

Burgenland's controlled appellations

In Austria everyone is talking about DAC, but what does DAC actually mean and why are wines categorised in this way? Internationally, there are clear distinctions made between the Germanic and Romanic wine systems. While varietal specification is more common in the Germanic system (e.g. in Austria, Germany), the Romanic wine system (Italy, France) will distinguish a wine according to its regional typicality and origin. In the Romanic system, wines are defined according to their origin and this origin simultaneously serves as a wine description, whereas under Germanic wine law wines are not defined by their origin. If somebody said for example ““I drank a wine from the Thermenregion”, very few details (such as whether it was white, red or sweet) are provided for this wine. However, if they answered “I drank a Rioja or an Eisenberg” then the opposite is true. (This statement is loaded with information about grape variety and style.)

Due to changes in wine law, Austria's individual wine growing areas were given the opportunity to get together and define what constitutes a regional-typical wine. Only these regional-typical wines may legally include the name of that region on the label. In order to show consumers that the wine is a regional-typical wine, the label will clearly state “DAC“ meaning “Districtus Austriae Controllatus.“ However, this acronym is not the most important piece of information on the bottle. This can be found in the geographical location before the acronym. A DAC wine is therefore not a new wine. It is a quality wine which is unmistakably typical for a local wine growing area. In Burgenland there are currently four DAC appellations:

Neusiedlersee DAC – here the focus is on Zweigelt. Burgenland's largest wine growing area boasts 1,812 hectares of Zweigelt, making it the most important grape variety. Zweigelt vines characterise the landscape in this area. The Neusiedlersee DAC appellation stands for a fruity, harmonious Zweigelt with soft tannins. Neusiedlersee DAC may also be marketed with the additional word “Reserve“. Such wines can be 100% Zweigelt or they can be a blend dominated by Zweigelt. In this case the Zweigelt has to make up at least 60% of the wine and the blending partners have to be indigenous grape varieties.

Leithaberg DAC wines are characterised by the local climate and the limestone and slate soil. Leithaberg is the first area to offer both white and red wines as DAC wines. Leithaberg DAC white may only be produced from the grape varieties Grüner Veltliner, Pinot Blanc,

Chardonnay and/or Neuburger. This means that Leithaberg DAC white can be a single variety white wine made from one of the listed grape varieties or a blend of two or more from the list. Leithaberg DAC red has to be Blaufränkisch. Both styles should be dry and characterised by the minerality typical for the area.

Mittelburgenland DAC stands for traditional and region-typical Blaufränkisch offering a complex bouquet with aromas of blackberry, dark cherry and blueberry combined with spicy notes of herbs and mint. The pronounced fruit is rounded off by the balanced acidity on the palate. Blaufränkisch wines have a distinctive tannin structure, a great mouth feel and a structured edgy finish. These wines also have considerable ageing potential. The classic and single vineyard wines are best drunk within five years. The Reserve wines impress with aromas of smoky oak and fully ripe fruit. The ageing potential of the Reserve wines lies between seven and fifteen years.

Eisenberg DAC stands for the fruity yet mineral, earthy Blaufränkisch which gets its taste from the loamy, mineral-rich soils characteristic of southern Burgenland. The wines can be matured in steel tanks or in wooden casks, but should demonstrate little or no use of oak. Eisenberg DAC wines are also available with the additional designation of “Reserve“. These wines are particularly complex with excellent ageing potential.

For further information:

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