

# Renegade Wines Futures Program:

## Austria & Germany from Terry Theise

### The Incredible 2016 Austrian & German Vintage (and some other gems)

"I have a bad habit of burying the lead. This time I won't. Nearly every vintage, even good, excellent or great ones, has a shadow side that expresses as a common flaw. It completes the sentence, "When XXXX doesn't work it is usually because of..." 2016 does not appear to have a dark side. At least where I tasted, it is almost **never not** delicious, almost never ungainly, unbalanced or unappealing. I can hardly remember a more adorable vintage." –Terry Theise

We (Renegade Wines) reviewed our tasting notes over and over in an effort to bring you the finest of the vintage. The wines below are the results. We find the 2016 a perfect, classical vintage whereas 2015 was a perfectly boisterous one. The 2015 will age forever (and needs time now as they begin to shut down). 2016 will age half as long as forever, which in itself is a seriously long time. Enjoy the notes below.

In addition to the 2016 offering, there are a few older vintages below that are just now being released (2005 Nikolaihof...), and we have a large selection of wines from the 2015 vintage, deemed every bit as good as 1971. All are listed on our [website inventory](#).

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Save 5% on 3 bottles, **10% on 6 bottles.**  
Tasting notes written by Terry Theise.  
**Order Deadline: October 31, 2017**  
Many of these wines are in short supply.

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To Order: Simply call 805-568-1961 or [email us](#) with your order. For simplicity sake (some of the wine names can get ridiculously long) each wine has a capital letter assigned to it. A sample order might look like this: B6 (wine #B, 6 bottles), G3, K2, U12...somewhat like a sequence in a game of battleship. Wines are reserved with a credit card. Enjoy the wine notes below

# Germany: 2016

Region: Pfalz

## Muller-Catoir

From 1962 to 2002 this estate employed a man who would become the seminal cellar master of his era. Hans Günter Schwarz's are the shoulders upon which an entire generation of German vintners stands. And during that time, Müller-Catoir was widely regarded as the best estate in the Pfalz. Anyone who had to fill his shoes started at a serious disadvantage. All the more reason to admire not only what Martin Franzen has done, but the sangfroid with which he did it. Today, I won't say that Catoir is "the best" estate in the Pfalz, but I will say there's no one better.

### **A: 2016 Muller-Catoir Riesling Herrenletten Trocken \$45**

Herrenletten is a single-vineyard wine from a classified site. If this were Champagne we'd be writing about "blatant naked chalk;" Pfalz joins hands with Mesnil, laughing together atop a quarry of smashed rocks. Cool talc and lemon and white tea. Cerebral? You tell me! I find it generous and overt.

### **B: 2016 Muller-Catoir Riesling Bürgergarten 'In Breumel' Großes Gewächs \$68**

Firstly, Grand Cru Wine (that's what Großes Gewächs or "GG" means). *AND* a single-vineyard wine? These days you'd be spending a couple C-notes for a Grand Cru Burgundy.

Now for the notes:

Searching, fascinating and accessible in its trigonometry-of-riesling way. Oddly the finish is like the Pyramid black salt from Cyprus, not so much "mineral" as carbonized; burnt herbs like when you throw them into a hot skillet. You're not only drinking the wine, you're eating the earth. But look out: this wild genius madman is DEE-RY.

### **C: 2016 Muller-Catoir Rieslaner Gimmeldinger Schlüssel Spätlese \$46**

The details: Rieslaner is a cross between Silvaner & Riesling, a late ripening grape with high acidity. Gimmeldinger Schlüssel is the specific vineyard, and Spätlese is a riper category than Kabinett but not as ripe as Auslese. To make things more confusing, one winemaker's Spätlese can be drier than another's Kabinett. Rieslaner can produce the most singular great wine on earth, the only great wine of its type. But make no mistake, this is "supernally" great wine; nothing else even comes close.

