



In Issues 122 and 124 of *The Fine Wine Review*, Claude Kolm rates the 2007 vintage in Germany, including visits at Busch and Lauer.

WEINGUT CLEMENS BUSCH

2007 Kabinett trocken	91(+)/B+
2007 Kabinett "N" trocken	92A/-
2007 Spätlese trocken **	93A
2007 Marienberg Rothenpfad GG	94(+)/A
2007 Marienberg	94+/A
2007 vom Roten Schiefer	94/A
2007 Rothenpfad	94/A
2007 Fahrlay	94+/A
2007 Falkenlay	94+/A
2007 Fahrlay Terrassen	94+/A
2007 Felsterrasse	93(+)/A
2007 Raffes	94+
2007 Kabinett Frucht süß	91/A
2007 Marienberg Spätlese EL	94/A
2007 Marienberg Spätlese Gold Capsule EL	94+/A
2007 Marienberg vom Roten Schiefer	95/A

I only began visiting Busch last year, but this year, as last year, the visit was one of my highlights in Germany. He is a perfectionist who says that he, his wife, and his son do not like to do the fancy publicity-related events, but would rather spend the time in the vineyards. Did someone say terroir? This fanatic for terroir has a multitude of wines (I'm sure that I didn't taste them all) because he wishes to capture the individual expression of each plot. The first wine is the *Kabinett trocken*, harvested 3 November. Stony quince aromas are followed in the mouth by calmness and purity with minerality, roundness, and complexity. This wine is quite delicious already. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 7 08. The N in the *Kabinett "N" trocken* stands for Nonnengarten, which is a second name for the Marienberg vineyard that is Busch's prime property. The soils here are red slate. The wine is slightly rounder in the nose than the regular Kabinett trocken and is tender. In the mouth, it is firmer and still has calmness with stone flavors much more evident, as well as minerality and a bit more hardness. This is a linear wine that is long with yellow fruits, especially plums. Clemens Busch likens it to a Rheingau -- which I find, too, in its texture and the yellow plum fruit. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 8 08. Busch has two types of Spätlesen from the Marienberg vineyard. ** means healthy grapes, *** means some botrytis, and hence more opulent. The *Spätlese trocken* ** has floral honey and quince aromas, followed on the palate by floral flavors with beeswax, honey, and purity. The wine is calm, precise, round, long, and silky in texture. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 9 08. The *Grosses Gewächs Marienburg Rothenpfad*, despite having been bottled just a few weeks prior to tasting, showed extremely well: more intense in the nose with beeswax aromas. Intense in the mouth but also pure, calm, and very long with depth and juiciness but also finesse to the beeswax. This is from red slate soils. The *Marienburg* is less floral in the nose than the previous, but more mineral. This is from gray slate soils. In the mouth, the wine has more to the flesh of the fruit, but at the same time is more austere and closed: quince and yellow plums are apparent and there is more power than in the prior wine, but also great finesse. Busch's *vom Roten Schiefer* is from red slate soils, as the German name states. The wine is spicy and round in the nose, and lemony and round in the mouth with purity and a sensual texture to go with tremendous development of the yellow fruit. It is harmonious and tastes dry even though there are 14 g/l residual sugar here. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 35 08. The *Rothenpfad* is subtly spicy with a bit of juiciness to its yellow fruit and honey aromas. On the palate, the wine is broad and sensual with a velvet/satin texture and length to the yellow plum fruit. Here, too, red soils and 14 g/l residual sugar and the style is halbtrocken. 13.5% alcohol. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 31 08. The *Fahrlay* comes from blue slate soils. The wine is more concentrated and less floral in the nose than the Rothenpfad. In the mouth, the minerality is more marked, and the wine is a bit less broad with tenderness -- again halbtrocken in style. 13.7% alcohol. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 27 08. The *Falkenlay* is from gray slate soils with



