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GERMAN SPÄTBURGUNDER GROWING UP GRACEFULLY

Anne Kriebiehl MW is joined by Andrew Jefford and Jancis Robinson MW for a tasting that suggests German Pinot Noir is coming of age, with the best wines having their own distinct identities as well as brisk, fresh appeal

When the idea was mooted that there might be a tasting of German Spätburgunder to appear in these pages, I was thrilled. It is a coming of age of sorts, a tentative admission to a kind of canon—and I felt honored to be asked to suggest producers. I say this because I still remember well both the indulgent, polite smiles and the open guffaws when German Pinot Noir first became a thing internationally about a decade ago. Seen from afar, how could this country of sweetish plonk even aspire to produce wine from such a distinguished but notoriously temperamental grape variety? And why not stick to white wines? And have you seen the prices? One eminent merchant, I remember, told me that while people might deign to taste the wines and see some merit in them, they would “swallow hard” once they learned how much they cost.

Spätburgunder has come a long way since then. Even I would have to admit that while Pinot Noir's presence in Germany goes back to early monastic settlements, its success is rather more recent, beginning in the late 1980s. The historic strongholds of German Pinot Noir in the Ahr and the village of Assmannshausen in the Rheingau, as well as pockets of Baden, Franken, and Rheinhessen, were mostly of local, occasionally of national, and only very rarely of international importance. Yet historic sources yield a wealth of references to Pinot Noir, which was always present if rarely the main protagonist. The only German wines with international currency were Rieslings—and even they were still

reeling from the self-inflicted harm of the 20th century. That the 1971 wine law permitting huge yields and making a mockery of the term Qualitätswein did not help matters is clear to all those familiar with the German wine landscape. It is also evident that a very strong southern cooperative movement churning out thermovinified reds by the liter-bottle at knock-down prices did little to foster a sense of pride. That it took more than two generations of German winemakers to regain some semblance of a national identity—of which quality wine from historic single sites forms an intrinsic part—is less well understood internationally. It took some brave, pioneering souls to look beyond the status quo of the dire 1970s and '80s and set about planting, growing, and making quality Spätburgunder. These visionaries, together with a resurgence of German wine in the home market, climate change, and the realization that the only way to compete was via quality, all created a tipping point. Since then, Pinot Noir has spread way beyond its historic limits; today it grows in all of Germany's 13 wine regions, and there are 11,783ha (29,116 acres) of it. Only the United States and France grow more—and a vast portion of French-grown Pinot Noir goes into Champagne, just to put the numbers into context.

In any case, it does not take a huge leap of imagination to see how plausible this grape variety might be in the temperate-to-cool vineyards of Germany. But here's the rub: Germany is always presented as a single entity, whereas its 13 regions cover four degrees of latitude—from the southerly tip of

THESE WINES DID NOT TRY TO PRETEND TO BE SOMETHING THEY WERE NOT: GERMAN PINOT-MAKERS NO LONGER CHASE OECHSLE AND RIPENESS BUT ARE RATHER AT PAINS TO EXPRESS THE SITE AND THE VINTAGE

Baden at 47.6°N, to 51.1°N in Saxony—without the moderating effect of any maritime influence. So, Germany's Pinot Noir landscape is diverse, both climatically and geologically: German Pinot Noir grows in limestone and slate, basalt and sandstone, schist and granite, Keuper and loess. To prevent regional bias, we decided to taste in order of vintage—but that meant that we tasted a jumble of regions, often disparate, including Baden, Württemberg, Franken, Pfalz, Rheinhessen, Nahe, Rheingau, Ahr, Mosel, and even Saxony. We tasted established names and newcomers. Producers decided which vintages to submit, and we thus had a surfeit of wines from the challenging 2014 vintage, only two from 2015, a good representation of 2013 and 2012, and a slew of older vintages as well. Vintage variation was certainly evident from vineyards that can be immensely warm and sunny in some years and barely marginal in others.

Acidity and longevity

As diverse as these wines were, bright, vivid acidity was certainly an ever-present feature, even in the riper vintages. Looking at the reticence of my fellow tasters and the divergence of our scores, I can only say that I have once again outed myself as a total acid freak, relishing the tartness that others may have felt was excessive. German Pinot Noir is certainly a style that I am deeply familiar with—that I not only taste but drink, that I collect and follow—thus my herbal overtones might well be someone else's unripeness. I have also been lucky enough to taste verticals reaching back into the 1990s and have come away with the conviction that the cooler years are often the winners in the end. But as I freely admit, I do also crave that acid hit. Had we been heavier on the warm 2015 vintage, we would certainly have tasted plumper fruit and more alcoholic warmth, so I was very happy with the heavy weighting of 2014s and 2013s.

Overall, I enjoyed these wines immensely and would regard myself rich if I had them in my cellar—some of them I would not touch for years. The prospects of some of the wines was, however, another point of diverging opinion, so I am not sure how helpful our drinking dates will be. In any case, I was pleased that these wines stood by their tartness and did not try to pretend to be something they were not: German Pinot-makers—certainly those invited to submit their wines for this tasting—no longer chase Oechsle and ripeness but are rather at pains to express the site and the vintage. While some wines showed

ANNE KREBIEHL MW'S TOP WINES

- Bernhard Huber Wildenstein Spätburgunder -R-Trocken Baden 2010 **96**
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- Friedrich Becker Sankt Paul SP Pinot Noir Monopol Trocken Pfalz 2013 **95**
- Friedrich Becker Heydenreich HR Pinot Noir Monopol Trocken Pfalz 2013 **95**
- JB Becker Wallufer Walkenberg Spätburgunder Auslese Trocken Rheingau 2003 GC **95**
- Fürst Hundsrück GG Spätburgunder Trocken Franken 2012 **95**
- Grafen Neipperg Neipperger Schlossberg Spätburgunder Trocken GG Württemberg 2014 **95**
- Gutzler Westhofener Brunnenhäuschen Spätburgunder VDP Grosse Lage Rheinhessen 2010 **95**
- Keller Westhofen Morstein Spätburgunder Felix trocken Rheinhessen 2013 **95**
- Krone Assmannshäuser Höllenberg Spätburgunder Rheingau 2009 **95**
- Krone Juwel Assmannshäuser Spätburgunder Trocken Rheingau 2012 **95**
- Philipp Kuhn Kirschgarten Laumersheimer Pinot Noir Trocken GG Pfalz 2013 **95**
- Markus Molitor Brauneberger Klostergarten Pinot Noir Mosel 2007 **95**
- Meyer-Näkel Dernauer Pfarrwingert Spätburgunder Trocken GG Ahr 2013 **95**
- Schnaitmann Fellbacher Lämmeler Spätburgunder trocken GG Württemberg 2013 **95**
- Shelter Winery Hans-Bert Espe und Silke Wolf Pinot Noir Trocken Limited Edition 4.032 ex Baden 2012 SC **95**
- Schloss Proschwitz Prinz zur Lippe Schloss Proschwitz Spätburgunder GG Sachsen 2011 **95**

AVERAGE AND RANGE OF SCORES

	Average	Range
Tasting	89	73-96
AJ	84	73-91
AK	93	80-96
JR	88	85-94

distinct new oak, this was nowhere near as blunt as it was ten years ago. Indeed, structure now comes more from stems than from wood tannin, as well as from acidity. Barrels of 300 liters and larger vessels are gaining in importance, and whole-bunch ferments are rife. The sins of overextraction and heavy makeup could barely be detected. What these winemakers are chasing is purity of fruit and distinct expression of site in a pared-back style—especially in the more southerly latitudes and perhaps as a counterpoint to the soupy idiom still peddled by some local cooperatives.

Could I have placed these wines confidently into their home regions by tasting them blind? Very honestly, no, I could not—the individual styles and sites are too various to pinpoint accurately. What the tasting clearly and gratifyingly demonstrated is that German Spätburgunder is just being itself—made now mostly by the children of the early visionaries of the 1980s. I like their ambition, their desire to redefine Spätburgunder in the 21st century, and their direction of travel. Fellow lovers of freshness will surely find here many delicious wines of lasting appeal.

