

## GOING FOR BAROQUE **MÜLLER-CATOIR 2010**



**A**t a time when minimal intervention and the concept of terroir was still alien to the German wine lands, Hans-Günther Schwarz knew the score: you have to have an innate understanding of soil and site before you can make great wine. His legacy of low intervention viticulture and winemaking has gone on to inspire and educate a whole generation of young German wine-makers, in the now-accepted theory that great wine is made in the vineyard not the cellar. That may sound hackneyed to today's well-versed wine lover, however it was not that long ago that the Pfalz region was awash with lifeless vineyards producing masses of overcropped dull fruit. During these dark decades, Günther Schwarz maintained standards at Müller-Catoir that were almost unique across Germany, let alone the Pfalz. Today, these same high standards are maintained under Philipp David Catoir and talented young cellar master Martin Franzen. The wine growing has remained much the same as has the winemaking, although things continue to evolve, as with any great Estate. Today Müller-Catoir continues to make wines that inspire a kind of zealous devotion amongst Riesling lovers across the globe. **BIBENDUM WINE Co.**

The 20 ha Müller-Catoir Estate is in and around the village of Haardt at the southern end of the Mittelhaardt, in the hills outside of Neustadt. Here, in the foothills of the Haart Mountains, there are a myriad of soil types, clay intermixed with limestone, sandstones, flint and basalt. These are some of the warmest and driest vineyards in Germany, kindly sheltered by the Haardt mountain range (in fact the continuation of the Vosges mountains that define Alsace to the south).

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ness and purity of fruit. 2010 can be considered amongst these great years, producing another brilliant collection of vibrant, resolute and sophisticated wines. Franzen told us that 2010 was a once in a lifetime vintage in terms of its tiny yields. Tiny berries and tiny bunches of the kind that has not been witnessed on the state for 50 years. The wines are accordingly very textural, full bodied, ravishing and edgy and with an intense backbone of acidity; a feature of 2010 across Germany. These wines blend the power and opulence you

**Stuart Piggott, Wine Atlas of Germany**

What has made these wines comparable to the very best Rieslings in the world? Firstly, the Estate has maintained the legacy of Günther Schwarz. He was a purist, a stickler for organics, very low yields and minimal interventionism before these things became popular. Each harvest is limited through restrictive vine pruning in the winter, supplemented by cluster thinning in the summer. Soil is given meticulous care (mostly permanent green cover) and there is selective hand-picking of very small grape quantities by hand. Since grapes are always harvested extremely late on this Estate, the musts are cold when they arrive in the cellar and so ferments commence slowly without any yeast inoculation. After racking, the wines are not touched again, save for a smidgeon of SO<sub>2</sub>, until they are bottled. The use of only perfect and perfectly ripe fruit and the non intervention in the cellar results in wines of high extract figures, ripe acidity and powerful vineyard character.

In spite of his retirement, Schwarz’ vision remains undiluted and recent vintages of Müller-Catoir are equally renowned for their scintillating fresh-

associate with the greatest Alsatian wines with classic Germanic precision and steeliness. To say that these wines are must-tries for any Riesling lover would be a gross understatement.

Many people claim to find the German wine classifications impenetrable when in fact the great VDP Estates have never had simpler labelling. Regarding the wine below, all are dry Rieslings. Let’s use France, and in particular, Burgundy, as our model to compare the various levels of quality. The Gutswein is the equivalent of the most basic regional wines (vin de pays) or perhaps a white version of a Passe-tout-grains. The standard Riesling (9313) is the equivalent of generic Bourgogne (although just try to find a white Bourgogne at this quality level!) The Haardter Riesling (from vineyards in the Haardt area) is a village wine, while the single vineyard, classified whites come only from the finest sites. These can be considered 1er cru wines. Finally, there is the Grosses Gewachs (which translates literally to grand cru, or great growth). So, no more complicated than white Burgundy, but definitely less expensive!



9313 2010 Müller Catoir **Riesling** Dry

Remarkable for an “entry level” wine; if this was any other producer’s best wine, you’d be stoked! Cropped at an incredibly low 35hl/ha it’s bright and almost impossibly pure. This is a lush and juicy Riesling packed with crushed-apple and yellow fruits, which zip across the palate, flowing to a dry and minerally finish. Demonstrating an intensity that you seldom find at this level, yet free of excess weight, this is a delicious and highly satisfying, bone dry Riesling. An immensely gratifying wine that will continue to develop for 5-10 years.

9314 2010 Müller Catoir **Haardter Riesling** Dry

At this stage the Haardt village wine is firmer and more coiled than the bottling above. It tastes incisive, ethereal, tangy, a ‘Cor, Blimey’ kind of Riesling with oodles of preserved lemon, juicy yellow fruits, liquorice root and talc aromas and flavours. Somehow it’s also ultra delicate in the mouth – it just floats over the tongue - yet is also textural and demanding of food. With its springy, exotically flavoured palate and long, textural finish, this is the business.

