.

### STYLE

The deeply-rooted vines grow under rather barren conditions and allow the grapes to ripen slowly and harmoniously. The wines are brilliant for their delicate citrus notes, with structural length on the palate as well as ripe acidity and a salty, spicy finish.

## LEUTSCHACH

### THE COMMUNES

Leutschach an der Weinstrasse, with the exception of the cadastral communities Kranach and Eichberg-Trautenburg.

### AREA UNDER VINES

631 hectares

### PRIMARY VARIETIES

Sauvignon Blanc & Muskateller

### SOILS

Predominantly heavy beds of calcareous marl (Opok), partly traversed by gravel banks

### LANDSCAPE

The Leutschach vineyards are among the most southerly vineyards in the Steiermark and are seated between 380–570 metres elevation on the hillsides. In Leutschach, south-facing kettle-shaped sites with eastern & western foothills and slopes of up to 75% predominate. The growing region is characterised by warm updrafts, which meet cool air currents coming from the western Koralpe Range. This climatic situation results in substantial temperature differences between day and night and an almost complete absence of any fog.

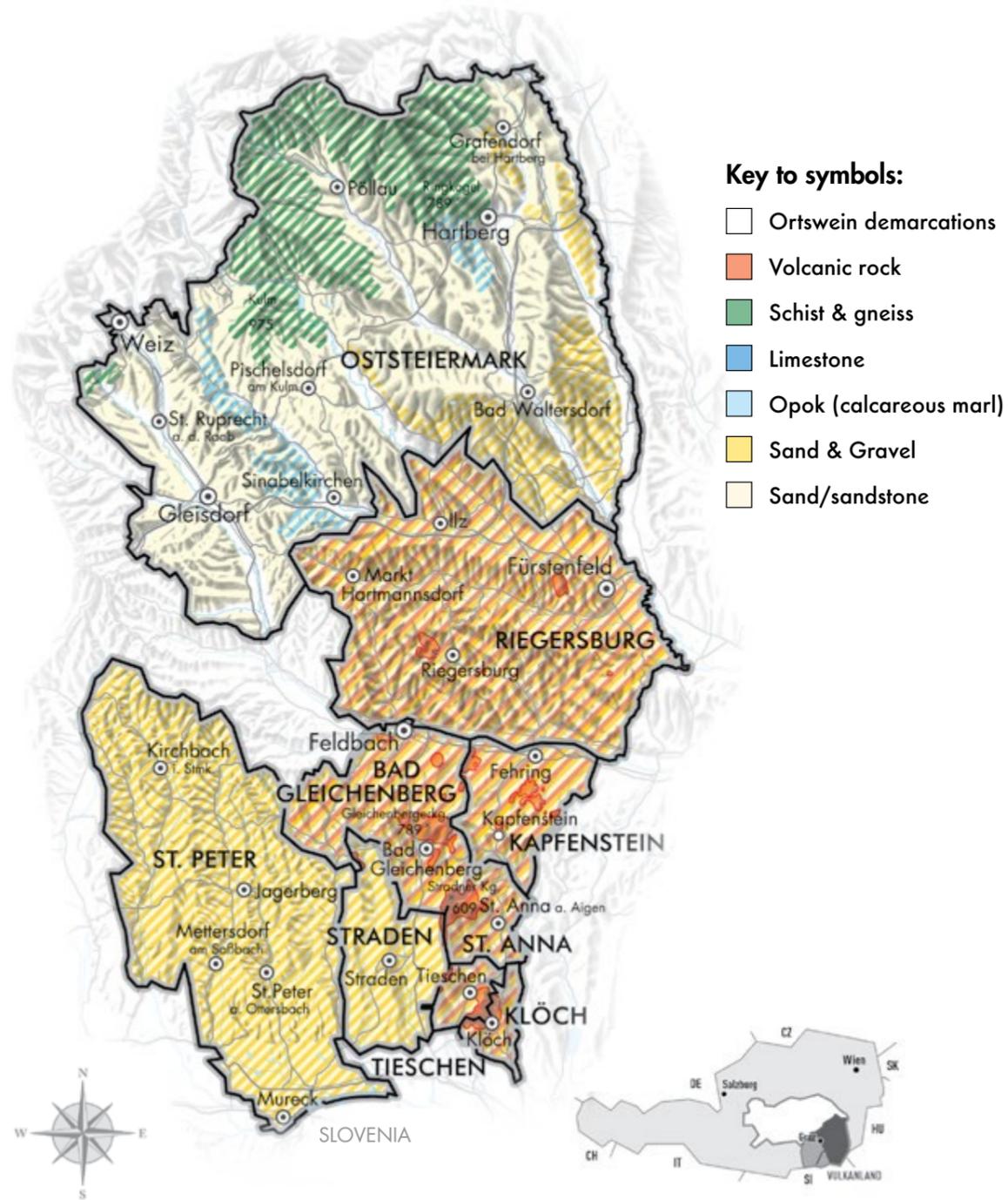
### STYLES

The calcareous marl soils and the great temperature differences between day and night are responsible for spicy and varied – occasionally even dark – aromas. The wines are robust, juicy and well-structured.