**Weingut Stadt Klingenberg
Benedikt Baltes Terra 1261
Spätburgunder Franken 2013** | 93
(13.5% ABV)

AJ | Mid-depth of translucent red. Bottle 1: Corky. Bottle 2: Vivid, fresh red cherry-plum fruits in still-youthful guise. Excellent fruit on the palate, too: vivid, nuanced, and ripe, carrying the wine as it should, with some delicate structural work to shape and settle the wine. Overall, the effect is still soft—but classy and refined, and with better concentration and depth than most of its peers. A very good Pinot indeed, and well up to Burgundy village or lower level premier cru standard. There is some resonance, depth, and lyricism (the great Pinot qualities) here. | 91

AK | On the nose, tart red fruit blends with the earthy purity and freshness of peaty spring water. The palate also bears the same, lovely, earthy echo of pu-erh tea, which has a definite but gentle grip, sometimes verging on autumnal notes of roasted pumpkin. Amid this, redcurrant fruit shimmers enticingly. An earthy, brooding wine, almost moody but also mysterious. | 94

**Bernhard Huber Wildenstein
Spätburgunder -R- Trocken
Baden 2009** (13.5% ABV) | 92

AJ | Very deeply colored and youthful for its age. Rather minty on the nose, but some raspberry warmth beneath. Probably the best of the pensioner flight, in that the wine is deep, structured, rounded, and resonant, and the fruit is still recognizably Pinot. Nothing has gone wrong, and the acidity is under control: perfectly satisfactory drinking. I still, though, don't get any sense that this well-made Pinot was really worth keeping... | 85

AK | A touch of roast pumpkin adds earthiness to red fruit. There still is a hint of reduction, too. The palate is elegant and poised with freshness that defines the clear lines of tart, red fruit with an evolved character that is reminiscent of maple-syrup aromatics. There is a savory, earthy note that is as honest as it is alluring. Elegance, earthiness, and precision make for a disarming trio. | 96

JR | Dark crimson and luminous. Much bluer than you would expect at this age. Pungent and interesting on the nose. Racy and lively. Very smooth and appetizing, with the merest hint of cough medicine. Smooth tannins and subtle stuff. The first wine I have been tempted to swallow. Quite a bit of acidity, but not raw. A treat to taste this licorice-scented wine. Dry but not drying on the finish. 2014-20. | 94

**Meyer-Näkel Derauer
Pfarrwingert Spätburgunder
Trocken GG Ahr 2013** (13.5% ABV) | 92

AJ | Deep, clear black-red. Quite oaky, but successful, with the oak charged and filled with soft raspberry and cherry fruits. Warm, rounded, vivid, and poised, with impressive depth of fruit here. The oak is melting into the wine, and while there are almost no palpable tannins, it's retained

a sense of structure and finishing wealth. An excellent mouthful of lively yet rewarding Pinot. A great driving palate, which I love, though its lack of aromatic subtlety sees me reining the score back a little. | 91

AK | Lovely, heady notes of iron-oxide and redcurrant fill the nose. The palate is dense and tart, but the freshness illuminates redcurrant, tart, aromatic cherry and tart mulberry so they show in all their glorious purity. This hits you right in the heart with its vivid, fresh-faced, and deeply alluring sense of fruit. The structure is firm and mouthwatering, shimmering with aromatic fruit from start to finish. Lovely now but this seems certain to evolve. | 95

JR | Mid-crimson. First bottle TCA. Second one smells of rubber and gym shoes! Then it calms down somewhat to fruit, even dried fruit. Some grip and lots of acidity. Certainly fresh and with vitality. 2018-25. | 89

**Pinot Noix Daniel Twardowski
Ardoise Pinot Noir Mosel 2014** | 91
(13% ABV)

AJ | Deep but translucent black-red. Sweet, oaky, but plenty of black and red fruits to provide some draw. Concentrated and exuberant, with starburst-fresh black fruits with some depth and substance. The oak is less obtrusive on the palate than on the nose, and this is a very good wine overall of generous and seamless style for its category. | 89

AK | A lick of creamy vanilla shines through the almost sumptuous cherry fruit on the nose. This sets the tone for a smooth, rounded, but fresh wine with ample red-cherry notes. There is extracted density and very fine-grained, taut tannin. There is even a little heat on the finish. Still tightly closed. Wait for this. For now, | 93

JR | Deep crimson. Subtle, intriguing nose that is very far from simple fruit. Very attractive mouth-filling, composed wine that seems to owe far more to vineyard than Weingut. Juicy and savory. Not at all sweet. Already enjoyable, but it should continue to evolve. Great balance and very refreshing with a long finish. Sophisticated. 2017-27. | 92

**Paul Shumacher Marienthaler
Trotzenberg Spätburgunder 2013** | 92
(13.5% ABV)

AJ | Clear, mid-red with some faint bricking of the hue. Warm and full of pure fruit enticement, without excessive oak. Fine-lined on the palate, with a much more mature and more settled style of fruit than some of the other 2013s, but this is another soft, stealthy, and haunting Spätburgunder of real delicacy, refinement, and class which I would love to drink for dinner. I wouldn't keep it any longer, but just now its tenderness and poise are outstanding, though it is neither ample nor particularly resonant. | 90

AK | This seems advanced, with notions of wet hay, freshly turned wet earth and trodden leaves. On the slender palate, the fruit is fading but there

still is a smoky veil of just gripping tannins and fine, bright acidity. All the elements are in balance; it is just a pity that the fruit is so shy and takes such time to come to the fore: redcurrant with edges of spicy pepper. This bears the hallmarks of unforced elegance. | 93

**Friedrich Becker Sankt Paul SP
Pinot Noir Monopol Trocken
Pfalz 2013** (13.5% ABV) | 91

AJ | Deep, clear, and clean black-red. Sweetly and freshly oaky on the nose initially. After a while, it acquires some sappy depths and grows more subtle and classically enticing. Juicy, fresh, mercurial fruit on the palate (redcurrant and red cherry), but backed by depth and substance with some shy tannins, and lots of ripely sappy acidity, so overall the effect carries; this would be an effective Spätburgunder for the table. A well-preserved and carefully crafted wine that summarizes the sour-sharp appeal of the category in balanced and refined style. | 91

AK | An aromatic touch of moss and conifer adds immediate allure to red-cherry fruit on the nose. The fruit walks an exciting tightrope between tartness and ripeness which adds both drama and tension. This is aromatic and alluring, poised and juicy, and has barely started on its journey. Aromatic depth of berry anchors this but the top notes soar. Simply lovely and very convincing wine. | 95

JR | Deep crimson. Something rather sweaty on the nose of this. Sweet start and some density. Quite a solid wine without the ethereal quality of a fine Pinot but the balance is fair and it could be a good accompaniment to food. A little drying on the end. Some beetroot notes. Pretty firm! 2018-23. | 88

**Peter Kriechel Neuenahrer
Sonnenberg Spätburgunder -R-
Trocken Ahr 2014** (13.5% ABV) | 91

AJ | Clear, limpid garnet. Ground black pepper and sweet cherry: an attractive mix. Lively, with a dash of lime juice to set the cherries dancing; smooth-textured and mouthwatering. I'd probably chill this and use it as a white wine that happened to be red. Lots to enjoy, if viewed aright. | 88

AK | There is something heady and sumptuous about the warm nose, something like cherry preserved in Kirsch. This appears like incredibly delicate fruit of strawberry held aloft on a structure of smoky tannin and fresh acidity. Edges of smoked meat appear, as do notions of pure, ripe cherry. There is nothing heavy about this, but there is depth. That visceral sense of smoked meat appears very strongly again on the finish. A very intriguing wine with strange staying power. | 94

JR | Mid-shaded garnet. Already has an attractive sweet fungal note. Good mid-weight and great balance. Very alluring, with just a hint of balsam. Already a great pleasure, with sufficient acidity to keep it fresh. Not sure this is a long-distance runner, but it's certainly lovely now. There's a certain delicacy and certainly some persistence. Bit of a dancer. 2017-24. | 90

ANDREW JEFFORD'S VERDICT

Pinot-growing and creating is a noble vocation, and the best of these wines show that it is worth pursuing in Germany, since they had perfume, finesse, and poise. They are definitely northern; the acidity is usually prominent, colors are pale, fruit allusions tend as much to the redcurrant as to any other fruit, and they are rarely deeply or firmly structured. Points of comparison include the Pinot reds of the Central Loire, Alsace, the UK, and even Champagne, and against this competition they will show creditably. Many—most—are oaked, and the oak is often excessively prominent on the nose. (Growing Pinot is not an excuse to buy barrels.) I'm not sure why, though, but even those wines that smell overoaked in fact prove rarely to be so on the palate. Tannic structures vary—some wines are smooth as glass. In my opinion, it is worth going after the tannins, providing the fruit is ripe, because this brings seriousness, dignity, and table aptitude to a wine. Ripeness is key—and challenging. Many wines were grassy and

herbaceous, and these were my least favorite part of the cohort; others, though, were almost jammy, when the ripeness had been pursued too single-mindedly. The ideal lies in the middle, but it often proved elusive. The role of acidity is an intriguing one here, since it was rarely truly sharp even if it was often the main structuring element in a wine; phenolic ripeness definitely brings ripe acidity. But the fruit must cling to that acidity if the acidity is to be successful. It seems to fall away swiftly with age, which was why I would really have preferred it if we could have looked at wines from 2013-15 alone; the older wines for me were often sharp, tired, and charmless, thanks to the fruit flesh sliding away from the acid bones. All of that said, the future bodes well for German Pinot in times (alas) of rapid climate change. German Pinot producers should keep benchmarking their wines against the finest competition to ensure that they are most optimally themselves and not needlessly parochial (and especially not overoaked).