9315 2010 Müller Catoir **Haardter Bürgergarten Riesling** Dry

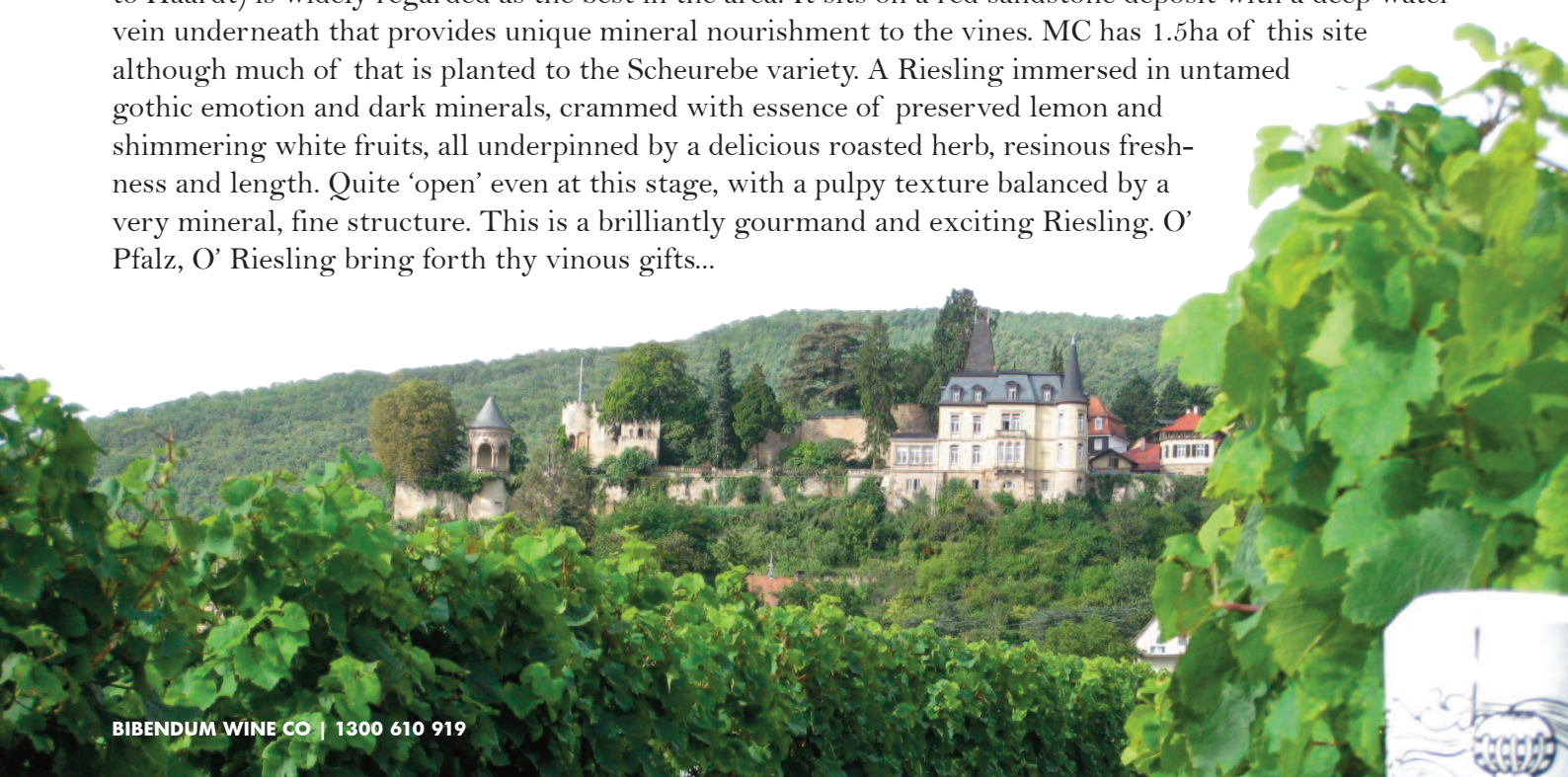
Welcome to the Müller Catoir big league. This is from the renowned Bürgergarten vineyard in the foothills of the Haardt Mountains. The soil here is mineral, sandy and deep and the roots can plough their way towards the osmotic rewards of the bedrock below. Cropped at 40hl/ha it is wildly perfumed with lots of dried fruit, quince, peach slices and woodsmoke. The complex palate is pure and long and fine yet with a palpable sense of power and depth culminating in a long, salty mineral finish. This is stunning stuff. Very intense with textural matter balanced by bright, crunchy freshness.