But enough for now, here are some tasting details:

If you crossed Petit Manseng and Muscat—and peppermint—you'd sort of approximate Rieslaner. Or, not really. For a wine that's never inscrutable I find Rieslaner fiendishly hard to describe. Riesling on Viagra maybe? In any case, this masterpiece may very well be great. The top notes sizzle and crackle, the middle notes thrum and croon, and the finish hums and

murmurs. Seamless, symmetrical, poised yet galvanic. Drops you to your knees, crying and laughing.

## Von Winning

It's hard to pick a favorite Riesling producer. There are many talented, exceptional producers. But if we *HAD* to pick our top 4 or 5, well...8, Von Winning would be near the top. His 2013 Riesling from the Kirchenstück vineyard literally had us in tears when we first sampled it a few years back. Here are his 2016 offerings:

### **D: 2016 Von Winning Riesling Langenmorgen "GG" \$72**

It's the GG with the nerd glasses. Threads and skeins and capillaries of nuance; herbs, mineral...interior beauty. A wine of wet gray trees, and the air is moist with all the green of the woods. Cerebral need not mean bloodless; this wine is enthralling in its intricate Gregorian purity.

### **E: 2016 Von Winning Riesling Ungeheuer "GG" \$62**

So how do you pronounce the vineyard Ungeheuer? Like this: OONGA-HOYER! This wine can sometimes seem a bit obtuse in a bone-brothy way, but this vintage has to be the most seductive GG in recorded history; firm and caramelly, shiitakes, goose fat, but all in a heaving jiggling orgy of hedonism and licentiousness. Want some? Sure you do. Oonga-hoyer roolz.

### **F: 2016 Von Winning Riesling Kirchenstuck "GG" \$126**

Just for reference, if you were to purchase the same quality White Burgundy you'd spend over \$300. Just saying.

This site is the hors classe of the Pfalz, and nearly always gives the most profound wine. No question this is the ne plus ultra of profundity, in a more earnest and determined idiom. More pepper (Sarawak black), more brooding, swollen mineral. Pechstein is affirming; this is unsettling, antelucan. Pechstein is euphoric; this is grave, darker, and yet also conveys more faith, more trust. Pechstein guides you by the sun, Kirchenstück guides you by the stars.

### **G: 2016 Von Winning Riesling Pechstein "GG" \$104**

All its wisteria and rock-dust and all in a warmly shimmery sweetness—or, "sweetness," for there is none on paper but the wine is so flowery you'll swear you taste it. True divinity here. Drink it next to a Felsenberg from Dönnhoff and consider the mystery and the kindness of the world.

## Eugen Müller

Eugen comes across as the kindest gentleman in the world. All smiles and charm. These wines aren't "trendy" but the fruit comes from the same Grand Cru vineyards that Von Winning sources from so when you look at the prices it is mind-boggling.

And now you're asking yourself why are his wines not labeled "GG" if the fruit comes from Grand Cru vineyards? Because Müller isn't a member of the VDP (basically a marketing group; nothing to do with quality). Smell the can of worms about to open? A vineyard classification cannot possibly be associated with membership in a marketing group, however fine its members or laudable their standards. Either the land is potentially great or it isn't. Oh well...

**H: 2016 Eugen Müller Riesling Forster Pechstein Spätlese Trocken \$34**

Pure stones and flowers, like wisteria crawling down a hot stone wall. Verbena and mint also—what a vineyard! Spicy and juicy in equal measure; a bone-broth "sweetness" forms an arc to the stony pure dryness, yet this offers an almost gushing welcome.

**I: 2016 Eugen Müller Riesling Kirchenstück Spätlese Trocken Cyriakus \$36**

It's the prime section of the greatest vineyard in the Pfalz, and the wine's almost too expressive and complex for its own good; it feels desperate, as if it's ready to explode with the thing it has to say. Complex almost to the point of inscrutability, a polytonal brooding wine yet with a shatter of spices.

**J: 2016 Eugen Müller Riesling Unhegeuer Spätlese Trocken Ziegler \$34**

I've never tasted a better vintage of this generous and bark-y creature, less stony than crusty; burning-leaf; the palate yields to an incredibly intricate stoniness but you don't approach it by a gravel path. A peppery heat sings to be heard. Toward the end of the glass you taste maitakes and puff-ball mushrooms. It's remarkably diligent for something so robust.

