

The 2017 Vintage in Alto Adige Typical Varietals, Wines that are Elegant, Fresh, and Fruity

The capricious weather in 2017, above all else the frost and hail, left its mark in Alto Adige's vineyards, especially in terms of quantity. All in all, though, 2017 presents itself as a good vintage with convincing levels of quality and with quaffable, inviting wines that are typical for Alto Adige.

A Vintage with Challenges

After a very dry, cold winter, it was already extraordinarily warm by the end of March. That led to a very early start to vegetation and a quick sprouting of the grapes. The sudden cold spell during the nights around April 20 with a late hard frost in some areas had a considerable detrimental effect upon some vineyard areas throughout the entire province.

There was, however, one small consolation for the winegrowers: in 2017, there were hardly any problems with diseases such as Peronospora or mildew or with the dreaded spotted wing drosophila. Hailstorms greatly affected primarily communities in the Bassa Atesina and Isarco Valley. Winegrowers had to do laborious work in the vineyards to select and remove the damaged grapes. But the intensive labors ultimately contributed to it being possible to pick grapes of good quality without exception.

The grape harvest in Alto Adige's vineyards began approximately ten to fourteen days earlier than in a normal year, already around August 20. After several days of rain at the beginning of the harvest, the autumn weather, with temperatures during the day of up to 30° C. (86° F.) and at night below 20° C. (68° F.) had a positive effect. All across the board, Alto Adige's winegrowers and winemakers were very satisfied with the quality of the grapes that were harvested.

Surprisingly Good Qualities

After the very good 2016 vintage, with its juicy, lively, and multilayered white wines and the promising, structured red wines, Alto Adige's wine industry is also more than satisfied with the 2017 vintage. The losses in terms of quantity of up to 20 percent and more may have left a bad taste in some mouths, but the quality of the wines is consistently good to very good.

With the white wines, the vintage presents itself with somewhat leaner but very elegant, fresh and fruity, juicy wines with aromas that are typical to their varieties. Those that particularly stand out are the Pinot Blanc, as well as the Pinot Grigio, Sauvignon Blanc, Müller Thurgau, and Sylvaner. The Schiava (Vernatsch), along with the Santa Maddalena and Lake Caldaro made from it, showed itself with somewhat lighter hues and fruity and fresh qualiteis, and although it may be somewhat leaner, the drinking enjoyment is all the more inviting. And presenting themselves as elegant, with a great deal of finesse and elegant tannins, are not only the Lagrein, but also the Pinot Noir, Merlot, and Cabernet.

Comments from the Individual Winegrowing Zones

Bassa Atesina – Hannes Pfitscher, Weingut Pfitscher Typical Varietals with Fresh, Fruity Wines

In the vineyards of the Bassa Atesina, winter frost and a late heat wave caused some problems in certain areas. The heavy hailstorms in early August had a detrimental effect

between Magré and Montagna. For these reasons, the harvest quantities in the Bassa Atesina declined by ten to twenty percent. "But the qualities turned out to be far better than had been feared," says Hannes Pfitscher in retrospect. Those who diligently cleared things out at the harvest came out with very good qualities. While that meant a lot more work, it definitely paid off. The 2017 white wines, above all else the Pinot Blanc and Sauvignon Blanc, show themselves to be very elegant, fresh and fruity, and typical of the varieties, while the red wines have lovely complexity and are elegant and inviting. Pfitscher adds, "In the Bassa Atesina, 2017 will certainly not go down as a vintage of the century, but a good to very good one."

Oltradige – Andrea Moser, Cantina Kaltern Special White Wines and Typical Lago di Caldaro

Certain individual areas in Oltradige also were not spared from winter frosts and then late frosts as well as hail. Above all else at the lower elevations as well as in areas subjected to weather patterns involving orographic lifts and adiabatic cooling, there were some problems with dryness and cold. The vines did in fact suffer quite a bit from stress due to frost, drought, and hail. The result was harvest amounts around 20 percent lower. Andrea Moser is very satisfied with the 2017 white wines. In particular, the Pinot Blanc and Sauvignon Blanc scored well with fresh, aromatic structure and lovely acidities, as did the Pinot Grigio with its good quality. The greatest reductions in the harvest were recorded with Gewürztraminer and Yellow Muscat. The Lago di Caldaro and Schiava (Vernatsch) of this vintage present themselves with very typical style: with a somewhat lighter color, very fruity, and fresh. The 2017 Pinot Noir shows itself with an emphasis on fruit, as well as a freshness with an elegant structure. With the Cabernet and the Sauvignon Blanc, Moser will still have to wait and see. But he is convinced of one thing: with the selections, there will definitely be a good many surprises.