TOP WINES

Friedrich Becker Sankt Paul SP Pinot Noir Monopol Trocken Pfalz 2013 | 91

Meyer-Näkel Derauer Pfarrwingert Spätburgunder Trocken GG Ahr 2013 | 91

Weingut Stadt Klingenberg Benedikt Baltes Terra 1261 Spätburgunder Franken 2013 | 91

Shelter Winery Hans-Bert Espe und Silke Wolf Pinot Noir Trocken Limited Edition 1.762 ex Baden 2014 SC | 90

Paul Shumacher Marienthaler Trotzenberg Spätburgunder 2013 | 90

Gutzler Westhofener Morstein Spätburgunder trocken VDP Grosse Lage Rheinhessen 2012 | 89

Philipp Kuhn Kirschgarten Laumersheimer Pinot Noir Trocken GG Pfalz 2013 | 89

Knipsper Burgweg Spätburgunder GG Trocken Pfalz 2012 | 89

Peter Kriechel Ahrweiler Rosenthal Spätburgunder Trocken Ahr 2012 | 89

Thörle Saulheimer Hölle Spätburgunder Trocken Rheinhessen 2014 | 89

Schnaitmann Fellbacher Lämmeler Spätburgunder Trocken GG Württemberg 2013 | 89

**Philipp Kuhn Kirschgarten
Laumersheimer Pinot Noir
Trocken GG Pfalz 2013** (14% ABV) | 91

AJ | Deep, clear red. Warm and grainy, rounded, with some soft cherry at the core; pleasant if broad-brush. Lively, juicy; lots of squeezed sour cherries. Sweet edges to set off the sourness, and the sourness is resonant and place-reflective; there's nothing unripe in this wine. Well made, and with some depth and concentration; one of the longest finishes on the table. All that it's missing is a little aromatic finesse. | 89

AK | Smoke and tar still play among ripe, red-cherry notes. The palate is dense and serious and very concentrated, only revealing aromatic notes of cherry here and there. This is still rather closed and very firm. This is just beginning to unfurl and has aromatic, tart red fruit at its deep core. This is resonant and still very young, with a firm, at this point almost unrelenting, structure. Wait. | 95

JR | Mid-crimson. Gentle and only a little raw on the palate. But overall, it is a little demanding on the palate. A hint of green. But quite long. Just a bit tart. 2017-22. | 88

**Fürst Hundsrück GG
Spätburgunder Trocken Franken
2012** (13.5% ABV) | 91

AJ | Clear, bright black-red. Sweet, soft, and warm scents: a cherry-fruit nose-mitten. Comfy! Very clear, light, limpid, straightforward, and direct. Uncomplicated, well-made, clean-contoured Spätburgunder that is now fully ready, but it doesn't really compete in the "serious Pinot" stakes. | 87

AK | The merest touch of reduction still plays on the nose but is joined by heady notes of conifer and tart, red fruit of lovely aromatic depth. This has barely begun to show—all we see for now is lovely poise and balance and a smooth, harmonious, and wonderfully unforced mid-palate that has bite and depth. This is alluring and completely self-evident. Its honesty and clarity are disarming. | 95

JR | Mid-garnet, with a transparent rim. Light, subtle nose. Lots of impact—both fresh fruit and acidity. Clearly a very good wine on the palate. Real character and balance here. Substance. Lip-smacking! Long. 2017-26. | 90

**Thörle Saulheimer Hölle
Spätburgunder Trocken
Rheinhessen 2014** (13% ABV) | 91

AJ | Deep clear black-red. Correct but shy raspberry and black-cherry scents, with some oak. Lean, mordant, and linear, with a little dash of raspberry vinegar among the raspberry (though neither acetic nor volatile—I'm just trying to convey its style of acid energy). Enjoyably pungent and bright, and the fruit quite correctly has the upper hand on the palate. This seems to me a good Spätburgunder—in other words, an enjoyable, characterful, and typical Pinot of the far north. | 89

AK | Smoky pine branches overlay lovely, bright, red fruit. There is real tartness here: redcurrant and cranberry and lively, sprightly freshness, alongside a fine gauze of still crunchy tannin. This is slender but deep. Acidity and tannin make for a lasting, firm structure. An alluring edge of Campari bitterness adds extra interest. This is firm and needs to mellow but is very promising. | 94

JR | Deep garnet. Light violet scents are rather Côte de Beaunish. Lots of fruit albeit unevolved fruit. Good attack and confidence. Real mid-palate presence. Great balance. Should be quite a long-distance runner to judge from the tannin level. 2019-27. | 89


**Schnaitmann Fellbacher Lämmeler
Spätburgunder Trocken GG
Württemberg 2013** (13% ABV) | 91

AJ | Deep, clear red, with a whisper of black still. Exuberant, lifted floral and cherry notes: attractive. Some aromatic sweetness, too. Juicy, bright, and fresh, with some depth of fruit matched by oaken sweetness. Not much in the way of extract, tannin, or substance but a wine of true appeal as a young, sweet-tempered Spätburgunder of some classicism. Raspberry to the last. | 89

AK | A touch of smoky bacon colors the ripe, red, but crunchy cherry fruit. The palate gives tart poise of more tart red fruit—think cranberry—and a still-crunchy, fresh, bright structure that has the lovely grip of starched tulle. The fruit is vivid from start to finish, so this manages to be concentrated but not heavy. The acid lures you in with its unbending freshness. The aromas linger. There is a lovely balance here. | 95

JR | Dark garnet. Very light nose with not that much development, though on the palate there is some ferny quality and melding of tannins. Quite pretty if fragile at the moment. The fruit seems

quite ready, but there is still quite a bit of both acid and fine tannin. Beetroot. An amalgam of elements rather than an integrated whole. And with very marked acidity. 2017–22. | **88**

Shelter Winery Hans-Bert Espe und Silke Wolf Pinot Noir Trocken Limited Edition 1.762 ex Baden 2014 SC (13.5% ABV) | **91**

AJ | Deep black-red against its peers. Rather showily sweet in scent, but not unattractive, with a big billow of black cherry to carry the oak. As is generally the case in this tasting, the palate comes as a bit of a shock, since it is much drier and sharper than the sweet scents suggested, but we are still in the cherry zone, black cherry, and there is plenty of weight of ripe fruit here albeit acid-focused; a little tannic support, too. The oak remains prominent. Good, fresh, invigorating, and diverting Spätburgunder—and well balanced, providing you can set the oak aside. | **90**
AK | A touch of mocha and smoke frames red-cherry fruit on the nose. The palate has a generous roundness and measured ripeness. There is a firm structure here, the tannins feel extracted, and there is a density here that suggests this was made for the long run. This is still firmly closed. A big wine. I'd like to reserve judgment but cannot. For now, | **93**

JR | Deep blueish crimson. User-friendly, with a whiff of sweet oak. Quite dramatically earthy and pungent. Lots to get your teeth into here! Definitely needs food. In fact, it tastes as though it had some mineral granules in it. Well balanced and very characterful. Marked but not rough tannin. 2019–27. | **89**

Shelter Winery Hans-Bbert Espe und Silke Wolf Pinot Noir Trocken Limited Edition 4.032 ex Baden 2012 SC (13% ABV) | **91**

AJ | Clear pale red. Sweet, fresh, and juicy, but just a little high-toned and varnished. It has that character on the palate, too, but the sweet, waltzy fruit carries it well, and I rather fancy drinking this for lunch. Not quite a serious contender but has some winning qualities. | **88**
AK | Dark bramble with its ripe fruit, and leafiness plays on the nose. The slightest touch of vanilla enriches the fruit. The palate seems unforced but dense. There is almost a wild streak of forest fruit and undergrowth on the mid-palate, tender and gentle, with structure from acid rather than tannin. At its core is a treasure chest of aromatic, pure red fruit that tempts you to explore. Allow yourself to be drawn in. Lovely and lasting. | **95+**
JR | Mid-ruby. Sweet, mushroomy nose. Easy to like. Flattering, even if without the vitality of some. Neat and well balanced. Fairly light but persistent. 2016–25. | **89**

Dautel Forstberg Spätburgunder Oberstenfeld Württemberg 2014 (13% ABV) | **90**

AJ | Deep clear purple-red. Dark, rather coffeeish scents. After a while, the black cherries steal shyly