## Theo Minges

Minges is so steady and so consistent they don't show ups and downs, only small variations of tone. And the general tones of '16 click right into the specific tone of Minges' style, and so it's a simple classic year for this wonderful (and underrated) estate. We're sneaking in a 2015 below.

**K: 2015 Theo Minges Riesling Kalkstein Trocken \$26**

This limestone-based Riesling is always offered a year late, and once again it demonstrates the keen connection between Theo's Rieslings and Blanc de Blancs Champagne. This one's a lavish, rich limestone pudding but with a greeny lime-like edge; balsam and aloe and white flowers. It compels the question, how can something so dry be so seductive? This will age deliberately and serenely, so don't be in haste to consume it.

Region: Nahe

## Dönnhoff

It isn't relevant whether Dönnhoff's is the "best" estate or where it sits in the rankings, because it is existentially apart from the norm. One sees this quality in a small number of other wines; Raveneau, Alzinger, maybe even Lopez de Heredia, citizens of their own worlds.

### **L: 2016 Dönnhoff Riesling Felsenberg "GG" \$68**

I could write at great length about the flavor of porphyry-grown Riesling, among wine's greatest miracles. Suffice it to say, these wines taste as though they were made by a vizier with a boiling cauldron and a set of a hundred spice boxes. It's hard to fathom such wines coming from prosaic grapes and dirt, and yet they do. And while any solidly competent grower lucky enough to have Riesling sites on this soil will make fascinating wine, Dönnhoff is like Bach, another order of being.

This '16 is a euphoric thrall of porphyry aromas, and the palate is an entire quarry of pulverized mineral with edges of sorrel and dandelion greens. It's both limpid and energetic.

### **M: 2016 Dönnhoff Riesling Dellchen "GG" \$74**

A conglomerate of slate and porphyry, the site entails the little hollows between cliff-sides; it's very steep and terraced and quiet, which may account for the wines' riddlesome nature, wines of pure inference and umami that need several years not just to blossom, but simply to say what they taste like. This is especially true of the dry wines. This '16 is relatively overt and smoky, but no sequence of descriptors will be useful—it's just too soon. The texture seems more lush than usual, and there's an earthy note, and as compelling as it is, I respect the shroud and will wait patiently.

### **N: 2016 Dönnhoff Riesling Hermannshöhle "GG" \$82**

Cornelius describes this as a "grand dry wine with a Mona-Lisa smile," but I usually find it less enigmatic, and in 2016 it is clearly, definitely and obviously fantastic. Intense yet filigree. Focused, and directed towards the conclusion of a complex argument, letting you follow the logic and the beauty of the thoughts, and then you perceive the grace of the language and you wish you could read it out loud to someone—to anyone. It's not as electrifying as the '15 was, it's more deliberate. But that very sense of careful unfurling seems born of love.

### **O: 2016 Dönnhoff Riesling Oberhäuser Brücke Spätlese \$52**

It's a vivid fantasy, a scrutible and visible depiction of this ur-Riesling; guava, salts, fervent spiciness (ginger, lemon-candy) and a stunning finish of herbs, apple-skin and mineral. Both approachable, ethereal and quietly magnificent, if you possess an inner mystic, this wine speaks its language.

**P: 2016 Dönnhoff Riesling Niederhäuser Hermannshöhle Spätlese \$58.50**

For many people this is a *ne plus ultra* of Riesling, and they'll be happy to hear that '16 is a firm and herbal version of a classic for which the typical descriptors apply.

But what you can't describe is the moment – and there's always a moment—when the love overcomes your resistance, your doubt or your fear, and you let yourself fall; finally someone sees you, your cells are urging you forward, and hoo boy, this could be bliss; watch out... here goes.

Region: Mosel

## Alfred Merkelbach

Alfred is the older brother. He's 82. Rolf had just had his 79th birthday this year. When I met them two years ago at a tasting in San Francisco all I could do was smile. That's all anyone does when tasting their wines. Making wine is in their blood; they've been doing it for something like 60+ vintages. And chances are they'll celebrate their 80<sup>th</sup> vintage someday.