Behind every other hill there's a Buschenschank. Life is good in the Steiermark.

# Vulkanland Steiermark<sup>DAC</sup>



## Vulkanland Steiermark<sup>DAC</sup> has nine viticultural districts.

Here, they are listed from north to south:

### OSTSTEIERMARK

#### THE COMMUNES

The districts Hartberg-Fürstenfeld & Weiz north of the Ilzbach – without the municipalities Loipersdorf, Fürstenfeld, Söchau, Grosswilfersdorf, Ilz, Ottendorf a. d. Rittschein & the town of Hartmannsdorf.

#### AREA UNDER VINES

325 hectares

#### PRIMARY VARIETIES

Sauvignon Blanc & Weissburgunder

#### SOILS

Predominantly weathered volcanic rock (basalt and tuff); sedimentary soils (gravel [alluvial deposits] sand & silty clay (marine sediments); schist (northern area).

#### LANDSCAPE

Embedded in a wide variety of orchardlands, winegrowing here is scattered among many small and often picturesque sites. The lovely and heterogeneous landscape forms the northern part of the Vulkanland and embraces the winegrowing area on the slopes of the subalpine Ringkogel, where the vines are planted at highly exposed altitudes up to 570 metres.

### RIEGERSBURG

#### THE COMMUNES

Loipersdorf, Fürstenfeld, Söchau, Grosswilfersdorf, Ilz, Ottendorf

a. d. Rittschein, Markt Hartmannsdorf, Riegersburg, Unterlamm & Fehring with the cadastral communities north of the Raab: Tiefenbach, Oedgraben, Stang, Habegg, Hatzendorf, Hohenbrugg, Weinberg, Johnsdorf.

#### AREA UNDER VINES

298 hectares

#### PRIMARY VARIETIES

Sauvignon Blanc & Weissburgunder

#### SOILS

Predominantly soils on sedimentary stone (sandy gravel [alluvial deposits], silt & clay [marine sediments]); weathered volcanic rock (primarily tuff).

#### LANDSCAPE

The Riegersburg, an 11<sup>th</sup>-century fortification that has been built & rebuilt over the centuries, dominates the region that reaches out above it in an imposing manner. The Ortswein district surrounding the castle is located in the middle of the Vulkanland and is bordered on the south by the Raab Valley and to the north by the Feistritz Valley. Due to the steeply sloping hillsides traversed by streams and rivers, numerous vineyards favoured with unique microclimates are found here.

### GLEICHENBERG

#### THE COMMUNES

Bad Gleichenberg; Feldbach with the cadastral communities Feldbach

Gossendorf, Leitersdorf, Mühlendorf, Oedt & Weissenbach; Gnas, with the cadastral communities of Fischa, Gnas, Hirsdorf, Kohlberg II, Maierdorf and Obergnas; Paldau, with the cadastral community Perlsdorf.

#### AREA UNDER VINES

90 hectares

#### PRIMARY VARIETIES

Sauvignon Blanc & Morillon

#### SOILS

Limestone-free, weathered volcanic rock (basalt, tuff), calcareous & limestone-free sedimentary soils (gravel [alluvial deposits], sand & loam [marine sediments])

#### LANDSCAPE

The almost 600-metre-high Gleichenberger Kogel (volcanic cones several million years old) are distinctive for the region and hence provide it with its name, located in the centre of the Ortswein district. In the north, the Ortswein district extends into the Raab valley (the River Raab forms a natural border to the local wine area Riegersburg), in the southeast to the Stradner Kogel. In the south & west, Gleichenberg borders the two Ortswein districts Straden and Sankt Peter. The vineyards lie like islands between meadows, fields and forests, scattered over gentle hills, which are crisscrossed here and there by streams. The numerous, small vineyards favoured with distinctive microclimates are situated between 300 and 400 metres in elevation.

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## KAPFENSTEIN

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### THE COMMUNES

Kapfenstein & Fehring with the cadastral communities south of the Raab: Pertlstein, Höflach, Fehring, Schiefer, Petersdorf I, Petzelsdorf & Burgfeld .

### AREA UNDER VINES

73 hectares

### PRIMARY VARIETIES

Sauvignon Blanc & Weissburgunder

### SOILS

Primarily weathered volcanic rock (basalt/tuff) laced with olivines (source, plutonic rock, originating from magma); sedimentary soils (gravel [alluvial deposits], sand, silt & clay [marine sediments])

### LANDSCAPE

The town of Kapfenstein lies between Bad Gleichenberg and Fehring and is geologically & scenically dominated by the high plateau of the extinct Kapfenstein volcano with its distinctive 11<sup>th</sup> century castle. Between Kapfenstein Castle & Fehring one encounters the steeply rising Kuruzzenkogel, the second volcanic cone in the small region. In the northwest around Schloss Bertholdstein, the terrain rises again before descending to the bottom of the Raab Valley, which determines the northern boundary of the commune.