SMOKED MEAT SETS A HEADY ACCENT ON THE NOSE. THE PALATE IS BRIMFUL WITH FRESHNESS AND SOME SHARP HEAT; IT IS THE FRUIT THAT LAGS BEHIND. THERE IS A PEPPERY, SPICY FINISH, BUT THE NOTE OF HEAT LINGERS

out from behind. Vivid, fresh, lively, juicy, yet lean, with plenty of acid energy but fruit-formed and bonded; an almost sherbetty finish. Sapid and jolly. | **88**
AK | The nose is almost closed. This does not want to give itself away. With a little air, notes of dark fruit appear—among them a touch of elderberry. The palate in comparison seems easy and juicy, sprightly and fresh, with wonderfully tart notes of red berry with earthy edges and a translucent, gauze-like structure that has immense charm. The freshness is moreish, the structure firm, this is deceptively light but shows wonderful depth. A bit short perhaps on the finish. | **93**
JR | Exceptionally deep purplish crimson. Slightly raw, intense nose. A very particular vision of Pinot Noir. Pretty dramatic and cold-soaky! Very edgy and chiseled. Not the blowy side of Pinot. No fun for the moment. Ambitious but a tad exaggerated for my taste. Red Spangles? 2020–30. | **88**

Weingut Stadt Klingenberg Benedikt Baltes Schlossberg Großes Gewächs Franken 2014 (13.5% ABV) | **90**

AJ | Clear, graceful red. Some evident oak; fine-drawn, dryish raspberry fruit behind. The overall effect is delicate and enticing. Clean, smooth, pungent, and refreshing, with a cascade of bright though ripe raspberry acidity and little detaining tannin. | **85**
AK | The nose is an amalgam of rose-petal potpourri, strawberry, and toasty woodsmoke. This is quite aromatic and heady. The palate is lovely and slender, characterized by firm acidity and the most gentle grip of fine tannin. Lovely depth. This is juicy, while the freshness makes the red fruit bright and vivid, which now gains something of cranberry and smoky cherry. This is wonderfully *à point* right now, even if a little alcoholic heat becomes evident, but it has the stuffing and resonance to go the distance. The long finish is of pure, smoky cherry. | **94**

Knipser Burgweg Spätburgunder GG Trocken Pfalz 2012 (13.5% ABV) | **90**

AJ | Translucent mature red. Warm, soft, rounded,

ripe, and enticing: an appealing scent of good Pinot given wise *élevage*. Vivid, rounded, lively, tangy; sustained redcurrant fruits, though just a little bitter at the end. But at root this is well made and gratifying; fully ready now. Not concentrated, even if stylistically very well judged. | **89**
AK | Smoked meat sets a heady accent on the nose. The palate is brimful with freshness and some sharp heat; it is the fruit that lags behind. It only wakes slowly, coming in with the tart aroma of redcurrant but proclaiming far riper richness of cherries in Kirsch. There is a peppery, spicy finish, but the note of heat lingers. | **93**
JR | Dark ruby. Mushroomy evolved nose. Rich fruit and masses of pleasure aromatically, even if the acid level is a little elevated. Hint of rusty nail on the end. 2016–21. | **89**

Gutzler Westhofener Morstein Spätburgunder Trocken VDP Grosse Lage Rheinhessen 2012 (13% ABV) | **90**

AJ | Clear, pale red, though nothing senescent in the hue. Attractive, sweetly true scents of the cherry orchard and the hay rick. Soft, limpid, clear, and fully ready. A delicate but pure-spirited Pinot that is ready to be dispatched, and that would make an excellent and refined dinner companion. | **89**
AK | Just a touch of reduction plays on the nose, which does not give away much else. Throughout, this is full of slender poise. The palate reveals harmonious red-berry notes, backed by textured richness with just a little heat backed by a counterpoint of vivid, lively freshness. There is a lasting touch of tart, red cherry. | **93**
JR | Bright ruby. Violets and fully evolved but without quite enough energy. But decent enough with some evolution. Just a bit raw. 2015–22. | **88**

Jean Stodden Spätburgunder Alte Reben Rech Ahr 2015 (12.5% ABV) | **90**

AJ | Very light-hued. Bright raspberry scents, with a big puff of sweet oak stiffening. More redcurrant than raspberry on the palate: straightforward, bright, and light, with the oak in fact not obtruding too much. Lean, acidic finish that nonetheless retains its fruit print. | **88**
AK | Rather smoky nose, heady but pleasant. Underneath that sits very full fruit that is still tightly closed. The ripeness of the year is evident in the juicy, ripe red-cherry notions. Fresh acidity makes for a lovely backbone and there is crunch and tender grip in the fine tannins. Here as well slight heat is evident. But fruit and balance are undoubted. This has great potential in its almost sumptuous way. | **93**
JR | Light ruby that's already browning with a pale rim. I'm torn between taking this distinctive nose for the forest-floor aromas that can sometimes be associated with Pinot Noir and less than pristine wood. I'll give it the benefit of the doubt because there is very fresh, attractive fruit on the palate. This is an extremely hedonistic wine that's already delivering pleasure. A hint of mushrooms and nice balance. Refreshing as well as fruity, with a little fine tannin on the end. 2017–23. | **90**

Paul Walporzheimer Kräuterberg Spätburgunder 2009 (13% ABV) | **90**

AJ | Still deep-hued for its age, without any advanced bricking. Warm, grainy, attractive and harmonious scents; decorous rather than dazzling, but enjoyable and enticing. On the palate, the wine is beginning to grow reedy, thin out, and slip away, but there is lots of truth to the noble Pinot ideal here, and it will still provide mature, settled pleasure over the next year or two. | **88**
AK | Roasted, caramelized pumpkin and iron-oxide notes hint both at ripeness and richness. Indeed, the palate is dense, but there seems more oak than fruit. The fruit there is offers brief but friendly, juicy glimpses, aided by bright freshness. The tannins are fine and detailed but a little astringent. A rather masculine wine, with muscle that obscures its charm. | **92**

Gutzler Westhofener Brunnenhäuschen Spätburgunder VDP Grosse Lage Rheinhessen 2010 (13.5% ABV) | **90**

AJ | Very clear red now. Sweet, fresh, lifted, and articulate, though it has only just inched beyond herbaceous. Some attractive secondary notes nonetheless (tobacco and vellum). Elderly and relatively acidic, but still with just enough fruit and supporting structure to provide some classic drinking pleasure. | **85**
AK | A rather reticent nose suggests herbs and tender red fruit alongside smoke. The palate is fresh and vivid and paints an alluring picture of redcurrant and riper but still tart notions of aromatic cherry. This is contained and fine, elegant and taut, brisk and neat—yet it still holds its tender, lovely, and pure fruit in its very core. This is alluring and lasting, lovely and evocative. | **95**
JR | Bright ruby. Some real mushroomy subtlety here. Fine and fresh and ferny. Seems a little green and whole-bunchy, but the fruit was clearly very high quality. Quite long. 2016–21. | **89**

Dautel Schupen Spätburgunder Bönningheim Württemberg 2014 (13.5% ABV) | **89**

AJ | Deep clear red. Very juicy, fresh, and pertly sweet; enticing if perhaps a little simple. The palate is similarly constituted: pretty, light, bright—a gush and a curtsy. Hugely enjoyable drinking, but I wouldn't let it near the cellar. | **87**
AK | Aromatic nose of morello cherry. The palate is juicy and sprightly, full of primary fruit with edges of lovely tartness and darker, more brooding edges. A wonderfully sprightly, not overworked and fresh-faced wine, with a juicy core of very pure fruit. Very approachable and full of charm. | **92**
JR | Deep blueish crimson. Floral nose with some intensely ripe fruit. The acidity is really quite marked here, and because hardly any tannin is in evidence, I suspect it will always be so. But there's a good mouthful of fruit here, even if it is still developing. Quite impressive length. Needs a bit of time to develop interest. 2019–26. | **89**

Diel Pinot Noir Caroline Blauer Spätburgunder Trocken Nahe 2014 (13.5% ABV) | **89**

AJ | Deep red; deeper than most of its peers. Juicy and exuberant on the palate, and the oak here, too, conveys a strong sense of cinnamon, nutmeg, mace, and clove spice to the wine. Shy fruit, however, so after the spices have settled, it is the acidity itself (and some delicate tannins) that remain. Enjoyable for now, but I wouldn't keep the wine too much longer. | **84**
AK | A ripe aspect of crunchy, red, aromatic cherry rises from the glass alongside a notion of wet stone. The palate is fluid and juicy, still brimming with fruit but with a firmer grip of Atlas silk. This is slender but harmonious and majors on fruit rather than muscle—it ends on a lovely, pure notion of red cherry. | **93**

Grafen Neipperg Neipperger Schlossberg Spätburgunder Trocken GG Württemberg 2014 (12% ABV) | **89**