**Q: 2016 Alfred Merkelbach Riesling Uerziger Würzgarten Spätlese Halbtrocken #7 \$26.50**

Wonderful, gravelly, detailed, a mosaic of sassafrass and slate; balanced and savory and fibrous; lithe and slim but long and transparent.

**R: 2016 Alfred Merkelbach Riesling Uerziger Würzgarten Spätlese #5 \$26.50**

An incredible portrait of Uerzig slate, in a salty kiwi-wash that defines the very soul of the being. The parcel is called Vor das Pichter, and everything about slate and Riesling seems to quiver and buzz.

**S: 2016 Alfred Merkelbach Riesling Uerziger Würzgarten Spätlese Urglück #9 \$30**

This could be the greatest Merkelbach wine ever, from a "normal" vintage. A searching, almost unfathomable fragrance does not prepare you for the miraculous palate; fruit and botrytis recall the 2005 but this is slinkier and more incisive, more resinous and herbal and even tropical; tender and powerful.

## Willi Schaefer

The winery dates back to 1121. That's ELEVEN-TWENTY-ONE! Now there's some history. Today it's a small family winery producing exclusively Riesling in minuscule amounts. Their vineyards are on steep slate slopes with up to 100 year-old ungrafted vines. Great material to work with.

It is hard to put a finger on exactly what it is that makes these wines so precious. There is a candor about them that is quite disarming. They are polished too, but not brashly so. They are careful to delineate their vineyard characteristics, and they offer fruit of sublime purity. They are utterly soaring in flavor yet not without weight. They are nearly impossible to find as his 12-16 different wines (depending on the vintage) combined total about 2900 cases.

**T: 2016 Willi Schaefer Riesling Graacher Domprobst Kabinett \$32.50**

Crisp, even snappy; pistachio, quince. This wine is (gorgeously!) twitchy and kinetic, yet it's still poised and showing its Buddha-face.

**U: 2016 Willi Schaefer Riesling Graacher Domprobst Spätlese #10 \$42**

For a while I thought these "numbered" cask bottlings were parcel specific, but it isn't so; they are stylistic "types" whereby #10 (for example) is the crunchiest most mineral one, while #5 is the one with the noblest fruit; thus "#10" becomes a kind of brandname for a certain type of wine. This smelled like a roomful of hyacinths and one quince with attitude. Stones and salts and a vein of iron.

**V: 2016 Willi Schaefer Riesling Graacher Domprobst Spätlese #5 \$50**

Even in this lordly context this wine has a remarkable fragrance, like the apples of Paradise. This is where Schaefer and Dönnhoff seem to overlap in a sort of palimpsest, as if Kirschheck were draped over Domprobst like a transparent shawl—slate and wintergreen and lime blossom here, cherry blossom and balsam there.

**W: 2016 Willi Schaefer Riesling Graacher Domprobst Auslese #11 \$82**

Lyric slate in a gossamer melody that swells in intensity until it carries you along. It's the most zig-zaggy wine on the table, and it is my kind of Auslese, deeping the Späts without lapsing into a coma of botrytis.

## Carl Loewen

This is the first time Renegade has purchased from this estate and we are scratching our heads realizing that we have been missing some profound Rieslings. The one wine we have ordered, a Riesling, was planted in 1896. I used a calculator to make sure but that's 121 year old vines. Quantity is tiny: 1000 Liters with fingers crossed. The wine is not only brilliant, it is historical. Everything is done by hand and pressing is done in a 'very old' wooden basket.

**X: 2016 Carl Loewen Riesling Maximin Herrenberg Feinherb "1896" \$84**

I'll leave you to read Terry's notes in a moment. This wine comes in two different styles: Trocken & Feinherb. Trocken in dry. Dry Dry. Feinherb, at least my definition, is a degree riper than Trocken. It's not sweet at all but I find Rieslings in the Feinherb category have extra depth; are more in tuned to the world around them. They offer more, one feels, but it's not something you can label. And now for Terry's analyses:

Obviously these are not only great wines, they're also meaningful wines. The inverse is also true; they're not only "meaningful," (which you may or may not be able to taste) but also, and dramatically, great.