Bolzano – Hannes Rottensteiner, Wine-growing Estate Hans Rottensteiner Not an Extraordinary Vintage, but a Good One

Winter frosts only in higher locations, late frosts without great effects, and hailstorms that only mildly affected the entire area – for Hannes Rottensteiner, Bolzano "came out well with the 2017 vintage and was lucky." The harvest began in late August, and thus around a week early than is normally the case. The harvest quantities may have been 15 to 20 percent lower in the greater Bolzano area, but the grape quality was very good. "The sugar levels were astonishingly high," Rottensteiner reports. "After the good 2016 vintage, the wines are on the whole somewhat leaner, but very fruity, elegant, and mineral-rich, with an inviting quaffable quality." With the white wines, what stands out for Rottensteiner above all are the Pinot Blanc and Müller Thurgau. The 2017 Santa Maddalena is somewhat lighter in color, but very juicy, fruity, and fresh. The young Lagrein presents itself with soft tannins and elegant structure.

Meran and Adige Valley – Stefan Kapfinger, Winery Meran Better than Expected and Very Typical to the Variety

The grape harvest began earlier than ever before in the Burgraviate – as early as August 21 – with one big drop of bitterness: the harvest quantities were around 20 percent lower across the board than those of the previous year. Above all in the lower elevation locations, winter frosts and late frosts caused substantial damage. In return, though, the quality of the harvested grapes was much better than expected. The 2017 white wines, especially those from higher elevations, are very typical to the variety and were quite successful: above all the Pinot Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, and Müller Thurgau stand out with lovely structure. The Schiava wines are somewhat leaner than those of 2016, but in return they are very juicy with prominent fruit aromas. With the 2017 red wines, Stefan Kapfinger particularly likes the Pinot Noir with stable color and great character in keeping with the variety. He evaluates the vintage as a whole "taking into consideration the low quantity, as not extraordinary, but good to very good."

**Val Venosta – Markus Fliri, Himmelreichhof
Fresh Wines with an Alpine Character**

The winter frost brought along with it the death of some vines in exposed locations, but it did not cause any major damage. The late frost in the spring only led to some problems in the Lower Val Venosta. And the valley was spared from larger hailstorms. The 2017 grape harvest began nearly two weeks earlier than in a normal year – with quantities that were only slightly reduced. And in return, the quality made up for it. The grapes were very healthy without exception and had good values in the winery. The 2017 Val Venosta Riesling and Pinot Blanc present themselves very well, with great fruit and fresh acidity. The red wines, especially the Pinot Noir and Zweigelt, are already convincing in their youth with a strong color, lots of fruit, and the typical characteristics of their varieties. “We can be very satisfied with the vintage”, Markus Fliri is pleased to report.

**Isarco – Peter Pliger, Kuenhof
Elegant and Invitingly Drinkable Isarco Valley Wines**

Peter Pliger of the Kuenhof in Bressanone speaks of a somewhat “bewitched year”. In the Bressanone area, the late frosts caused extreme damage. The hailstorms spread through the entire valley to an extent that is unusual for the Isarco Valley. For that reason, with some operations, especially in the northern part of the valley, the harvest quantities were reduced by up to half. In spite of everything, though, the qualities of the grapes were astonishingly good. Above all else the principal varieties of Sylvaner and Veltliner withstood the year well and with their great acidity, freshness and fruit, they present themselves as inviting and typical to their varieties. “In the Isarco Valley, we can't speak of 2017 as a really great vintage,” Pilger is convinced. “But in spite of everything, it ended up well, and we can be more than satisfied with the qualities of the 2017 wines.”

Herbert Taschler – 02/2018