AJ | Deep, clear black-red. Tinned cherries and clotted cream: not unattractive, but lacking a little fresh zest. Perhaps this character had a reductive element, though, because after a few minutes in the glass it does seem fresher, and the oak more evident. Tangy and relatively dry on the palate, though, without a lot of fruited wealth or detail. A touch green at the end, finally. | **85**
AK | Both tart red- and tart black-cherry notes play on the nose. There is also an almost mint-like lift and a touch of wet iron. This has the headiness of cold mint tisane without even the faintest touch of greenness. The palate comes in with vivid, poised freshness that carries pure, tart, red fruit. This is full of life and drive. This is slender but firm, has concentration but no heaviness. A streak of wild, black, sour cherry haunts seductively. This has purity and poise and is of bewitching aromatic intensity. | **95**
JR | Mid- to deep garnet. Herbal nose. Sweet fruit on the front palate. Some cough medicine notes—not the juiciest, not fruitiest. Rather a lack of juice in fact. Tastes as though made from very small or thick-skinned grapes. I fear this will always be a bit dry. 2019–23. | **88**

Grafen Neipperg Wurttemberg Neipperger Schlossberg Spätburgunder Trocken Wurttemberg 2011 (13% ABV) | **89**

AJ | Clear red and relatively deep-hued for a 2011. Sweet cherry scents; still primary, to my surprise. On the palate (perhaps I should have seen this coming), that primary fruit has a rather fixed and drawn expression; intense, but lacking warmth and resonance. But to look on the bright side, this is a vibrant and faithful Pinot with classic fruit, some length and a tangy finish that needs finishing soon. | **84**
AK | Lovely notes of heady black cherry play vividly on the nose. The palate is firm but tart and has only just started opening up. There is vivid

purity of ripe red cherry and a lovely, unforced expression of freshness and gauze-like tannin. This is slender but vivid, taut but full of allure. The morello freshness on the finish is haunting and so moreish. | **94**
JR | Crimson-ruby. Sweet and very slightly jammy. A bit simple. 2016–21. | **88**

Gutzler Westhofener Brunnenhäuschen Spätburgunder Trocken VDP Grosse Lage Rheinhessen 2012 (13% ABV) | **89**

AJ | Clear and beginning to brick a little now. Graceful and mature; true Pinot scents with some refined creaminess. It's evolved but bodes well nonetheless. Sinewy redcurrant fruits in a very smooth-contoured mouthful; tart finish; a little less rich, in other words, than the nose suggested. Ready now; true; and with some mouth-quickening qualities, though. | **87**
AK | The nose does not want to give that much away. There are gentle hints of strawberry on a wonderfully fluid, unforced, fresh palate. Edges of woodsmoke set a sultry accent, and while there is just a hint of heat, this stays on the right side of balance and firmness, with a bright, enduring freshness and earthy elegance. The freshness lingers. | **93**
JR | Pale ruby. Transparent. Light and rather decayed. Fruit is difficult to discern. Just a tad mousy. Trying hard, but not pure or bright enough for me. 2015–20. | **87**

Peter Kriechel Ahrweiler Rosenthal Spätburgunder Trocken Ahr 2012 (13.5% ABV) | **89**

AJ | Deep though clear and mature-hued oxblood red. Pleasant, mature scents with oak and hazels evident as well as cherry fruit. On the palate, this is quite a deep, full-bodied Pinot that is carrying the years a little better than some of its peers. Impeccable ripeness and a little supporting structure, though prominent oak. | **89**
AK | Ripe, almost luscious notes of forest fruit make for a rich, alluring nose. They are joined by notes of undergrowth and earth, as well as a rich and sonorous tone of vanilla. This is pliable and mellow, fresh and rich, and ends on an almost plump, vanilla-scented note of red berry. | **92**
JR | Brownish garnet. Very sweet, coconut and hedonistic but not pure. A tad oily. Too many winemaking tricks evident. Sickly. No! 2015–17. | **86**

Aldinger Untertürkheimer Gips Spätburgunder GG Trocken Marienglas® Württemberg 2014 (12.5% ABV) | **88**

AJ | Light and translucent; deep rose-red. Redcurrants and snipped privet on the nose. Despite the greenness, there is a stylish warmth of scent, too, so you can't really say that it's underripe. That's very much the palate appeal, too: It seems to be a full-season, cool-place Pinot that offers phenolic maturity with flavors of redcurrant, grapefruit, and trimmed grass and leaves. Not

really my thing, but I feel it is an honest and well-made wine. | 83

AK | A very smoky nose hinting at toasty oak. The palate underneath is fresh and full of lively, fresh and pure morello cherry alongside tart notes of red cherry. The smoke plays alongside, brightened by the wine's lively acidity. This is tangy and tart, moreish and light, but not without depth or echo. Rather intriguing, with a lovely redcurrant finish. | 93

JR | Mid-garnet. Pale rim. Round and low in tannin. Easy, mushroomy, and with quite marked acidity. Fairly lightweight and grassy. Pure aromas but a bit tart. Could be riper... 2019-23. | 88

Friedrich Becker Heydenreich HR Pinot Noir Monopol Trocken Pfalz 2013 (13.5% ABV) | 88

AJ | Deep clear black-red. Oak and sweet cereal-grain notes, but a slightly cardboardy cast to this as well. Filter pads? Deeper than many of its peers, with rounded, harmonious fruit driven by green-hued acidity. A wine with qualities but lacking a little in seduction and articulacy. | 83

AK | Toasty notes of oak appear first. There also is a floral overtone of peony. The palate has concentration and poise and reveals dark, ripe cherry with total crunchiness. The structure is firm; the palate is vivid and alive. This is not scared of appearing tart and revels in its own freshness and vivacity. Red and black cherry dance and leave wonderful aromatics in their wake. For adults only. | 95

JR | Mid- to deep crimson. Very pale rim. Rather occluded smudgy nose. Sweet edgy fruit with marked acidity. Tannins are a little rough. Good intent but not the most sophisticated. Scrawny finish but some interesting fungal flavors. 2018-22. | 87

Diel Pinot Noir Caroline Blauer Spätburgunder trocken Nahe 2013 (13.5% ABV) | 88

AJ | Deep black-red; the 20th wine served, and certainly the sturdiest so far in terms of depth of color. Rather muddled, kerosene scents, however, with some sweet coffeeish oak behind. A bit muddled and soupy on the palate—cherry soup, but tinned and not fresh, with a spoonful of raspberry vinegar. I could drink a curiosity glass for dinner and relish its depth of flavor alongside its more emasculated peers, but I doubt I'd finish the bottle. | 83

AK | An edge of savoriness on the nose: salty soy plays alongside tart red fruit and comes together in a spicy, appetizing way that shows depth rather than power. The palate is firm and has ample crunch but the fruit is beginning to express itself on the tart, still crunchy palate. Aromatic richness of redcurrant and cranberry, conifer headiness and slight smoke define the moreish finish. Rather alluring. | 94

JR | Very deep crimson. Big and dense on the nose. Sweet fruit and apparently lower in acidity than the 2014s we have just been tasting. Quite arresting, and fleshier than most Pinots. Ready. 2017-22. | 88

JANCIS ROBINSON MW'S VERDICT

The wines were all quite pale and, often, brownish. The wines tended to be a bit sweet, and most 2014s, and even 2013s, had quite marked acidity. On the other hand, compared to the Spätburgunders of old, these wines were hardly ever overoaked, and very few were overripe.

They were all at extremely different points in their evolution, with some, often those I liked most, already approachable, while others were extremely youthful and difficult to predict in terms of likely development. The 2013s had very dark colors in general, while the 2014s had markedly high acids. In fact, the acids were routinely high, no matter what the vintage—no bad thing usually with Pinot Noir.

Overall, there was an extraordinary variation in color! Some of the wines showed the old German fault of being too sweet. I found a few to rave about—and they were generally much more open than their Burgundian counterparts. Overall, I thought this selection compared pretty favorably with a likely similar selection of red Burgundies (though I don't have price comparisons to hand). Even though there were hardly any absolute knockouts, there were hardly any serious disappointments. My impression is that the range of quality was narrower than it would have been for a range of red Burgundies of the same age and prices. Some wines had evolved much faster than similar Burgundies would have done, but that was often a plus point.