The dry wine, I wrote, is the song of the ancient plants, in this case a haunting threnody of things lost but not abandoned, something more mysterious than what we think of as "depth." It addresses the whole world of the silex and the pebbles and the richly breathing leaves. The

truly important wines don't seem to need to try. They coalesce into a vapor that rises from the ground and forms a tangible being in the air. Forget for a moment what it "tastes like," because if you still your mind, the graygreen ghosts gather around you.

The Feinherb, not very much "sweeter" than the Trocken, is my wine of the vintage. I wish it weren't because we hardly have three drops of it. But with that wine, we start drawing near to eternity, through layers of bliss and amazement into a fragrant shady glade, cool and fresh, and there's a strange ethereal mosaic seeming to hover in the air, and you make for it but never get closer. And the moment you realize that the sweetness lives in the longing and not the arriving, then you arrive.

## Austria: 2016

Region: Neusiedlersee-Hügelland

### Heidi Schröck

If you've met her, you remember her; if you've spent more than an hour together, you're probably friends. That's the way she is.

Heidi Schröck took over her family winery in 1983, in the historic village of Rust situated in the province of Burgenland about 5 miles from the Hungarian border. She makes the type of wines you daydream about, like when you're in a café beginning to read the sequel to Harry Potter and you start to zone out, staring through the window out into the world and all you can think about is last night's wine from Heidi.

#### AA: 2016 Heidi Schrock Rose "Biscaya" \$20.50

When I looked into this wine, I discovered it is a blend of Lagrein, Teroldego, Petit Verdot, Syrah, Merlot, Pinot Noir and Cab-Sauv. Then I read Terry's notes (see below) and knew I just *HAD* to get a few cases of this beast!

It's as exotic as it always is, but the '16 shows more flower and berry and less beet and rose-hip. Less earthy. It's almost mineral, this crazy beast; like a crushed powder of violets; hints of spring-onions, dried iris petals; firm and structured, even some black truffle in there. Has there ever been a rosé like it?

Region: Kremstal

### Nigl

Nigl's the guy you'd have wanted to do your brain surgery, his wines were always so incisive and scalpel-fine. A year like 2016 is ideal to show the astonishing transparency of Nigl's best wines, which are clearer than clarity, and so microsurgically detailed it's like he arranged the flavors with little chef's tweezers, just-so in the glass.

**BB: 2016 Nigl Riesling Hochäcker \$56**

In great vintages this is one of the world's best Rieslings. Yes, you read it right—one of the world's best. It's a plateau above the Pellingen, on a complex soil in which the original loess eroded and exposed the bedrock of marble, amphibolite, paragneiss and mica schist. Because it is flat it stores water, and because of that it is stunning in dry vintages. I cannot, honestly, drink the 2013 without weeping. (Even if I'm also watching wrestling!) And this '16? All the mythos of this great vineyard comes to life in a complex explosion of mineral, fruit, herb and citrus, a gorgeous flavor rendered with shimmering brilliance and detail. Ravishing fruit and steely brilliance; can't ask for more.

Region: Kamptal

## Bründlmayer

It is stirring to observe the way this estate has soared the last 3-4 years, as if to issue the gentlest yet most confident reminders that they are indeed stellar. The wines? Majestic, searching and insanely complex.

**CC: 2016 Bründlmayer Grüner Veltliner Ried Lamm \$94**

One of the very few most important GVs in Austria. Most vintages turn out to boggle the mind after about 12-15 years. In any case, if Austria has a "Montrachet," this is it.

It's a wine of rich raw dark dough— Lamm is always bready, herbal (especially rosemary) and oddly lamb-like. (The name doesn't refer to lamb meat but actually derives from a dialect pronunciation of the word "Lehm," which means loam). It has gigantic potential; it is wonderfully salty and dense, yet not remotely heavy.