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## SANKT ANNA

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### THE COMMUNE

Sankt Anna / Aigen

### AREA UNDER VINES

140 hectares

### PRIMARY VARIETIES

Sauvignon Blanc & Morillon

### SOILS

Sedimentary, partly calcareous (sandy gravel [alluvial deposits], sand & clay [marine sediments]); weathered volcanic rock (basalt and tuff, mainly to the west).

### LANDSCAPE

The village of Sankt Anna is perched at 403 metres above sea level upon a ridge of argillaceous marl, sand and gravel, from which one can see most of the vineyards on the slopes. This striking hillside, the Stradener Kogel, is one of the largest extinct volcanoes in the region. It functions as a climatic divide and protects the vineyards from the cooling weather conditions of the mid-Alpine, Styrian north. Most of the vineyards are between 300–390 metres above sea level, though in Frutten-Giesselsdorfberg as high as 460 metres. The area borders on Südburgenland in the east, to the southeast on Slovenia.

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## STRADEN

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### THE COMMUNES

The district Straden includes the villages reaching to the Gnasbach in the west and the northern parts of the municipality Deutsch Goritz, in addition come Krobathen, Unterspitz, Oberspitz, Haselbach, Poppendorf, Ebersdorf, Grabersdorf & Trössing east of the Gnasbach.

### AREA UNDER VINES

166 hectares

### PRIMARY VARIETIES

Sauvignon Blanc & Grauburgunder

### SOILS

Predominantly deep sedimentary soils, partly calcareous (sandy gravel [river sediments], sand, silt & clay [marine deposits]); weathered volcanic rock (basalt & tuff).

### LANDSCAPE

The community of Straden lies in the southern half of the winegrowing region Vulkanland on by the gentle hills of an ancient gravel plateau as well as the foothills of a former volcano on the Stradener Kogel. The vineyards are scattered like islands between 280–440 metres of elevation on steep slopes and high plateaus around the historic market town of Straden. Exposure of the grapevines ranges from east to south to west.

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## SANKT PETER

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### THE COMMUNES

Sankt Peter am Ottersbach, Mureck, Mettersdorf, Schwarzaual, Jagerberg, Sankt Stefan im Rosental, Kirchbach-Zerlach, Pirching am Traubenberg, and additionally the cadastral communities Baumgarten, Unterauersbach, Raning, Aug-Rädisch & Trössing west of the Gnasbach, Hofstätten, Schrötten (municipality of Deutsch Goritz), Weinburg, Siebing, Sankt Nikolai ob Drassling (municipality of Sankt Veit in the Südsteiermark).

### AREA UNDER VINES

125 hectares

### PRIMARY VARIETIES

Sauvignon Blanc & Weissburgunder

### SOILS

Predominantly sedimentary soils, partly calcareous (sandy gravel [alluvial deposits], sand, silt & clay [marine sedimentation]).

### LANDSCAPE

The municipality of Sankt Peter lies in the southwest of the winegrowing region Vulkanland and is characterised by rolling hills and valleys with hilly to steep vineyards, orchards, forests & fields – an expansive, picturebook land of traditional, mixed agriculture.

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## TIESCHEN

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### THE COMMUNE

Tieschen

### AREA UNDER VINES

97 hectares

### PRIMARY VARIETIES

Sauvignon Blanc & the Pinot family

### SOILS

Predominantly weathered volcanic rock (basalt and tuff); sedimentary soils (gravel [alluvial deposits], sand & clay [marine sediments]).

### LANDSCAPE

The vineyards are located around the Steintal on slopes that are spurs of extinct volcanoes and face the

village of Tieschen. The Ortswein district is characterised by a diverse, hilly agricultural landscape with a variety of soil types.

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## KLÖCH

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### THE COMMUNE

Klöch

### AREA UNDER VINES

179 hectares

### PRIMARY VARIETIES

Sauvignon Blanc & Traminer

### SOILS

Predominantly weathered volcanic rock (basalt in particular, but also tuff with inclusions of various sizes), quite ferrous in places.

