



Written by
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Ingrid Groiss Grüner Veltliner 2014 Weinviertel



From €7.90, \$17.99, 2,354 yen

Find this wine (with apologies to readers in the UK - this wine is not yet available here but, fingers crossed, it may be coming soon; update 11 Nov: Mark Savage of Savage Selection tells me he will be importing Ingrid Groiss's 2015s early next year)

Ingrid Groiss tried to escape the vineyards and small-village life of Breitenwaida in the Weinviertel north west of Vienna but the call of the vines proved irresistible.

Her parents and grandmother owned vineyards and made wine for their own *Heuriger* (a country wine tavern selling young wine on tap) and for private clients and at the age of 15 she

wanted to leave home to study at the Klosterneuburg winemaking school. There was one insurmountable problem: there was no dormitory for girls and her parents felt, not surprisingly, that she was too young to live on her own in or near Vienna. So she studied tourism at a nearby college.

Having completed her studies, she started working with her parents and 'felt like life had already ended ... together with my parents in this really, really tiny village surrounded by nothing – here the chicken and foxes say good night to each other – ideally marrying my neighbour who is also a farmer (as an old saying goes: loves goes away, hectares stay) so I had to leave and explore the world.'

After a happy and prosperous few years working in marketing for Coca Cola and Anheuser Busch in the German cities of Bremen and Berlin, she still felt something was missing – 'a great life, good payment, a company flat and company car ... so what would you expect more from life?' The inescapable conclusion: 'What I really desire to do and what my heart beats for: making wine!'

Fortuitously and, from Ingrid's point of view, 'as a sign of destiny', at this time the University of Vienna started a new natural sciences course in *Weinbau, Önologie und Weinwirtschaft* (viticulture, oenology and wine marketing). Alongside her studies she gained practical experience working with producers such as Domäne Wachau, Birgit Braunstein and Birgit Eichinger. She had started making wine at home but then began the generation game.

As she explains, 'I had already started making wine at home but with my father, and it was always big discussions and fights because he had his own philosophy and I wanted to improve many things. It didn't work and so I asked my granny to give me her Schablau vineyard to work and make wine out of it (this was my first own vintage 2010). I had a deal with my father. I said I would work this vineyard in my own philosophy and make the wine in my style and he is not allowed to discuss it. Then we taste all wines together blind and if my wine wins I run the vineyards and make the wines on my own with my philosophy in the next year. My wine won. Now he is happy that he is not responsible for the vineyards and the cellar any more and I'm happy as well (but of course both my mum and my father support me a lot and I'm thankful for this!). Also the philosophy of my parents changed – now we already work the first vineyards organically and my father is proud of this way!'

Groiss is particularly grateful for the 'gorgeous' vineyards planted by her granny. 'Most of them are 50 years and older and in these times people put much more focus on which varieties fit on which appellations and on which soil. I'm also proud that I still have many old autochthonous varieties in my *gemischter Satz* vineyards like Hietl Rote, Silberweisse, Weisse Vöslauer and Graue Vöslauer (varieties that were planted everywhere in Weinviertel but now nobody knows them any more). And of course I learnt a lot from my granny (there are sooo many things you cannot learn from a book - it's things you learn from a real long life and lot of experience). She couldn't sit at home – she always wanted to go in the vineyards with me.'

I first tasted the results of the returned prodigal daughter in London at the 2012 and 2013 annual Austrian tastings. They were initially pushed in my direction by her partner, who happens to be Franz-Josef Gansberger from Weingut Stadt Krems/Stift Göttweig because she was a little too shy herself. When I met her in Krems earlier this year, she asked me if she could send me samples from the 2014 vintage.

There's a definite step up in quality in all her wines, including the **Groiss Grüner Veltliner**

2014 Weinviertel, my wine of the week today. I scored it 16.5 out of 20 and thought it would drink well for at least a couple of years, although it is currently showing its lively aromatic fruit to the full. The alcohol is just 12.5% and here is my description of the wine:

'Deeply aromatic with an array of fruit aromas but mostly pear and peach; the lees ageing has given it a definite creamy quality too. Peppery and crisp on the palate, plenty of bright citrus freshness. Full flavoured and tangy on the finish, the freshness cutting to a mouth-watering finish. It has the riper fruit that often comes from the Weinviertel but also a stony, grainy texture that lifts it beyond fruity.'

Groiss's vineyards are in three different areas: those on her father's side are mainly on loess soil (well suited to Grüner Veltliner) in Haugsdorf, close to the border with the Czech Republic. This is where she sources the fruit for today's wine of the week. Vineyards on her mother's side, those planted by her granny, are in Fahndorf, closer to Breitenwaida. And then she has vineyards such as Sauberg right by her front door. She recently bought a small vineyard (planted in 1955) from her nonagenarian neighbour Herr Bernhardt because he could not bear to see the vines ripped out, and from this she makes the impressive **Bernhardt Gemischter Satz** (current vintage 2013), which is powerfully complex yet beautifully fresh, fermented on the skins in 500-litre casks. (Gemischter Satz literally means 'mixed sowing' and the vineyard and the wine include many different varieties such as those mentioned above.)

She produces four different **Grüner Veltliner**: my wine of the week, **Dorflagen** from two different vineyards, the single-vineyard **In der Schablau** and **Tradition**, this last fermented in oak casks. In addition, there are two **Gemischter Satz** wines: **Dorflagen** and **Bernhardt**. I wholeheartedly recommend all of them for their quality and value for money (and to make her granny even more proud). She picks by hand in several passes through the vineyards, ferments the juice using mainly ambient yeast and occasionally a neutral commercial strain, and her philosophy is based on love for these family vineyards that drew her back home. She uses very little oak but makes the most of the fermentation lees to give texture and depth to her wines. You can find my reviews of these other wines in our Germany and Austria compilation, to be published on Tuesday.

Groiss currently exports her wines to the US (Washington and Oregon, according to wine-searcher, but also in Chicago via Candid Wines), Japan, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, the Czech Republic and Ireland and of course they are widely available in Austria. **Update 11 Nov 2015**: Savage Selections will start to import Groiss's wines to the UK from early 2016.

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