some red mixed in. There is some botrytis in this wine -- Busch says that it is his best location for late harvest wines. There is some spiciness in the nose, but it is mostly closed. I got the impression of biting into fresh fruit, especially yellow fruit, in the mouth, and overall the wine is like a synthesis of the two previous wines. Also halbtrocken in style. 14.3% alcohol, although it doesn't show. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 28 08. The *Fabrlay Terrassen* is from 65 year-old vines on terraced vineyards. It is floral with a bit of honey and beeswax in the nose. In the mouth, the wine is intense and concentrated with citric flavors. It is still quite young with nervy acidity and seems dry with no sense of alcohol. Harvested at 111° Oe, I was amazed to learn that the wine has 15.8% alcohol because it doesn't show! Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 32 08. The *Felsterasse* is from 75 year-old vines on terraced gray slate soils. There is a slight touch of butter here but the wine is still mostly closed in the nose. In the mouth, it is lighter and more lively than the Fahrlay Terrassen with a little sweetness showing. The flavors are citric and mineral, the texture is chewy and almost meaty, but the wine needs time to come together, impressive as it already is. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 33 08. The *Raffes* has a hint of grapefruit peel with tropical aromas -- almost like a Sauvignon Blanc. The grapefruit continues in the mouth with more structure and dryness (although the sugar is perceptible) than the preceding few wines. This wine is nervy, juicy, and powerful, but very young and needs some time to express itself. 14.5% alcohol. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 34 08.

Turning to the fruity-style wines, the *Kabinett "Fruchtsüss"* is from gray slate soils with some botrytis. The wine has leesy notes in the nose, and is chewy, rich, and lemony in the mouth with purity and nervosity and apples on the finish. 7.5% alcohol. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 4 08. The *Marienberg Spätlese* is lemony, flinty, and spicy in the nose. In the mouth, it is ripe, round, sensual, and powerful with lemony flavors that are pure and linear. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 15 08. The *Marienberg Gold Cap Spätlese* has apply aromas and in the mouth is richer but more closed than the regular *Marienberg Spätlese*. It is lemony with some tropical fruit, lively with some botrytis showing, and seems almost like an Auslese. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 26 08. The *Marienberg "vom Roten Schiefer"* has spice and honey in the nose. In the mouth, the wine is long, deep, nervy, caressing, pure, calm, and honeyed. There are some spice flavors, but also minerality and peach and pear fruit. This superb wine is a fine example of the proverbial iron fist in a velvet glove. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 21 08. Busch's *Marienberg Fahrlay Auslese* is long, mineral, and nervy and almost gold capsule in style for its richness and botrytis. The *Marienberg Gold Cap Auslese* is notable for its purity and the great quality of its botrytis. The wine is honeyed, calm long, subtle, rich, ripe and creamy and is delicious to drink already. The *Marienberg Long Gold Cap Auslese* is even more pure and dense, really Beerenauslese in style with honey and brown sugar in the nose and mouth. This, too, is wonderful to drink now, but it will age seemingly forever. Speaking of Beerenauslese, the *Marienberg Beerenauslese* in fact could be a Trockenbeerenauslese. The fabulous nose is concentrated with sauteed apples and quince. In the mouth, the wine shows great density and purity with caramelized apples. It is a breathtaking wine. Busch has three TBAs in 2007, but I only tasted one as the other two had not finished fermenting. The *Marienberg Trockenbeerenauslese* is even more intense than the Beerenauslese with caramelized brown sugar aromas and flavors and lively mineral flavors with plenty of acidity. The wine is not heavy, but it is so intense that one sip is sufficient. It is one of the very greatest wines of the vintage. Importer: Mosel Wine Merchant, New York.