TOP WINES

Bernhard Huber Wildenstein Spätburgunder -R- Trocken Baden 2009 **94**

August Kessler Höllenberg Pinot Noir Trocken Rheingau 2012 **92**

Knipser Reserve Spätburgunder Trocken Pfalz 2011 **92**

Fürst Hundsrück GG Spätburgunder Trocken Franken 2012 **90**

Peter Kriechel Neuenahrer Sonnenberg Spätburgunder -R- Trocken Ahr 2014 **90**

Peter Kriechel Walporzheimer Kräuterberg Spätburgunder-Goldkapsel-Trocken Ahr 2013 **90**

Pinot Noix Daniel Twardowski Ardoise Pinot Noir Mosel 2014 **92**

Jean Stodden Spätburgunder Alte Reben Rech/ Ahr 2015 **90**

Bernhard Huber Wildenstein Spätburgunder -R- Trocken Baden 2010 (13.5% ABV) | 88

AJ | Clear black-red; deep hue for its age. Some piney oak (an oxymoron, but that is how it comes across) dominates the aromas. Acidic and rather leafy on the palate, with all the warmth and seduction coming from the barrel. There is some depth and concentration, but I would struggle to

drink this with any pleasure. | 79

AK | Even now a hint of reduction still lingers. Underneath that, pure redcurrant appears. The palate is taut and tight, vivid and fresh, firm and precise. This sings with purity and poise and still shows very young for a wine from 2010. I feel this has barely awoken. There is weightless poise anchored in pure redcurrant depth. Gossamer tannins frame absolute elegance. A cool year, but such poetry! | 96

JR | Deep ruby. Bright and transparent. Veggie nose with lots of acidity and not quite enough breadth of fruit. Spicy notes but a bit dry. Quite tart. 2016-20. | 88

Holger Koch Pinot Noir Baden 2015 (13% ABV) | 88

AJ | Light clear red. Clean, sweet-edged fresh fruit: simple cherry, softly defined. Bright, rather biting cherry fruit, but pure and not overly oak-compromised: a refreshing mouthful. | 85

AK | Smoky overtones, just-lit woodfire, hover over redcurrant fruit. With deeper sniffs, fruit attains a riper aspect. Reminiscent of ripe mulberry and cherry. Body is slender and alcoholic heat is palpable—countered by fresh, bright acidity. This seems still boisterous and young. Between the opposing poles of alcoholic warmth and juicy freshness, clear fruit lurks through. Very charming. | 92

JR | Pale ruby with a greyish tinge. Very light nose—just vaguely warm fruit. On the palate, there is marked acidity but not much fruit core. Definitely too young to enjoy now. 2019-23. | 87

Franz Keller Oberrotweiler Eichberg Spätburgunder GG Baden 2014 (13% ABV) | 88

AJ | Deep black-red. Sweet and warm, but unfocused. Clean, as most are. Bright, acid-rinsed soft plum fruit, jingle-bellsing its way through the mouth, but I can see no real depth or glow or thrill of fruit here, though it is perfectly drinkable. | 84

AK | The nose does not want to give too much away. There are mere hints of black cherry and a little freshly tanned leather. The palate has a juicy wealth of tart, dark fruits at its core but remains slender and tender, fresh and vivid. This is timid but charming, firm and fresh. | 92

JR | Healthy crimson. Very pale rim. Light beetroot nose. Lots of flirtatious fruit on the front palate. And pretty tight and austere on the end. More flesh, please! But it's actually pretty charming in a lightweight ballerina sort of way and has impressive persistence and freshness. 2020-24. | 89

Franz Keller Achkarrer Schlossberg Spätburgunder GG Baden 2014 (13% ABV) | 88

AJ | Deep, clear red. Sweet hay and vetiver scents, with shy fruits. Pretty and enticing—though I don't sniff it and think, "Ah, Pinot..." Smooth, light, and rather linear on the palate. It's a correct wine with some depth of flavor, but it lacks a little loveliness. | 84

AK | A nose of tart morello cherry. An almost slight palate that has elegance and poise. Tartness and fine-boned grip are the hallmarks here. There is a certain delicacy, a certain vivid, northerly freshness that has captured all of the aromatic fruit without leaning on wood or extraction. A translucent and firm but convincingly aromatic style with a wonderfully slender, sprightly body. | 94

JR | Pale blackish crimson. Not 100 percent clean on the nose. And pretty austere on the palate. Rather a lack of fruit. A tad more interesting than basic red, but not a success for me. 2018-20. | 86

Keller Westhofen Morstein Spätburgunder Felix Trocken Rheinhessen 2013 (13% ABV) | 88

AJ | Deep though clear red. A touch of gym shoe to the aroma of this wine; let's see if it clears. Five minutes later, that slightly oppressive note has disappeared, and there's a little fruit, but it doesn't have a lot of shape or focus. Brightly acidic palate, but there's not much primary fruit clinging to the acidity now. It seems to have lost the youthful charm, but to lack the resonance it would need to seduce as a mature wine. | 81

AK | A lovely richness of fruit becomes apparent immediately; this has notes of summer pudding, of redcurrant and raspberry, enveloped in just a little woodsmoke. This is joyous, tartly fruity, totally balanced, and almost bouncy. Everything is illuminated by fresh acidity, but underneath there is a harmonious, unforced unity of elements that suggests ease and pleasure. So lovely, so joyful. Lip-smacking and moreish—with mileage. | 95

JR | Dark crimson. Light, slightly decayed nose. Then sweet and sour. Not sure there is quite enough in the middle to integrate these two elements. A bit of grating acidity on the end. 2018-23. | 87

August Kessler Höllenberg Pinot Noir Trocken Rheingau 2012 (14% ABV) | 88

AJ | Deep, clear red; retaining good depth of color for its age. Warm, cereal and baked cherry pie on the nose, with some straw; not quite classic and a bit tanky and contained. Almost a Tawny Port touch to the sweetness, too. Very smooth and unstructured on the palate, and the fruit has evolved swiftly toward a relatively uninteresting mouthful, alas. | 80

AK | Very full-fruited, ripe and generous notes of forest fruit are immediately apparent. The palate shows them in all their ripeness but sets a counterpoint of firm, fresh acidity. The body is full and juicy, brimming with fruit. The mouthfeel is generous and smooth. There is a little alcoholic heat, but the freshness ensures bright liveliness and lasting joy. | 93

JR | Very dark garnet. Quite subtle, alluring nose with some complexity. Rich fruit with really well-balanced acidity and tannin. Bravo! Big and bold but with a future. Maybe a tad too alcoholic? But with excellent acidity. Lip-smacking. Long. Really rather impressive. A lovely drink now. 2016-28. | 92

Knipser Reserve Spätburgunder Trocken Pfalz 2011 (13% ABV) | 88

AJ | Translucent red. Warm, oaky and tobacco scents; fine carpentry, but will there be enough fruit? The oak isn't quite so evident on the palate, but the freshness and poise and flesh of the fruit has faded somewhat, and what remains is rather grimly acidic. Time to finish up. | 80

AK | Leafy red fruit plays on the nose, then there is a touch of smoke. The palate is sprightly and fresh, vivid and pure. At its core there is ripe redcurrant, shimmering with lovely, peppery spice. Depth of fruit is evident and gets a perfect backdrop to play against in the tart, vivacious freshness of the palate. Very moreish. | 93

JR | Mid-ruby. Pale rim. Subtle, fragile but not dangerously so. A lovely vital drink now. Lots of autumn leaf subtlety. Long. Very fresh. Still vibrant. One of the longest of this selection. Bravo! 2016-23. | 93

Peter Kriechel Walporzheimer Kräuterberg Spätburgunder Goldkapsel Trocken Ahr 2013 (13.5% ABV) | 88

AJ | Deep blood red, bright and well colored, but carrying the years in its hues. Is this going to be very ripe? It's a touch jammy, even figgy on the nose. Not unenticing, though, and with a real architecture of scent to it. It is ripe and has retained that slightly jammy character on the palate, though it is clean and well made. I enjoy the ripeness of fruit though I can't say that it qualifies as a classical Pinot. | 82

AK | The nose has the ripeness of berry compote and very ripe, black cherry. The palate has some of the same plump juiciness but counters it with ample freshness. This is pliable and aromatic, majoring on that black-cherry ripeness. The structure is firm and crunchy. | 92

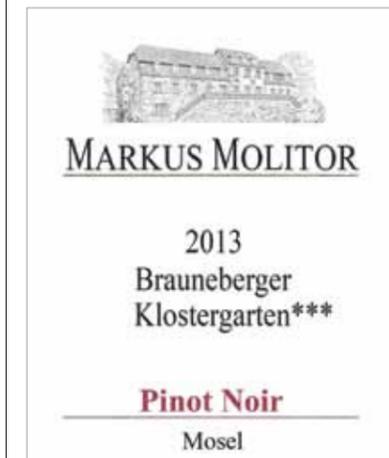
JR | Shaded mid-garnet. Lots of evolution in the herbal/minty spectrum. Appetizing and fully evolved. Not too sweet and just the job now. Some subtlety and great build. Light tannins but the fruit overwhelms them. Good balance and presence. Medium length. 2016-23. | 90

