



Wine appreciation with consultant **ALEX BERRY**

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Resurgence of Riesling

What's happening to Riesling? The humble drop has been given the once-over in place of more emerging varietals in the past few years, but today it has a different story to tell.

There has been much discussion about the resurgence of Riesling – driven by the wine savvy and educated wine drinkers, and the new-age drinkers looking for something clean and crisp and utterly delightful to drink on a warm summer day.

Riesling wines originated in Germany's Rhein and Mosel River valleys.

The wine is being produced in dry and sweet variations, as well as light to full-bodied.

Crisp, refreshing character, a well-balanced blend of acidity and residual sugar, along with the ability to pair with an almost limitless assortment of food options, make Riesling one of the most versatile wines on the planet.

Courtesy of Stacy Slinkard of **About.com** the following is a modified extract of the classification:

The Riesling quality classification starts off with the basic table wine, or "Tafelwein" in German, and proceeds to a level 5 designation of "Qualitätsweine mit Prädikat" (QmP) – translated to "Quality wine with attributes".

At this level 5 quality classification, the "ripeness" classification system kicks in to further understand and define the world of German Riesling.

This is further broken down in the ripeness classification system, giving you

an idea when the grape was picked, and an indicator of initial grape sugar levels, not final bottled residual sugar levels.

The wines in ascending ripeness level order are as follows:

Kabinett

This is the Riesling classification that is made from the grapes that are the least ripe, producing the lightest style of Riesling wine.

They tend to have lower alcohol levels (in the eight to 10 per cent range) and are made in a drier style.

This is a fantastic option for pairing with a wide range of foods. Consider pairing a dry Kabinett with sushi, shellfish, goat's cheese or Thai food.

Spätlese

Literally translated as "late picking", this wine refers to the Riesling grapes that are picked late during the harvest season.

This Riesling typically has a medium-body and ups the flavour intensity, due to its extra days of sunshine.

This Riesling classification can be made in a dry or sweet style.

Consider pairing the drier form with creamy sauces, rich poultry or pork-based dishes or crab.

Keep the sweeter version of Riesling for serving with Asian or Mexican fare – something with a bit of spice.

Auslese

Translated as "out picked", designating ripe grapes picked out from a specific cluster of berries.

This Riesling can also be crafted into

a dry or sweet version. This is the first Riesling range that may exhibit true dessert wine status.

However, many Auslese wines are made in the dry style and make for an elegant pairing with heartier fare.

Beerenauslese

Called BA for short, this Riesling is made into the luxurious dessert wines that are sought out for their compatibility with a myriad of dessert options – but specifically peach-based desserts, caramel delights and even foie gras.

Trockenbeerenauslese

Known as TBA for short and translated as "dry berry select picking", this designates a late-harvest, botrytis picking, where the berries have started to shrivel on the vine, concentrating the sugars.

These Trockenbeerenauslese wines are the ultra-concentrated, nectar-like dessert wines that can claim quite a price.

Give them a go with blue cheese, apple pie, fruit-filled desserts and sweet treats in general.

Eiswein

These are the famous dessert wines that are harvested from highly concentrated grapes that have actually frozen on the vine and are then pressed to produce a low-yield, high-flavour, rich dessert wine.

There are also label residual sugar indicators to keep in mind. If the wine is dry, it is labelled as "Trocken" (dry); "Halbtrocken" (German for "half-dry," meaning "off-dry").

IN REVIEW

This week we review three wines from the family-owned boutique winery, Mt Pilot Estate in Eldorado in Victoria. The winery, open by appointment only, is located at 208 Shannon's Rd at Byawatha; phone 5726 5435 or 0419 243 225.

Mt Pilot 2008 Durif
14.5% RRP \$30 84/100

From a harsh and dry summer vintage, they have made an acceptable wine that would hold up in a line-up of Durifs. The wine shows promise with good depth and flavour with generous tannins which are a little aggressive on the first glass, but tend to back off a tad as the wine opens up after it has time in the glass. The oak is a little forward and needs time in the bottle to allow that to soften and balance the wine. But it is quite suitable for immediate consumption with a good meaty dish to complement the rich berry and plum fruit and middle-weighted, medium-bodied tannins. There is no doubt the wine will keep for eight or more years. It is available at the cellar door and regional speciality wine outlets.

Mt Pilot 2008 Shiraz
14% RRP \$25 85/100

The first glass shows its character with a big nose of rich, ripe berries and spicy oak. This follows through to the palate with good oak integration and a fine grainy texture belying the underlying spicy fruit with hints of chocolate and vanilla. It is well made and will stand up to an onslaught of rich foods. The wine is a keeper, easily storing well in the cellar for a decade or more. Considering the low-yielding vines, I would imagine it will sell out quickly if not already done so. It is available at the cellar door and regional speciality wine outlets.

Mt Pilot 2010 Viognier Chardonnay
14.1% RRP \$25 85/100

I would not have thought these two varieties could blend so harmoniously together if I had not tasted the wine. The varietal expression of Viognier dominates the wine with waves of musk, peach and citrus aromas and that's complemented with the ripe melon characters from the Chardonnay hidden in the background. There is a good feel in the mouth, with the acid cleansing the palate and leaving the mouth tingling from the soft acid, making you want another glass as you reach for the bottle without conscious thought. Worth every cent.