WEINGUT PETER LAUER

2007 Saar trocken Fass 15	89/B
2007 Fass 2 trocken	91/A-
2007 Fass 25 trocken	92/A
2007 Fass 6 Senior trocken	92/A
2007 Fass 1 trocken	93/A
2007 Fass 4 feinherb	90/B+
2007 Fass 3 feinherb	92/A
2007 Fass 12 Unterstenberg	93/A
2007 Fass 11 Schonfels	
2007 Fass 15 Stirn feinherb	92(+)/A
2007 Fass 9 Kern feinherb	91?/A-



2007 Fass 13 Saarfeilser feinherb	92/A
2007 Spätlese Fass 7	92(+)/A
2007 Spätlese ** Fass 23	92+/A
2007 Auslese Fass 10	92+/A

Previously, I have only encountered an occasional bottle or two from this estate, but I was impressed by what I tasted. Now that the wines are being imported regularly to the United States, I made it a point to visit and get to know the wines better. Be forewarned, these are not wines for the casual drinker; they are as rigorous expression of their producer's vision as you will find. Florian Lauer, 29 years old, is now in charge of operations here, but seems to be following exactly his father. Although you won't see it on the main label (at least the labels I saw in Germany), the wines are primarily from the Ayler Kupp vineyard, and it is here to go if you want to understand why the vineyard is great, as much of what passes for Ayler Kupp is from inferior sites. As with Clemens Busch, Lauer challenges the 1971 wine law and uses the individual vineyard designations that the law intended to suppress. A glance at a map showing Ayler Kupp will immediately verify that this is a just decision, as it is vineyard split into seven non-contiguous portions that obviously are separate terroirs; those that Lauer bottles by the name of the particular vineyard are all from the original Ayler Kupp and far superior to the vineyards added later to the Kupp. Each cask (*Fass*) is bottled separately, and for the most part, the wines have very high, hard acidity -- the fine acidity of 2007 is not present here. This is wine as it was made more than half a century ago. For the most part, the wines are sold to individual customers (90% of the wine is sold in Germany). The best wines are raised in wood Fuder, but some stainless steel and fiberglass-lined containers are also employed. 90% of the wines are fermented spontaneously (i.e., no cultured yeasts), and there is very long lees contact here, and frequently *bâtonnage* (stirring of the lees). Adding to the confidential nature of these wines, a green label indicates the original Kupp vineyard as the source, a gray label indicates that the source is an added-on portion of the Kupp vineyard, and a gold label indicates the best portions of the Kupp vineyard as the source. These wines will be difficult to understand at first, but are well worth your efforts to do so.

Harvesting in 2007 began on 10 October and finished on 2 November. We start with the *Saar trocken Fass 16*. Technically, this could be called Ayler Kupp, but as Florian deems the source to be lesser vineyards, the wine is declassified to Saar. Mineral and apricot aromas are followed by chewiness and density in the mouth with peach and apricot flavors. The wine is a little rustic, but pleasing. 11.5% stated alcohol. Last digits of A.P. Nr. 07 08. *Fass 2 trocken* is very mineral and lemony in the nose, and pure, clear, and shows lemon and quince fruit on the palate with body and firmness and lots of acidity. There is great crispness here, and this is a classic expression of the Saar. 12% stated alcohol. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 05 08. *Fass 25 trocken* has pear and quince aromas and flavors. In the mouth, there is a little residual sugar evident. The wine is dense, classic, juicy, long, and crisp with plenty of acidity showing. 11.5% stated alcohol. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 01 08. *Fass 6 "Senior" trocken* is designated because the wine is in the style of Florian's grandfather (i.e., 1950s and 1960s) -- powerful and off-dry. The pear/lemon nose is followed by opulence in the mouth and the wine essentially tastes dry due to the acidity, with pear flavors and lots and plenty of acidity. 11.5% stated alcohol. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 06 08. *Fass 1 trocken* is the most exotic wine, so far. It shows grapefruit in the nose. In the mouth, the balance is excellent and gives great finesse to the crisp acidity. The wine is essentially dry at cool temperatures, although with a little warmth, some residual sugar is evident. 11.5% stated alcohol. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 7 08. The *Fass 4 feinherb* smells of fresh grape skins and is very mineral. In the mouth, the wine is grapy with some yellow fruits and is sweet, indeed almost Spätlese sweet, with supporting acidity and great concentration. 10.5% stated alcohol. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 02 08. *The Fass 3 feinherb* is a bit riper than the previous wine with a bit finer slate and more stones. The wine shows pear and quince aromas. In the mouth, it is opulent and juicy with pear and quince fruit and a chewy/ sappy texture, plus Spätlese-like sweetness. 10.5% stated alcohol. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 08 08.