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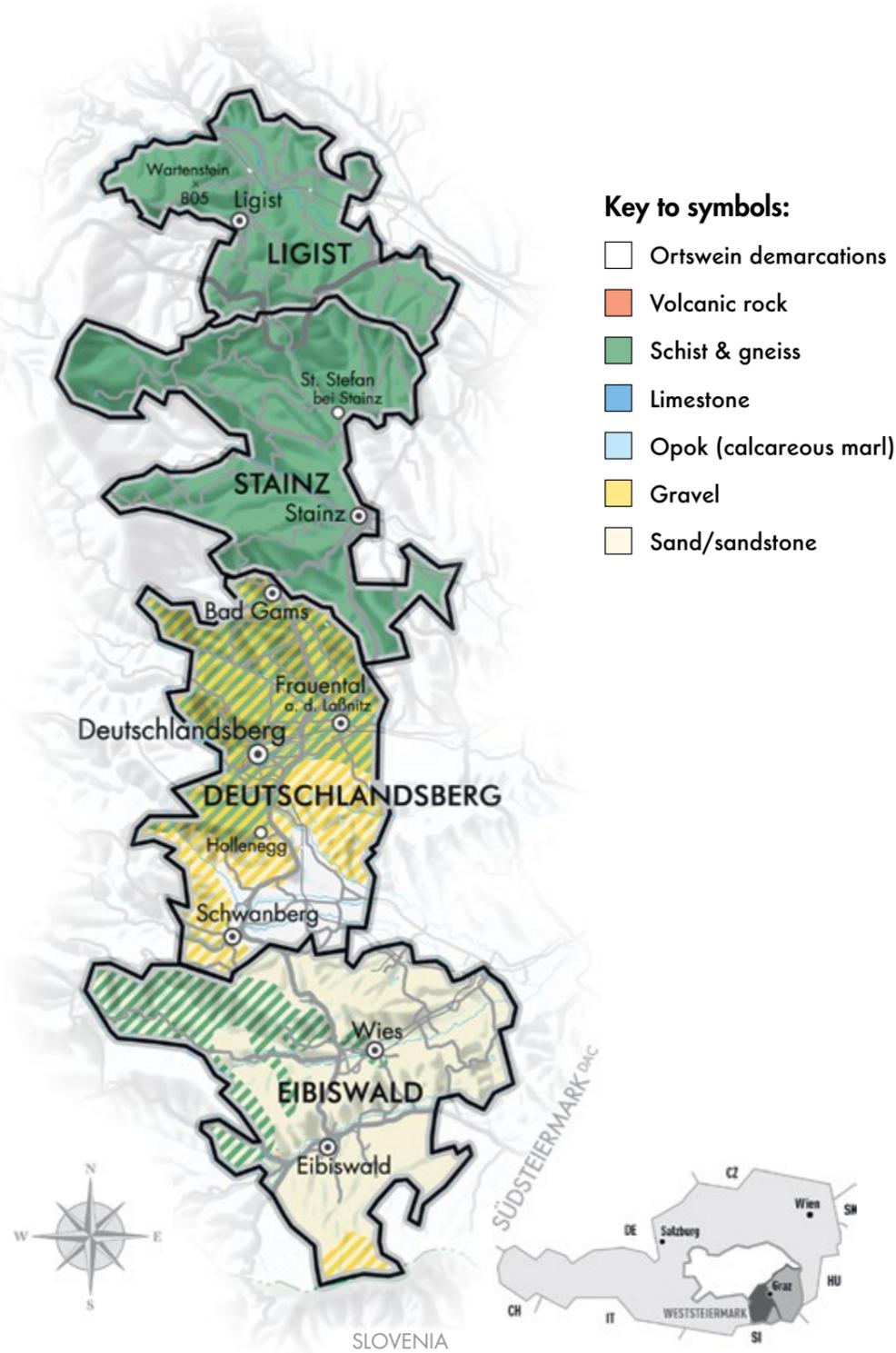
## SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE VULKANLAND

The greatest variety of soil types can be found in the winegrowing regions south of Kapfenstein, although the climatic conditions remain rather consistent. The Illyrian climate here is clearly marked by Pannonian influences, which means that one finds here the driest and hottest vineyards in the Steiermark. The soil types, however, vary greatly from calcareous to almost limestone-free. They are characterised here and there by sandy material, then clay again, as well as by gravels and volcanic deposits. The soil formations run like a marbling through the vineyard landscapes. Every vineyard is different, every wine is unique & distinctive.

Ultimately the climate also plays an essential role in the style of the wine. The district of Oststeiermark in particular is relatively different in climatic terms from the southern part of the Vulkanland. It is close to the mountains on the Styrian border, which allows thunderstorms to plague the vineyards more often, but also provides moderate temperatures.



# West Steiermark<sup>DAC</sup>



## Weststeiermark<sup>DAC</sup> has four viticultural districts.

Here, they are listed from north to south:

### LIGIST

#### COMMUNES

In Ligist, the cadastral communities Ligist, Grabenwarth & Steinberg. From Krottendorf-Gaisfeld, the cadastral communities Krottendorf, Gaisfeld and Gasselberg. From Söding-Sankt Johann, the cadastral districts Hausdorf, Köppling, Pichling bei Mooskirchen & Moosing. From Mooskirchen, the cadastral communities Stögersdorf, Fluttendorf, Neudorf bei Mooskirchen & Giessenberg

#### AREA UNDER VINES

50 hectares

#### PRIMARY VARIETIES

Sauvignon Blanc & Blauer Wildbacher (vinified as Schilcher)

#### SOILS

Predominantly limestone-poor stony brown earth, originating from crystalline [plate gneiss & schists.