Markus Molitor Brauneberger Klostergarten Pinot Noir Mosel 2013 (13.5% ABV) | 88

AJ | Clear, deep red. Light, bright, and exuberant high-latitude Pinot with sweet, developed, fully aged but slightly farmyardy style. Light, slender palate, its redcurrants now with their primary focus scrubbed away, but supported by modest tannins. Holding its own, but I wouldn't keep much longer. | 84

AK | A nose of ripe forest fruit gives an impression of sumptuousness. That plump generosity stays throughout the palate, despite being sculpted by vivid acidity. The mouthfeel is smooth and pliable, there is fluidity and the juiciness of that generous fruit. There is an edge of earth and truffle. Nothing is forced, and an earthy core draws you toward a moreish but fresh finish. | 94

JR | Light shaded ruby. Sweet, heady nose. Quite high in acetic. Not really solid and composed. Too fragile and fruitless for me. 2015-17. | 86



Schnaitmann Fellbacher Lämmli Spätburgunder Trocken GG Württemberg 2014 (12.5% ABV) | 88

AJ | Deep black-red. A green, leafy scent of such cool freshness that it might beguile—though to my way of sniffing, it seems a little hedgy and unripe. Pristine nonetheless. Green all the way through the palate, and I wouldn't really relish drinking it, yet it is once again pristine to the last and seems to have been made with great care and precision. If you have a taste for woodland Pinot, check it out. | 84

AK | A wilderness touch of elderberry creeps into the nose of cherry fruit, alongside sun-dried conifer and slight smoke. That elderberry note stays bright and alert across the juicy, lively and fresh palate. There is real verve and energy here, lots of drive. Underneath, there is more serious intent: firmness, freshness, and depth. This has real allure without being overdone. | 94

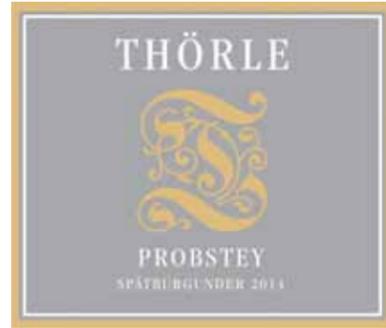
JR | Deep garnet—one of the deepest-colored of these wines. Sweet beetroot on the nose. But on the palate, the acidity is a bit dominant, and there seems a lack of fruit to knit it all together. A bit raw overall. Not much persistence. 2019-23. | 87

Thörle Saulheimer Probstey Spätburgunder Trocken Rheinhessen 2014 (13% ABV) | 88

AJ | Clear dark red. Oddly unattractive aromas at first sniff, with a note of sweet decay and rather evident oak. Tart and faintly bitter on the palate, though the oak brings a sweetness, too; what's missing is ringing central-palate fruit. Drinkable, but there are wines from its peers in which the fruit core has been better handled. | 82

AK | A touch of dried pine needle on the nose, as well as a touch of smoke. Fragrant. Red fruit lurks through a veil of finely knit tannin, which has pleasant grip, but there is also something meaty, very substantial and rounded at the core. Fullness is evident, and there is almost a bacon edge to the

red forest fruit, lending a kind of rustic charm. Lingers on the palate. | 93
JR | Mid-garnet. Mild sweetness on the nose. Quite firm tannins and bracing acidity. Still very youthful. Embryonic and still a little callow. Lots to chew on. Very clean, but it has not yet evolved much flavor. Very grainy finish. 2020-26. | 88



JB Becker Wallufer Walkenberg Spätburgunder Auslese Trocken Rheingau 2003 GC (15% ABV) | 87

AJ | Deeply colored but showing its age in its hue. Another wine with strange hyacinth aromas. Smooth, structured, quite deep, and in good shape for a Spätburgunder of its age; it came of course from a very ripe summer, and there is plenty of tannin to stiffen its sinews. But for me there is little charm; it's a doughy survivor. | 77
AK | Very full-fruited, evolved nose of earthiness, recalling roast pumpkin and maple syrup. The palate continues with this earthiness but has a fine frame of bright acidity and a lovely, grippy texture. This is more than alive and still evolving, aromatic and ripe, maturing and present. That roast-pumpkin note appears again on the finish, pervaded by ample freshness. Very long. | 95
JR | Mid- to deep crimson—looks much more youthful than many younger wines. Obviously old but not over the hill. Big and bold and massive-beefy and still very much alive. Well done! Quite savory and appetizing. I'd love to know the identity of this Peter Pan of a wine! Just a bit smudgy and hot on the end, but by no means dead. 2008-18. | 89

Fürst Centgrafenberg GG Spätburgunder trocken Franken 2012 (13.5% ABV) | 87

AJ | Deep, clear, bright, and mature red. The scents, though, are a little tinny and varnished. Unappealing. Dry but somewhat baked and lifeless. A low-acid example, however, if you are looking for one. Somewhere along the line, the fruit has checked out, though. | 81
AK | Ripe, almost fleshy cherry fruit appears on the nose. The palate hovers between poised freshness and plump fruit and has the precision of ripe cherry and the spicity vivaciousness of kirsch. The aftertaste is full of diffuse black cherry, with just a touch of spicity heat. | 90
JR | Healthy garnet color. Sweet, dense fruit without much subtlety, as though ripeness rather than flavor were all. Cuts off a bit on the end.

THE PALATE IS JUICY AND SHOWS THE CHERRY NOTES OFF TO BEST EFFECT. THERE IS A FIRM CORE OF CONCENTRATION THAT HOLDS WARMTH AND NOTES OF TAR AND EARTH. THIS IS PLIABLE AND SMOOTH

Even a bit of alcohol in evidence! Drying finish. But there is real substance and energy here. 2016-22. | 89

Holger Koch Pinot Noir Reserve Kaiserstuhl, Baden 2014 (13% ABV) | 87

AJ | Bright, clear red. Warm, well-rounded, but soft-focus red fruits. Wet sand behind. Bright and acidic, thrusting and rather skinny, without a lot of fruit resonance. Enjoyable if your tastes lie at the masochistic end of Pinot-land. | 80
AK | Very ripe fruit, almost of black cherry, appears on the nose. The palate reins that in with vivid freshness. This is smooth and juicy, with an appetizing, tart edge. There is grip and that fine, alluring freshness that reels you in for the next sip. There is something honest and fresh-faced about this, drawing you in toward a deeper core of aromatic, tart, red fruit. This is firm and promising. | 93
JR | Transparent ruby color. Light, rather fragile nose. Edgy acidity but good savory fruit that should settle down to a thoroughly digestible wine. The acidity is certainly marked at the moment... And it's not that long, but I would expect this to gain flesh. It's a little low in tannin though. 2019-26. | 89

Krone Assmannshäuser Höllenberg Spätburgunder Rheingau 2009 (13.5% ABV) | 87

AJ | Deep and clear, though with plenty of brick in the red. Grassy, stringy scents. Slender and stringy palate with quite a primitive, must-like style; unattractive. | 78
AK | Meaty smoke and ripe, alluring fruit beckon on the nose. There is a touch of elderberry and a fine line of tart, refined, pure fruit. The freshness is like a fault line that brightens and intensifies everything. The palate is compact and firm, beginning to come round. Elegance and subtlety are hallmarks of this concentrated, little bright, pure gem. | 95
JR | Transparent ruby. Raw and light with sweetness and some rawness. Unsubtle redcurrant flavors and lots of freshness. Marked acidity. 2015-20. | 88

Philipp Kuhn Steinbuckel Laumersheimer Steinbuckel Pinot Noir Trocken GG Pfalz 2013 (14% ABV) | 87

AJ | Deep black-red, though now clear. Sweet, sherbety, rubbery: a little odd, and some kind of herbaceousness at the base of this. Deep, but with some strangenesses that vitiates its appeal, and an unconscionably acidic finish. | 80
AK | There is ripe, almost plump red- and black-cherry fruit on the nose. The palate is juicy and shows the cherry notes off to best effect. There is a firm core of concentration that holds warmth and notes of tar and earth. This is pliable and smooth, seemingly more ripe than its peers, with a generous and appetizing juiciness. The finish is mouthwatering and vivid. | 93
JR | Deep purplish crimson. Clean, toasty nose. Not the most ethereal, with hints of smoked meat and dill pickle and an awful lot of acidity! Too tart! But there is some fruit concentration in the middle. 2018-22. | 87

Schloss Proschwitz Prinz zur Lippe Schloss Proschwitz Spätburgunder GG Sachsen 2011 (14% ABV) | 87