We begin the parcel-denominated wines with the *Fass 12 Unterstenberg* from the lower and south-east-facing portion of the Ayler Kupp vineyard, by the town of Biebelhausen. (There is an excellent map of Lauer's main vineyards on his website: www.saarriesling.de -- press the Weingut link, and then on the next page press the Weinlagen link.) As with all of Lauer's vineyard-designated wines, minimum vine age is fifty years. The wine features crisp green berries and chipped stone in the nose. The mouth is very crisp with cracking acidity and some incipient tropical fruit. It is a dry wine, great with food. 11.5% stated alcohol. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 12 08. The *Fass 16 Schonfels* is from very steep terraces with no forest on top to provide protection from the wind. The top part ripens, but there often is botrytis in the bottom



part, and indeed this wine has about 15% botrytis. I found some spice to the nose, as well as stoniness and some honey. In the mouth, I found grapefruit flavors and juicy, chewy texture with virtual dryness until the finish, where there is some sweetness. This is an extreme expression of Riesling, and I did not really know what to make of it. 11.0% stated alcohol. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 10 08. The *Fass 15 Stirn feinherb* is about 100 meters above the Untenberg portion and is a windier and cooler site. There is a little botrytis here. The wine has dusty stone aromas with some gooseberries. In the mouth, the wine is at least Spätlese sweet, bordering on Auslese with honey and sweet/sharp sensations from the residual sugar. There is some botrytis in this wine, too. 10.5% stated alcohol. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 11 08. The *Fass 9 Kern feinherb* is back from the river and the vines go from the bottom to the top of the vineyard on the steep, stony hill. Temperatures are often very hot during the day and cool at night. There are about 40 g/l of residual sugar in this wine and 8.8 g/l of acidity, and so again we have Auslese sweetness. In the mouth, there is cutting acidity that plays against the honey. I'm not really sure how this wine will develop. 10% stated alcohol. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 09 08. The *Fass 13 Saarfeilser feinherb* is not from the Ayler Kupp. It is a steep, south-facing vineyard that is one of the warmest sites in the Saar Valley. Unlike the other sites, which are slate soils, this is on gravel. The wine shows pineapple aromas and is sweet with cutting acidity to go with its tropical fruit flavors and overall finesse. 10.0% stated alcohol. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 13 08. The *Fass 7 Spätlese* is a selection from the vineyards and there is no botrytis here. Florian calls it his light Spätlese. The wine is deep and perfumed in the nose. The mouth is medium-weight with grapefruit and pineapple flavors, some sugar showing, and Saar rigor. It would seem to be best after 5-6 years. 65 g/l residual sugar here. 8.5% stated alcohol. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 14 08. The *Fass 23 Spätlese* ** is leesy in the nose. In the mouth the wine shows honey with lemony flavors and a touch of grapefruit peel, great acidity, nervousity, and length. The wine is sweet on the finish. It should be great for gastronomy. 5-10% botrytis. 80 g/l residual sugar. 8.5% stated alcohol. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 15 08. Finally, the *Fass 10 Auslese* shows some gooseberry aromas, but is largely closed in the nose. In the mouth, the wine is filigreed with high malic acidity, making for hardness to go with a juicy, chewy texture, a little honey, and some grapefruit. This is a wine to wait several years for. 50% botrytis, 100 g/l residual sugar. 7.5% stated alcohol. Last digits of A.P. Nr.: 16 08. Importer: Mosel Wine Merchants, New York.