#### LANDSCAPE

The Ortswein commune Ligist is located in the northern part of the winegrowing region Weststeiermark, about 25 kilometres south of Graz. The landscape embraces winegrowing on gentle hills as well as on extremely steep slopes. The vineyards are situated on the foothills of the Reinischkogel, some vines even at 650 metres above sea level. The ruins of the old fortress Burg Ligist provide the principal tourist attraction in the region.

#### STYLE

Wines with complex fruit and a vibrant minerality are produced on the sparse gneiss and slate soils and under the influence of the cold falling winds of the Koralpe Range.

### STAINZ

#### THE COMMUNES

From Sankt Stefan ob Stainz, the cadastral districts Greisdorf, Gundersdorf, Grubberg, Steinreib, Lemsitz, SanktStefan, Zirknitz & Pirkhof. From Stainz the cadastral Sierling, Teufenbach, Gamsgebirg, Kothvogel, Stainz, Rassach & Herbersdorf. From Deutschlandsberg, the cadastral communities Vochera am Weinberg, Mitteregg & Hohenfeld

#### AREA UNDER VINES

196 hectares

#### PRIMARY VARIETIES

Sauvignon Blanc & Blauer Wildbacher (vinified as Schilcher)

#### SOILS

Sandy & limestone-poor soils, formed on crystalline schists & gneisses.

#### LANDSCAPE

The Ortswein district of Stainz is the centre of the winegrowing region Weststeiermark. The well-known Stainz Castle is situated on the southern foothills of the Rosenkogel and Reinischkogel. Here the vines grow on steep slopes at up to 600 metres above sea level.

#### STYLE

Wines with complex fruit and a vibrant minerality are produced on the sparse gneiss and slate soils, under the influence of the cold downdrafts of the Koralpe Range.

### DEUTSCHLANDSBERG

#### THE COMMUNES

The cadastral communities of Gersdorf, Feldbaum, Müllegg, Sulz, Bösenbach, Unterlaufenegg, Gams, Bergegg, Wildbachdorf, Wildbach, Hinterleiten, Oberlaufenegg, Burgegg & Warnblick are located within the municipality of Deutschlandsberg. From Frauental, the cadastral districts Schamberg, Zeierling & Gleinz. The cadastral districts Hohlbach, Hollenegg, Trag, Aichegg, Neuberg, Mainsdorf and Schwanberg are located in Schwanberg. From Sankt Peter im Sulmtal, the cadastral districts Moos, & Sankt Peter im Sulmtal

#### AREA UNDER VINES

124 hectares

#### PRIMARY VARIETIES

Sauvignon Blanc & Blauer Wildbacher (vinified as Schilcher)

#### SOILS

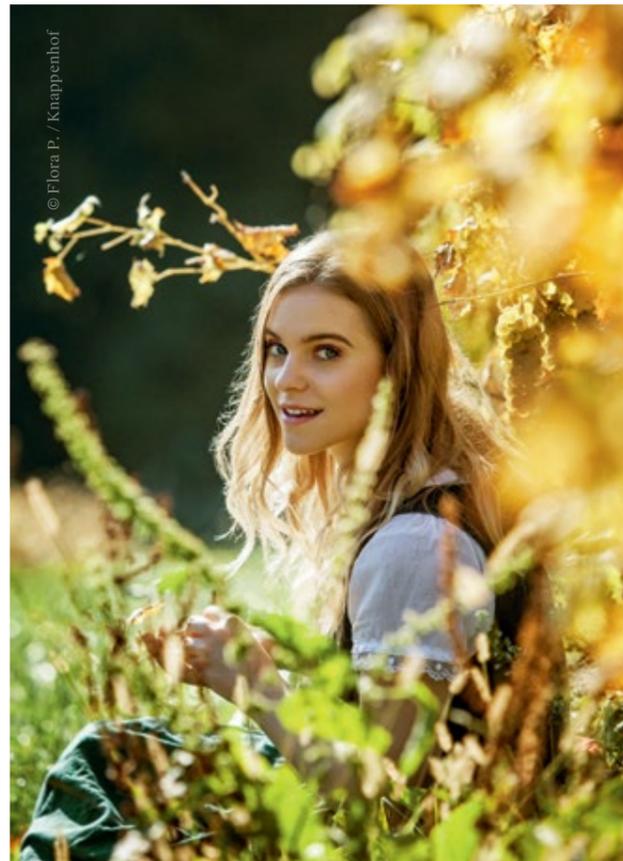
Predominantly gneiss, formed from crystalline slate gneiss (northern area); loamy, sandy & gravel soils (southern area).

## LANDSCAPE

The Ortswein commune Deutschlandsberg is located in the middle of the growing region Weststeiermark. The vineyards are situated on foothills of the Koralpe Range. In Deutschlandsberg, the vines are also growing in the region's highest-lying vineyards (380–600 metres above sea level). The mighty, medieval – and in the early modern era structurally-expanded – Deutschlandsberg Castle sits amidst the vineyards, and the nearby forest offers a wild & romantic destination for excursions.