9316 2010 Müller Catoir **Haardter Herrenletten Riesling** Dry

From the loam over limestone soils of the Herrenletten, Franzen has delivered one hell of an enigmatic Riesling in 2010. Its dichotomy of opulence and nerve will either lead the drinker to a zen-like trance or a state of utter confusion. Most likely the former. In other words, we’ve got a live one here; a Riesling in a state of perpetual motion that one minute offers up aromas of spicy lemon pith and dried apricot, nut and smoke the next. One second it’s lithe and fruity the next it’s taut and mineral. Whichever way you cut it this is the MC with most substance and also the most in reserve. The finish is epic and characterised by stone and iodine notes.

9317 2010 Müller Catoir **Gimmeldinger Mandelgarten Riesling** Dry

Mandelgarten, a tear-shaped site on the northern border of the tiny Gimmeldingen village, (next-door to Haardt) is widely regarded as the best in the area. It sits on a red sandstone deposit with a deep water vein underneath that provides unique mineral nourishment to the vines. MC has 1.5ha of this site although much of that is planted to the Scheurebe variety. A Riesling immersed in untamed gothic emotion and dark minerals, crammed with essence of preserved lemon and shimmering white fruits, all underpinned by a delicious roasted herb, resinous freshness and length. Quite ‘open’ even at this stage, with a pulpy texture balanced by a very mineral, fine structure. This is a brilliantly gourmand and exciting Riesling. O’ Pfalz, O’ Riesling bring forth thy vinous gifts...



9318 2010 Müller Catoir **Breumel In De Mauern**  
Riesling **Grosses Gewächs** Dry Riesling

Uber-Riesling! 'Breumel' is the 'Clos' (wall enclosed vineyard) within the Haardter Bürgergarten that Günther Schwarz always insisted was the greatest vineyard of the Mittelhaardt (the central Pfalz). The fruit here has been cropped at a very low 28-30hl/ha. Some 30% was fermented and matured in large 1,000lt oak vessels. When we tasted it in Germany, it was like tasting the essence of the Mittelhaardt with an endless procession of aromas and flavours; yellow plum, white peach, earth, mint, jasmine, ginger, pear skin etc, all balanced by sandstone like minerality. There's a hint of something exotic but the wine remains bone dry with oodles of extract. A massively deep, textured and layered Riesling yet with pungent minerality and tangy, candied lemon rind freshness and length. It is has closed down since shipping but will be something special in a few months. It's pushing \$70 LUC which may sound a lot for a Riesling, though in comparison to its closest rival this blows just about all white Burgundy (at this price level) out of the water in terms of complexity, sheer deliciousness, thrilling excitement and value. Incredible Pfalz, incredible Riesling, incredible wine.



*Note: We shipped 12 Jeroboams (3000ml) of Breumel In De Mauern 2010. If we hadn't prohibited Bibendum staff from buying these, they would have been snapped up already!*

The Grosses Gewächs ("first growth") is reserved for the finest dry wine from a classified vineyard. Rigorous quality standards apply, and each candidate has to be tested and approved by each region's governing wine board before it can be released. The criteria are as follows:

- 🍷 *Vineyard site must be classified as Erste Lage (Grand Cru)*
- 🍷 *Grape Varieties must be traditional for the region*
- 🍷 *Yields must be restricted to 50hl/ha*
- 🍷 *Manual Harvest & only traditional production techniques*
- 🍷 *Style must be dry (less than 9g/l RS)*
- 🍷 *The label/bottle must carry the Erste Lage logo*
- 🍷 *White wine are only released on September 1st after previous harvest*

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## Grosses Gewächs & Gutswein

9319 2010 Müller Catoir **Gutswein QBA**  
Troocken (1000ml)

*A litre of Müller-Catoir mineral juice anyone?* This is the first Gutswein we have imported and the inevitable play on words is still doing the rounds in the Bibendum office. New to Gutswein? Basically this is a relatively new classification (yes, another one!) for 'house wines' that are simply labelled with a proprietary name and/or a broad appellation of origin, such as the name of a village or region. The Estate's name is the harbinger of the wine's quality and it needn't have a vintage designation. Muller do not typically export this wine and sell it only to local restaurants. We only got to taste it when we spied some bottles in the winery and demanded to taste it. After three years of trying, we have finally been given a small parcel of this juicy offering. A blend of Riesling, Rieslaner, Scheurebe and Weisburgunder (Pinot Blanc) from 2010, it's fruity and each sip is like taking a whistle-bright mineral shot flecked with lime and lemon with plenty of juicy acidity to balance. Grab a case to keep behind the bar in case of any mineral deficient emergencies.

