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vinous



DÖNNHOFF

ANNE KREBIEHL, VINOUS REVIEWS OF DÖNNHOFF

Dönnhoff

Cornelius Dönnhoff recounts 2023 at the domaine: “Fruit set was good, and we could see early on that this might be a bigger harvest, and in summer, we started reducing yields relatively early. This, with canopy management, was key as the vines were vigorous. In July, the weather changed, temperatures went down, and we had continuous showers in July and August, and our well-ventilated canopies paid off. We also had interrow ground cover to help pull moisture out of the soil. We had poked right. It ensured the grapes could dry off, and we could get on top of the immense disease pressure.” Later in August, the weather changed again, ringing in stable weather. “September was warm and had high sunshine hours, not a cloud from morning to night. This accelerated the ripening and compensated for the cool August. The thinned-out fruit and airy canopy meant healthy grapes and no botrytis.” Dönnhoff notes that in wetter years like 2023, his steep and rocky Riesling sites are at an advantage with their excellent drainage and poor soils, curbing vine vigor, resulting in a harvest of healthy fruit.

Dönnhoff did not make BAs or TBAs but harvested small amounts of thrilling Kabinetts, Spätlesen and Auslesen, mostly from botrytis-free grapes. “In Riesling, you do not need alcohol as a transporter of flavor,” he notes. “The Pinots [Weissburgunder and Grauburgunder] were a different story,” he says. “We had to select aggressively because there was some rot.” Picking started on 17 September with the Pinot varieties, and they had to hurry because ripeness advanced quickly. Dönnhoff is happy that nothing “slid into overripeness”—apart from the Auslesen—and notes that the wines have good acid structure with moderate alcohol and that sufficient moisture meant great extracts. He also puts his wines’ strikingly golden color down to extract—yet another stunning collection.

From Nahe, Pfalz & Mittelrhein—Of Wheat, Chaff and Thrill (Aug 2024) by Anne Kriebiehl MW

Dönnhoff Riesling trocken 2023 - 89 Points

The 2023 Riesling was picked in the Oberhäuser Felsenberg, on porphyry and melaphyr, and in the Oberhäuser Kieselberg, which, despite its name, is Tonschiefer (shale). The wine is made 90% in stainless steel and the rest in neutral wood. The golden wine sprays with a fruity freshness that holds a crunchy green apple, Reine Claude plum, overtones of blossom and joyful, sunny fruitiness. The palate is super-slender, dry and sprightly, carrying all this fruit and freshness, and it is totally straight-laced and clear. (Bone-dry) Drinking Window, 2024 - 2034

Dönnhoff Riesling Tonschiefer 2023 - 90 Points

The 2023 Riesling Tonschiefer was picked mainly in the Oberhäuser Leistenberg (80%) and a neighboring site, both on Tonschiefer or shale, plus younger vines from the Klamm and the Hermannshöhle. It is made in stainless steel only. The nose is shy but shows a savory, herbal note of fern, tender lemons and a certain stoniness. The palate is beautifully restrained, crystal-clear, stony and pervaded by clear-cut lemon brightness, finishing bone dry with a touch of ripe lemon zest. Lovely and elegant. (Bone-dry) Drinking Window, 2024 - 2034

Dönnhoff Riesling Schlossböckelheimer Felsenberg Felsentürmchen GG 2023 - (96-98) Points

The 2023 Riesling Schlossböckelheimer Felsenberg Felsentürmchen Grosses Gewächs is picked in the fully south-facing site of porphyry and melaphyr. Cornelius Dönnhoff says this is the most challenging site to work, simply because the stones are so hard and unforgiving, retaining almost no water. Thus, a year like 2023 was brilliant for this site. It is always the first GG site to be harvested because the rock retains heat from the day. Tender reduction still casts a flinty spell on the nose. Lovely savor implies crushed citrus foliage merged into iron oxide on the nose. The palate is taut, citric, bright with immense linearity, moving with absolute ease and direction, with energy and punch, towards a zesty, cool finish, long, sustained, all with savor and saltiness. The 2023 is a total joy of clarity, direction and stony poise. This is so elegant, so slender, so powerful, and no, this is not a contradiction. (Bone-dry) Drinking Window, 2034 - 2070

Dönnhoff Riesling Roxheimer Höllenpfad im Mühlberg Grosses Gewächs 2023 - (94-96) Points

The 2023 Riesling Roxheimer Höllenpfad im Mühlberg Grosses Gewächs comes from the core parcel of this red Permian sandstone site, made separately as a GG from 2017 onwards. This was made in old, neutral Doppelstück. Gorgeous savor unites fern, yarrow and tansy, all tingling amidst citrus and a gentle creaminess. Immediate concentration and fluidity characterize the palate, and the citrus impression almost attains a touch of lemon oil, still holding these savory, herbal notions. The 2023 has a sinuous shape, great fluidity, beautiful stoniness and tautness, absolute clarity and direction but with a ton of charm. (Bone-dry) Drinking Window, 2028 - 2060