## STYLE

The gneiss soils in the northern area bring forth wines with a pronounced primary aromatic arc. The Schilcher tend to be lighter here. On the other hand the sandy & gravelly soils in the southern part of Deutschlandsberg inspire the secondary aromas in the wines to unfold more perceptibly: riper to spicier styles of wine with enhanced notes of juicy strawberries and wild strawberries. The acidity is usually not so racy as it can be in wines from crystalline soils. The wines are usually deeper in colour, fuller in body and evince more pronounced tannins.



Fashionable growers, lovely wines

## EIBISWALD

### THE COMMUNES

The municipalities of Wies including Limberg, Mitterlimberg, Buchegg, Gaisseregg, Wies, Pörbach, Aug, Altenmarkt, Etzendorf, Vordersdorf, Kogl, Wernersdorf & Unterfresen. From Eibiswald, the cadastral communities Wuggitz, Pitschgau, Haselbach, Oberlatein, Kornriegl, Feisternitz, Hörmsdorf, Sterglegg, Aichberg, Aibl & Stammeregg. From Sankt Martin im Sulmtal, the cadastral districts of Pitschgauegg, Tombach, Kopeinigg, Gasseldorf, Oberhart & Bergla. From Pöfing-Brunn, the cadastral communities Jagerigg & Brunn.

### AREA UNDER VINES

155 hectares

### PRIMARY VARIETIES

Sauvignon Blanc & Blauer Wildbacher (vinified as Schilcher)

### SOILS

Predominantly loamy soils on sand & gravel, as well as limestone-free soils of crystalline schists & gneisses.

### LANDSCAPE

The Ortswein district Eibiswald is located in the southernmost part of the winegrowing region Weststeiermark. Close to the Slovenian border, its topography is hilly to mountainous. The vineyards grow on the

slopes of the foothills of the eastern Alpine Koralpe Rang. Coming from Graz, the well-known Schilcher Wine Trail and viticulture itself find their geologic/climatic terminus here.

### STYLE

These predominantly sandy soils usually produce riper, spicier wines with prominent notes of strawberries & wild strawberries. The acidity is usually not so perceptibly racy as it can be in wines from crystalline soils. The wines are usually deeper in colour, fuller in the body and have more tannins. The gneiss soils to the northwest are more likely to produce wines with pronounced primary aromas and brighter colour.

## RIEDENWEIN: A PERSPECTIVE

The third, narrowest and qualitatively most important level of the Styrian DAC pyramid: these are the DAC Riedenweine, single-vineyard wines.



Working on the steep slopes of the Styrian Sausal takes time and energy. Nevertheless, the winegrowers in Kitzreck are privileged: they work in one of the most beautiful wine regions in the world.

## The state of things? In any case, quite unique!

No question, great wines are produced in the Steiermark. But to claim that the winegrowers all pulled to turn the big wheel would be exaggerated. Rather, they work – each for themselves – in a microcosm. The microcosm is called »Ried« and these parcels are often very small, but also truly distinctive and thus figure among the very finest vineyards in the world.

As a rule, a winegrower will own parcels in one or even several vineyards. Sometimes a number of growers own vines in one of these sites. And as different their approach in the vineyard can be, that is how different their wines will taste. One does not get too far trying to work

with machines in the nearly impassable and often quite mountainous area with gradients up to over 80%. So winegrowers have to work their way through the vines with many detailed, often laborious procedures and many kilometres of footsteps each day.

And it is unlikely that one grower can go to school on the activities of the others, because there are no two vineyards that are identical in their conditions and their climate. So every winegrower must determine what makes his vineyard so special, so unique, and then decide how to get the most out of it.



Small grape: big flavour. A true Styrian!



# The taste of



# the Steiermark

Styrian wines are known for their **FRAGRANCE** and their **JUICINESS**, for their **SPICES** and **MINERALITY**, for their **LIGHTNESS** and their **SUBSTANCE**. And Styrian wines are shaped by their origins to an extreme degree: from the typical Styrian climate, from the different growers' hands, but also through their soils, which are the common denominator.

The Styrian marquee player Sauvignon Blanc shows how differently and dramatically the individual soils can affect the style of the wines.

by Gerhard Retter, sommelier with Styrian blood

## SLATE, SCHIST, & GNEISS

Wines harvested from vines that grow on weathered soils such as slate or gneiss usually produce lithe yet extremely expressive wines with abundant mineral salts and intense, varietal aromas.

## VOLCANIC STONE

As the name would indicate, volcanic soils are indeed found in Vulkanland Steiermark, where a rather warmer climate prevails. The wines therefore assume a full-bodied form as well as an expressive aromatic and mineral character.

## LIMESTONE

Limestone soils encourage a varietally typical aroma in the wines, as well as a firm, almost linear acidic structure with soft chalky textures. Wines grown in calcareous soils tend to be extremely cellarworthy.