## Gobelsburg

One of our favorite, soft spoken, off-the-radar, estates. The wines are jarring in their silence. With age they develop spunk and a certain robustness, but never an ego. With so many great wines in the 2016 vintage it was difficult to narrow our selection. Two Gruners & one Riesling made the cut; the others we can only dream about.

**DD: 2016 Gobelsburg Grüner Veltliner Ried Lamm \$64**

This is a great wine though virtually without fruit per se. Its poise of gloss and power, intensity and outline, mass and transparency are emblems of the paradox without which no wine is truly great.

**EE: 2016 Gobelsburg Grüner Veltliner "Tradition" \$55**

"Tradition" has a meaning here. It's not irrelevant. Michi (winemaker) set about to make a wine as it would have been made between the end of the Franco-Prussian war and the start of World War 1. That years ago, before the possibilities of technology created choices they couldn't have imagined.

Possibly the outer limits of complexity are embedded in here somewhere, but right now my heart is melted by the enveloping embrace. As the wine exhales in the glass it gets saltier and grainier, but it never stops glowing. You never knew that affirmation could be so tender, or tenderness be so affirming.

**FF: 2016 Gobelsburg Riesling Gaisberg \$42**

Gaisberg for me is always a moonlight wine, as if somehow the grapes ripened at night when the moon is waxing. The '16 is piquant, "white" and cool and silvery, yet also with a certain creaminess, leading, again, to a firm adamant finish.

Region: Wachau

## Alzinger

I see Alzinger as spirit-kin to people such as Dönnhoff and Raveneau, wines that are endlessly complex and mysterious but seldom explicit. You'd almost prefer to describe them with music rather than words.

**GG: 2016 Alzinger Grüner Veltliner Steinertal Smaragd \$68**

Beautifully angular, and sizzles like those special cymbals, the wine croons with a rasping sexy voice; pungent green mostly balsam, less tarragon and lime; starkly exposed minerality. An outstanding and remarkable wine.

**HH: 2016 Alzinger Riesling Hollerin Smaragd \$55**

This is usually the charmer among the Rieslings, and this '16 shows its typical apricot and passion fruit but this is quickly submerged below the most lavish lime-zest and wintergreen and gray salt and opal basil; not as seductive as usual but exponentially more intricate and multi-layered—and extremely salty.

**II: 2016 Alzinger Riesling Höhereck Smaragd \$60**

How inconvenient that my usual-favorite of Alzinger's Rieslings is the one they barely make. It's a tiny plot and they get "around 800 bottles" in a good year. Yes—bottles.

All I can say, after all these years, is—from this tiny place comes one of the earth's great wines, the terminus of every great facet of Wachau Riesling, the herbs from this, the peaches and plums from that, the mangoes from another, the smoke from yet another—all there. The '16 is greener and grayer; smoke and broth and spices and blown-out candle and veggies on the grill, smoky and sweet.

**JJ: 2016 Alzinger Riesling Steinertal Smaragd \$68**

Juicy and mineral and lavishly animated, neither herbal nor especially "mystic," just wolfishly good and enticingly mineral, as if terroir were ground to dust. Spicy and just stupidly delicious.

## Nikolaihof

Most of you already know the story and love the wines. Bio-dynamic since 1971, first Demeter-certified wine estate in the world, all those things. The wines and the family convey a seamless unity, radiantly good humor, and an unfussy gratitude.

We were arriving at the end of our budget for the 2016 wines, but upon tasting the Nikolaihof line-up we decided to go off the reservation so to speak, and offer the wine below. Insane is an understatement.

**KK: 2005 Nikolaihof Riesling Steiner Hund "Jungfernlese" \$130**

All I can say is this: this is INCONCEIVABLY GREAT, INSANELY COMPLEX RIESLING. Legend. Period.

The 2005 is a nice way to finish the offering. The pre-sale ends Oct. 31 so please call or [email us](#) to secure your wines. Wines will arrive at Renegade around Nov 1. We will call / email upon their arrival to arrange pick-up, delivery, or shipping.

Thank You,

Steve Wayne  
Renegade Wines  
805-568-1961  
[Renegadewines007@yahoo.com](mailto:Renegadewines007@yahoo.com)