Dönnhoff Riesling Roxheimer Höllenpfad 2023 - 94 Points

The 2023 Riesling Roxheimer Höllenpfad is harvested from around 50-year-old vines on steep, south-facing Permian red sandstone. It's made half and half in neutral wood and stainless steel. Lovely savor spreads from the glass with notions of yarrow crushed against stone. The palate is slender but concentrated and vivid, with a juiciness that has something of apple, something of herbal tisane, something of tart orange zest; all are beautifully taut and elongated. The 2023 is understated and lovely, with a savory zestiness on the clean-cut finish. (Bone-dry) Drinking Window, 2028 - 2050

Dönnhoff Riesling Oberhäuser Leistenberg Kabinett 2023 - 94 Points

The 2023 Riesling Oberhäuser Leistenberg Kabinett is from a south-east-facing site of shale, getting the morning sun; this is never affected by botrytis and is shaded in the afternoon, so a late harvest is possible because botrytis never occurs, and acids are preserved. The nose combines lemon zest, stone and herbal tisane. The palate adds just a little sweetness, giving the charm to the citric verve, but all remains light, tender, bright and so deceptively easy. What a tease, what elegance, what lemon resonance! (Medium) Drinking Window, 2028 - 2050

Dönnhoff Riesling Oberhäuser Brücke Spätlese 2023 - 96 Points

The 2023 Riesling Oberhäuser Brücke Spätlese is from a geologically complex site that has loess, loam, shale, weathered sandstone and volcanic formations, the moderating influence of the river also means that botrytis is possible. Spätlese and Auslese are harvested together but selected in the vineyard. Golden and gently botrytised fruit goes into Spätlese. This charms with a touch of crushed blackcurrant foliage and ripest, juiciest Reine Claude plum, all edged with citrus. Beautifully taut, vividly concentrated, yet no heaviness, just light-footed, dancing, playful and oh so balanced. (Sweet) Drinking Window, 2034 - 2070

Dönnhoff Riesling Oberhäuser Brücke Auslese 2023 - 96 Points

The 2023 Riesling Oberhäuser Brücke Auslese is made from mostly highly ripe grapes with around 10-15% of botrytized fruit, all pressed in a basket press, slowly, over hours, drip by drip is extracted, without rupturing the grape skins. The tender nose is not obvious; it shows distant notions of iced Reine Claude compote with an overtone of passion fruit foliage; all is lemony and tender. The palate is sweet, bright and concentrated, but it has a slender, taut footprint. Extreme elegance is the name of the game, and the tenor is still of fresh lemon juice and zest. Restraint and elegance are exemplified here. (Sweet) Drinking Window, 2034 - 2070

Dönnhoff Riesling Norheimer Kirschheck Spätlese 2023 - 94 Points

The 2023 Riesling Norheimer Kirschheck Spätlese benefits from cool nights. Dönnhoff emphasizes that this has no botrytis. A touch of tangerine appears on the nose. The palate brings immense charm to the veil-like lightness. This is all delicacy and elegance, scented with tangerine. It's beautifully restrained and so fresh. Around 50-60 g/L of sweetness against thrilling acid means this is still only medium sweet. The 2023 is exquisite, pure and taut. (Medium) Drinking Window, 2028 - 2050

Dönnhoff Riesling Norheimer Dellchen Grosses Gewächs 2023 - (95-97) Points

The 2023 Riesling Norheimer Dellchen Grosses Gewächs is grown on porphyry with a shale cover. The vines are sheltered and have underground aquifers. A tender lemon zest note holds traces of white summer blossom, wet stone and a touch of chervil—beautifully tender. The slender palate, likewise, is lemon-dominated, bright, sunny and friendly in its citric smile. The 2023 is agile, tingling and slender with a subtle stoniness. This is as wonderfully pervasive, tart and palate-cleansing as lemon sorbet. (Bone-dry) Drinking Window, 2028 - 2060

Dönnhoff Riesling Niederhauser Klamm Kabinett 2023 - 94 Points

The 2023 Riesling Niederhäuser Klamm Kabinett, from porphyry facing southeast, has a slightly darker aspect on the nose. Wet stone shines through the lemon, slowly gaining more ground. The palate has touches of peach and is a bit sweeter, but all is framed with tender lemon. The finish is totally zesty. Whoa. (Medium) Drinking Window, 2028 - 2050