## OPOK

Wines vinified from grapes whose vines grow on Opok soils are mostly full-bodied, soft and creamy in the mouth and impart a sense of welcoming warmth. In addition, the limestone content of many Opok soils brings with it a perceptible salty minerality. The limestone also enhances finesse and a delicate fruit aroma in the wine.

## SAND & GRAVEL

The wines of gravel soils usually have a clear and distinctly assertive varietal typicity. Citrus fruit and floral notes often prevail. The wines tend to show expressive, elegant body with a distinctive acidity.

## SAND/SANDSTONE

Grapes grown on sand or sandstone, usually produce elegant but expressive wines with distinctive structural acidity. The fruit aromas are usually rich and rather ripe, coupled with great finesse.

## THE STEIERMARK PRÄDIKAT

# FROM THE HILLS, WITH HAND & HEART

Many wines of the Steiermark are mountain wines – »Bergwein«. Now, some readers will surely ask if there are vines growing on the steep crests of the Alps. Because there are indeed such towering peaks reaching into the sky quite nearby. But the term »Berg« applies – in agriculture & viticulture – to hills as well. And surely, when the vineyards have a slope of more than 26%, the farmer, in this case the winegrower, is obliged to be a bit of a mountaineer.

Viticulture on steeply sloped sites means that almost all work is performed by hand. Pruning the vines in winter. Planting the vines in springtime. The binding of the vines to the trellises, also in the spring. Mowing the lanes between the rows and then around the vines from late spring to late summer. The foliage canopy work on the vines in summer and autumn. Add to that the many passes among the vines during the harvest in autumn, which not infrequently takes place under time constraint. And that is not everything.

Steep slopes are worth a river of gold. The sun shines much more evenly on the vines and the clusters receive greater radiance – more kilojoules, as the scientific term goes. In addition, the soils heat up more and stay warm longer when the night falls. When the cool nocturnal downwinds on the hillsides provide for significant temperature swings, this brings more finesse and delicacy into the wine. Steep slopes are therefore not to be cultivated for any romantic notion, but rather because the landscape is simply the best for growing grapes, and one must submit to the landscape.

Working on the steep slopes involves no modest financial outlay. Machines are impossible, workers are an absolute requirement. Steep-slope viticulture is an individualistic, artisanal, traditional sort of grape-growing. And even in the Steiermark, apart from the new,



squeaky-clean steel tools (shears, etc.), it does not differ appreciably from the viticulture that was practised one or two hundred years ago on a steep slope. May the fully automatic, satellite-controlled harvesters do their work in the fields; on the steep Styrian slopes, human beings must do it. This work, this extra effort, of course, is reflected in the operational costs. And is reflected by the winegrowers as little as possible in the bottle prices. The question for the reasons behind this are answered here.

The hillside vineyards permit nothing other than 100% manual labour.



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## FACTS & FIGURES

### MAKING WINE SINCE

800 BCE (Celts). Development of viticulture by the Romans (about 100 BCE to 300 AD)

### AREA UNDER VINES

4,633 hectares in the southern, south-western, southeastern and also the north-eastern parts of the Steiermark. The federal state has about ten per cent of the total vineyard area in Austria and about seven per cent of the Austrian wine market. Over half of the vineyard area is mountain viticulture.

### DAC REGIONS WITH THEIR ORTSWEIN DISTRICTS

<b>SÜDSTEIERMARK<sup>DAC</sup></b>	<b>2,563 ha</b>
Gamlitz	693 ha
Leutschach	631 ha
Ehrenhausen	426 ha
Kitzeck-Sausal	419 ha
Eichberg	355 ha

<b>VULKANLAND STEIERMARK<sup>DAC</sup></b>	<b>1,524 ha</b>
Oststeiermark	325 ha
Riegersburg	298 ha
Klöch	179 ha
Straden	166 ha
Sankt Anna	140 ha
Sankt Peter	125 ha
Tieschen	97 ha
Gleichenberg	90 ha
Kapfenstein	73 ha

<b>WESTSTEIERMARK<sup>DAC</sup></b>	<b>546 ha</b>
Stainz	196 ha
Eibiswald	155 ha
Deutschlandsberg	124 ha
Ligist	50 ha

### GEOLOGY

Various loose or solid rock foundations from the Eastern Alps and the Styrian Basin. In addition, extinct volcanoes. The winegrowing areas of the Steiermark are located in the east and south of the state, where the Central Eastern Alps descend towards the Styrian Basin and dive underneath it. The Styrian Basin then moves to the east and southeast, towards Hungary, in turn back into the great Pannonian Basin.

### SOIL STRUCTURES

Essentially, there are six types of soil, also occurring in various hybrid forms.