AJ | Clear red. Rather odd Bakewell tart aromas (moist marzipan, cake crumb, and strawberry jam). A little bit soupy and jammy on the palate, too. Sweet and not at all acidic, so someone has worked hard at getting to full ripeness, but stylistically it is not exactly dream Pinot alas. | 79
AK | Smoke, ripe red fruit and the nuttiness of roast chestnuts make for a welcoming olfactory trio. There also is a heady lick of vanilla. On the expressive palate, spices like nutmeg and pepper make themselves felt against lovely strawberry notes. There is resonance and balance, scope and aromatic expanse. This affords us a great, panoramic view of Pinot-ness in all its fresh ripeness. Very harmonious. | 95
JR | Pale evolved ruby. Very bright. Gamey, sweet nose without quite the vitality one would wish for. Sweet and licorice and a little over-made up. Shades of the Riviera in the 1920s! Hot end. 2015-19. | 87

Krone Juwel Assmannshäuser Spätburgunder Trocken Rheingau 2012 (14% ABV) | 86

AJ | Deep, limpid red. Almost offensively kerosene and herbaceous, in contrast to many of its 2012 peers. Ditto on the palate, and for me undrinkable. | 75
AK | A nose of deep, black-fruited ripeness, has the heady aroma of elderberry. The deeply aromatic lift of this plays throughout the palate, shimmering with its deep, dark but tart allure. The palate is unforced and just ripe, tart but brilliant. Juicy and moreish, with innate balance and harmony. Very, very moreish and totally disarming. | 95
JR | Shaded garnet. Rather unobtrusive elderberry flavor on the nose. A simple, one-dimensional fruit-dominated wine. Not the most subtle. Raw. 2016-22. | 88

Meyer-Näkel Walporzheimer Krauterberg Spätburgunder GG Ahr 2012 (13.5% ABV) | 86

AJ | Clear red. Slightly odd scents; almost a fish-skin note, and something a little ashy. Sharp, hard, and with those same ashy notes; a touch of herbaceousness, also. A little awry, and not really drinkable for me. | 76
AK | Freshness on the nose combines ripe, red cherry and hints of smoke. The palate has a slender, but distinct concentration and vivid tartness. There is a stony core of firm, alluring depth, while red fruit plays gently around the edges. Alcoholic heat is palpable but serves to heighten rather than to subdue. This is powerful and fresh. | 94
JR | Mid-garnet. Bright color. Some sweat and cumin on the nose. Good fresh fruit with an edge but it's not mellow. Drying tannins on the end. Needs a little more fruit. Light and a bit tart. | 88

Markus Molitor Brauneberger Klostergarten Pinot Noir Mosel 2007 (13.5% ABV) | 86

AJ | Clear red, though not notably brown. Settled, articulate, but fatigued aromas of wood and stewed plums. The palate is just about in touch, but all the fruit flesh is tumbling off the acid skeleton, and there isn't much plain pleasure left, other than for those who have a fetish for the old under any circumstances. I can tell that this was a good, ripe, well-made wine when young and might have merited a top score at two or three years... But for me it is way too old, and all the pleasure has gone. A clattering acidic finish. | 75
AK | Earthy notes dominate: Forest floor and mellow red fruit combine. The palate is evolved and now majors on savoriness rather than mere fruit, even though highlights of redcurrant linger. This has lovely balance and depth with an unforced, central core of vivid, crunchy, still firm fruit with illuminating freshness. The finish is long and pure. This draws you in. | 95
JR | Pale blueish crimson. Mushrooms and pleasure on the nose, even if the smoked-meat palate is a little lacking juice. Some length and substance. Clean. 2013-20. | 89

Salwey GG Spätburgunder Oberrotweiler Eichberg Trocken Baden 2014 (12.5% ABV) | 86

AJ | Graceful light red. Rather kerosene fruits with some ill-assorted oak. Dry, sharp, and sinewy; I'm afraid I couldn't enjoy drinking this. | 79
AK | Mocha and roasted coffee-bean notes hint at new oak. For now, they dominate the nose, but underneath ripe, juicy, even plump forest fruit and red berries play against a backdrop of fresh acidity. There is balance and lots of freshness alongside the riper notes. This is mouthwatering but rather up front. | 92
JR | Mid-, evolving ruby. Quite evolved nose that suggests caramel and fragrant ferns. Not the noblest array of Pinot Noir flavors, but lively

and refreshing with significant but (just) not excessive acidity. Grainy tannins on the end. Quite long. Slightly simple, and it tastes as though the grapes were only just ripe enough but creditable. 2018-24. | 88



JB Becker Wallufer Walkenberg Spätburgunder Spatlese Trocken Rheingau 2009 GC (14% ABV) | 85

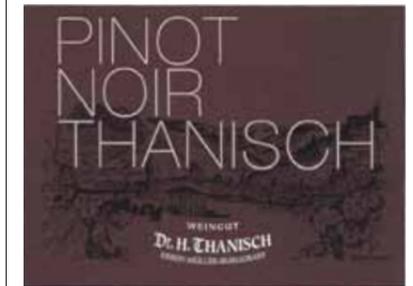
AJ | Still deep and good looking, with plenty of red resource left. A little simple in aromatic style, but at least we are still in classic raspberry-cherry territory. Touch candied. Deep and almost oppressively candied on the palate, too: a low acid, very ripe incarnation of Pinot with some structure and surviving tannin, yet in the end the flavors are very simple and tangy, alas. I would really struggle to drink this. | 75
AK | Very plump fruit plays on the nose. This has a touch of almost confected fruit that plays on nose and palate. The body has an edge of bitterness but is fluid and vivid, youthful and only just evolving. There is a spine of freshness that spells brightness and joy. An earthy note resonates on the finish. | 93
JR | Dark crimson! Head and sweet and medicinal. Not pure enough. Very chewy tannins. Not appetizing. But bold. 2017-22. | 88

Dr H Thanisch Erben Müller-Burggraef Pinot Noir Mosel 2014 (12.5% ABV) | 85

AJ | Clear orange-red, the color of an old-fashioned Tavel. Bottle 1: Corked. Bottle 2: Rather a dull nose, in truth, lacking freshness and lift. Thin and dreary on the palate; a wine to avoid, for me. | 77
AK | The nose gives little away. The palate is barely there; this is translucent and very, very delicate. There is an old-fashioned earthiness that seems reminiscent of a large barrel, but underneath there is tender strawberry fruit. The finish is short. | 89
JR | Markedly pale ruby—almost rose-tawny! First bottle: TCA. Second bottle seems to have virtually no nose at all! Austere palate that seems to have eaten up the fruit but if you dig deep there is some grainy sandy Pinot down there. Light and lively and rather impressively long. A strange wine that builds toward the end but is almost unsmellable. 2018-23 | 88

Dr H Thanisch Pinot Noir Thanisch 2009 Mosel (12.5% ABV) | 85

AJ | Clear red. Very odd smell of hyacinths. Strange, unattractively perfumed yet thin red wine, well past its best. | 73
AK | Something rather mellow hovers above the already ripe fruit on the palate. This is full-fruited, but all the fruit seems to be concentrated at a core, surrounded by luminous freshness. This is concentrated and rich, but poised and defined in its rich, vivid berry notes with a herbal tang. | 94
JR | Pale grayish ruby. Sweet and sour and not quite enough to marry the two. A bit ordinary. 2016-20. | 87



Schloss Proschwitz Prinz zur Lippe Schloss Proschwitz Spätburgunder Trocken GG Sachsen 2009 (13.5% ABV) | 84

AJ | Clear and light-hued, with some bricking. Toffeed, oxidized, and tired on the aromas, alas (both bottles). Deep, ripe, with some structure, but lacking fruit and rather lifeless as a consequence. Wouldn't want to drink this. | 74
AK | A meaty heft clings to nose of forest floor. The palate still revels in freshness and has a concentration of redcurrant and tart strawberry. This is resonant and fresh, vivid and alive—invigorating, even. Long, savory finish. | 94
JR | Subtle shade ruby and glowing. First bottle oxidized. Second bottle on the way to oxidation. The fruit has disappeared, alas. 2007-12. | 85

Jean Stodden Recher Herrenberg Spätburgunder GG Rech/Ahr 2014 (13.5% ABV) | 84

AJ | Translucent brick-garnet in color, but with some depth. Sweet, harmonious, with ripe fruit that is taking a little age already, but agreeably so. (A touch volatile also.) Smooth, pleasant but unexceptional on the palate, and an older-seeming wine than many of its 2014 peers. But a nice wine for all that. | 84
AK | The nose seems fleshy and lacking in focus. The palate has warmth from alcohol and freshness from acidity but seems to lack precision and focus—where is the fruit? | 80
JR | Light to mid-ruby with some evolution at the rim. Light nose with a hint of smoked meat. Sweet powdery start. Mild and easy. Already quite evolved and with sweet appetizing notes to counterbalance the acidity. Fine tannins and the merest hint of something metallic on its long finish. 2017-23. | 89