Dönnhoff Riesling Niederhauser Hermannshöhle Spätlese 2023 - 97 Points

The 2023 Riesling Niederhäuser Hermannshöhle Spätlese, grown on shale, has equal notions of moss and lemon. More air makes this smell simply of wet stone. The palate carries gentle sweetness but is absolutely precise and slender. Citrus frames everything with the clearest precision. Everything is serene, zesty, tender, yet so very serious. The 2023 is glorious in its lightness and disarming in its elegance. (Sweet) Drinking Window, 2034 - 2070

Dönnhoff Riesling Niederhäuser Hermannshöhle R 2018 - 96 Points

The 2018 Riesling Niederhäuser Hermannshöhle R spent three years on gross lees in one Stück. After this, it is bottled and now released with two further years of bottle age. Cornelius Dönnhoff says this is a homage to his grandfather and the wines of the 1950s and 1960s. This barrel was destined for GG but stopped its ferment and was allowed to stay that way. An immediate ethereal lift brings lemon oil and cool, dried mint, expansive and scented. The palate is slender, fluid with lemon, cool with mint and smooth with age. This goes down like balm. Again, the 2023 is essence-like and glorious. While this has around 11 g/L of sweetness, it does not taste sweet at all. Wonderful. (Dry) Drinking Window, 2028 - 2060

Dönnhoff Riesling Niederhauser Hermannshöhle Grosses Gewächs 2023 - (96-98) Points

The 2023 Riesling Niederhäuser Hermannshöhle Grosses Gewächs, from a south-facing shale site with just a few calcareous veins, is golden in color. The vines were planted in 1949, and they now bring just small yields of tiny berries with a different pulp/skin ratio. A gorgeous lift tells of citrus zest, with an ethereal touch of crushed citrus leaf and spicier herb. The palate is crystalline. It's a clear-cut, taut, pure vision of stone and citrus. This is a pure, poised, precise and concentrated wine. Time and again, it is astonishing that so much flavor, stone and energy can be captured in a wine of such taut proportions at 12.5% alcohol. What an experience! There is no reliance on power, volume or fat, just slenderness, elegance and essence. (Bone-dry) Drinking Window, 2024 - 2034

Dönnhoff Riesling Niederhauser Hermannshöhle Auslese 2023 - 96 Points

The 2023 Riesling Niederhäuser Hermannshöhle Auslese was selected at the same time as the Spätlese. Dönnhoff says that for him, Auslese is merely a more concentrated Spätlese. He notes that passerillage also plays a part here. Slight smoke and Reine Claude plum compote on the nose continue straight to the palate, edged with beautiful lemon brightness. The 2023 shows gorgeous depth, deep lemon and gentle sweetness. A touch of herbal tisane adds a minty edge, exquisitely light, precise and sweet. This wine is a paradigm of lightness and elegance. (Sweet) Drinking Window, 2034 - 2070

Dönnhoff Riesling Kreuznacher Krötenpfuhl Kabinett 2023 - 93 Points

The 2023 Riesling Kreuznacher Krötenpfuhl Kabinett comes from the site's plateau of quartzite and gravel. A subtle flint on the nose still veils the lemon underneath. The palate is gently sweet and juicy, like a tart apple, edged with ripe lemon and tangerine. This light wine is absolutely mouthwatering and dangerously easy to drink. (Medium) Drinking Window, 2028 - 2050

Dönnhoff Riesling Kreuznacher Kahlenberg 2023 - 91 Points

The 2023 Riesling Kreuznacher Kahlenberg comes from a broader, warmer part of the Nahe Valley that's further downstream. There's less day-night amplitude, slightly higher temperatures and deeper soils with some loess of gravel and quartzite. A touch of reduction plays on the nose with citric charm. Despite the slender contour, the palate is smooth and rounded, with fluidity and smoothness, with more generosity and fill. (Bone-dry) Drinking Window, 2024 - 2034

Dönnhoff Riesling Bad Kreuznacher Krötenpfuhl Grosses Gewächs 2023 - (94-96) Points

The 2023 Riesling Bad Kreuznacher Krötenpfuhl comes from the steep south-facing part of this site of poor gravel and quartzite. Due to dryness in 2022, this was not made as a GG last year; however, 2023 provided sufficient moisture so the GG could be made again, exclusively in stainless steel. The nose has the slightest hint of smoke, arranging itself beside restrained citrus freshness. The palate hones in on that citric, lemony note. This is mouth-watering, bright and beautifully ripe on a slender, almost sinuous but contoured body. (Bone-dry) Drinking Window, 2028 - 2060

Dönnhoff Riesling 2023 - 90 Points

The 2023 Riesling is precisely the same wine as the Riesling trocken but with an arrested ferment at a point that Dönnhoff deems to have a certain balance. Stone, flint and lemon play on the nose. The palate dances, veil-like, barely there, with exquisite lightness. A subtle sweetness highlights juicy apples and tender lemons. (Off-dry) Drinking Window, 2024 - 2034