**SLATE, SCHIST & GNEISS**  
Weathered solid rock

**VOLCANIC STONE (TUFF, BASALT)**  
Weathered solid rock

**LIMESTONE**  
Fossil-rich marine deposits and reef limestones (Leithakalk & Korallenkalk)

**OPOK**  
Limestone marl (Styrian Schlier): hardened, formerly muddy, mostly calcareous marine and lake deposits

**GRAVEL & SAND**  
Coarse grained, partly loose, partly solidified river deposits

**SAND/SANDSTONE**  
Loose sand or solidified as sandstone, often containing quartz

### GRAPE VARIETIES

The most important grape varieties by region:

**SÜDSTEIERMARK<sup>DAC</sup>**  
Sauvignon Blanc, Welschriesling, Weissburgunder, Muskateller, Morillon; Kitzeck-Sausal: Riesling

**VULKANLAND STEIERMARK<sup>DAC</sup>**  
Welschriesling, Weissburgunder, Sauvignon Blanc, Zweigelt, Traminer

**WESTSTEIERMARK<sup>DAC</sup>**  
Blauer Wildbacher, Weissburgunder, Sauvignon Blanc, Welschriesling

### MOST IMPORTANT WINEPRODUCING COMMUNES

**SÜDSTEIERMARK<sup>DAC</sup>**  
Gamlitz, Ratsch, Berghausen, Spielfeld, Leutschach, Sausal: Kitzeck, Sankt Nikolai

**VULKANLAND STEIERMARK<sup>DAC</sup>**  
Hartberg, Fürstenfeld, Kapfenstein, Sankt Anna am Aigen, Klöch, Straden, Bad Gleichenberg

**WESTSTEIERMARK<sup>DAC</sup>**  
Stainz, Sankt Stefan ob Stainz, Deutschlandsberg

### PARTICULAR CHARACTERISTICS

The winegrowing regions of the Steiermark are known for:  
Very low crop yields compared to other regions (around 4,650 litres/hectare). Slopes with occasionally extreme inclines and demanding conditions for cultivation. Protection of varieties and their typicity for almost 200 years. A few of the best Sauvignon Blancs in the world. Chardonnay is called Morillon here. The only rosé wine region in Central Europe (Schilcherland). Harvesting by hand is mandatory in the DAC regions. Known for young, fresh, fruity and sensuous regional wines, for Ortswein with impressive terroir and for single vineyard wines (Ried- enwein) with power, structure & unmistakable distinctiveness. Self-confident winegrowers who bring together experimentation & tradition and make it into a living modern culture. A state in which some of the best *vins naturels* in the world are produced. Impressive agricultural landscape. One of the most beautiful wine regions in the world. Culinary standards among the world's finest.

### SIZE OF THE PRODUCERS

**SÜDSTEIERMARK<sup>DAC</sup>**  
623 estates that cultivate  
2,563 hectares; 4.11 ha/estate

**VULKANLAND STEIERMARK<sup>DAC</sup>**  
1,199 estates that cultivate  
1.524 hectares; 1.27 ha/estate

**WESTSTEIERMARK<sup>DAC</sup>**  
261 estates that cultivate  
546 hectares 2.09 ha/estate

## WINE ESTATES & TRADITIONAL TAVERNS

More about Styrian winegrowers, wine estates, taverns & wine bars along with info about overnight accommodations can be found at [www.steiermark.wine](http://www.steiermark.wine)



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## VOICES OF THE PRESS

'The Steiermark is a small but very fashionable winegrowing region in the far southeast of Austria and has achieved considerable fame with its aromatic, lively, dry white wines'.

Jancis Robinson MW, wine journalist, Financial Times & The Oxford Companion to Wine

'Viticulturally, the Styrian landscape is a reincarnation of Greater Steiermark's powerful 19<sup>th</sup> century persona: an engine of innovation and a cradle of vinous diversity'.

David Schildknecht, Wine & Spirits, The World of Fine Wine

'The DAC regulation of the Steiermark is the most comprehensive in all of Austria. DAC is not only understood as a label here, but is a clear designation of origin'.

Stephan Reinhardt, The Wine Advocate

'The Steiermark is replete with expressive examples of distinct differences between wines that differ significantly only in site, many of which may depend on the consistency and rock or clay content of their soils'.

David Schildknecht, Wine & Spirits, The World of Fine Wine

'Some of the world's best Sauvignon Blancs are produced in the Südsteiermark (...)while the Weissburgunder, Chardonnay (Morillon) and even Riesling (from the slate soils of the Kitzeck-Sausal district) still do not have the reputation they deserve'.

Stephan Reinhardt, The Wine Advocate

'Anyone who has ever drunk Styrian wine will never give it up again'.

Alexander Rabl, freelance author on the topics of restaurants, food and wine

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Many thanks to geologist Dr Maria Heinrich, the soil specialist Dr Alois Bernhart, the Steiermark's state director of viticulture Werner Luttenberger, the Steiermark Chamber of Agriculture, Gerhard Retter and the innumerable Styrian winegrowers for their numerous interesting stories about the region and its terroir.

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For the resident alpacas at the Knappenhof, the grass between the vines tastes better than the grapes. And they probably won't have an opportunity to taste the wines ...

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