

Weingut Georg Breuer

This estate in Rüdesheim attained its reputation in the 1990s, thanks to Bernhard Breuer and his Rieslings from Rüdesheim Berg Schlossberg and Rauenthal Nonnenberg. Breuer died suddenly in May 2004, when his daughter Theresa, born in 1984, was just finishing school. She studied at Geisenheim from 2004 to 2007, while also managing the estate with her uncle, Heinrich Breuer. Since 2011, she has run the estate alone but is still assisted by her father's right-hand man Hermann Schmoranz and, since 2004, the young Swedish cellar master Markus Lundén.

Theresa has 166 different parcels, adding up to 33ha (81.5 acres) of vines in Rüdesheim and Rauenthal. They include Riesling (80 per cent), Pinot Noir (12), Pinots Gris and Blanc (7), and historic specialities Weisser Heunisch and Gelber Orleans (1). The finest vineyards are Rüdesheimer Berg Schlossberg, Berg Roseneck, and Berg Rottland, and the monopole Rauenthaler Nonnenberg. All sites are steep, south-facing, have pure slate and quartzite soils, and (apart from Nonnenberg) are classified as first growths. But as her father controversially did, Theresa refuses to release wines as Erstes Gewächs.

The well-structured wine range has also remained the same, with the four crus at the top; Terra Montosa as the second wine of the Rüdesheim crus; Rüdesheim Estate and Rauenthal Estate as village wines; and Sauvage as dry and Charme as off-dry Rheingau Rieslings. There is also an excellent barrel-fermented Grauer Burgunder, a vibrant Spätburgunder, and a complex vintage Sekt from Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, and Pinot Noir (with Riesling *dosage*). Theresa also picks fine Auslesen; in fact, the gold-capsuled ones are downgraded Beerenauslesen. BAs (2008) and TBAs (2005, 2007, 2009) are produced only in suitable vintages.

In the vineyard, Theresa eschews herbicides, and instead of synthetic fertilizers she uses organic manures. Yields are kept low, averaging 45hl/ha. Harvest starts with the Pinots, whereas Riesling

is rarely picked before October. Picking is manual and selective. Botrytis is not accepted for dry wines, produced only from ripe and healthy grapes. The grapes are not destemmed but are lightly crushed and, depending on the year, kept on the skins for rather less than the maximum of six hours. After settling, the musts of the crus are fermented with cultured yeasts in traditional wooden *Stückfass* and *Doppelstückfass* casks from palatinate oak, while the less complex wines ferment in smaller stainless-steel tanks. Fermentation takes up to four months. The more easy-drinking wines are kept on their fine lees until April; the better wines, until the end of July. The Pinots ferment and age in (mostly used) barrels or large wooden casks.

Over the years, Theresa's wines have become better and finer. Much as I liked Bernhard Breuer's characterful, gripping, yet often austere and slightly phenolic wines, I find Theresa's range more brilliant, elegant, and pure, and fruitier and better balanced. "We have more men in the vineyards during the year than my father had, so our timing is better. We are more efficient, and we get better grapes," Theresa explains. Her earlier-picked Rieslings contain 1–1.5% less ABV so are light in colour and body, brilliant on the nose, and racy (if not steely) on the palate, needing at least three years to open.

In 2010, Theresa completed a quartet of excellent yet quite different vintages. 2007 combines power and fullness with a cool and precise mineral soul, as well as a long and complex finish. 2008 is dense, powerful, and very mineral—a real Rheingau classic that needs a couple of years to show its true worth. 2009 is powerful and rich but also elegant and quite vibrant, and even the crus are opening up earlier than usual. 2010 was still too young when I tasted one year after the harvest. But I appreciated the concentration, purity, and steely acidity of the Rieslings.

Right: Theresa Breuer, who inherited her family estate in difficult circumstances but has more than upheld its reputation





Above: Barrels of different sizes are used to produce wines even finer than those released by Theresa Breuer's father, Bernhard

FINEST WINES

Rüdesheimer Berg Schlossberg Riesling trocken

The Berg Schlossberg Riesling, which is bottled with an annually changing artist label, is a real grand cru. No other wine has a comparable ripeness, depth, complexity, or length. Together with Leitz's Berg Schlossberg, Breuer's version is one of the outstanding Rieslings of the Rheingau (as long as the summer has not been too warm and dry). They both just need a couple of years of bottle age before they really start to show their impressive complexity, elegance, and finesse. Breuer's Berg Schlossberg comes from 25- to 30-year-old vines that grow in poor, weathered slate soils. Despite its depth and intensity, it is always full of elegance and finesse and has a racy salinity that makes you drink the bottle glass by glass.

2007★ This is very clear yet still restrained on the nose, displaying typical cool and herbal terroir aromas. On the palate, it is rich and powerful, multilayered, very salty, and vibrant, and the finish is excitingly complex and long.

1997★ Brilliant, elegant, and spicy on the nose, then very pure, racy, and vibrant on the palate, showing a succulent texture with a nice sweetness, perfect maturity, and balance. The long finish is again salty, piquant, and appetizing.

Rauenthaler Nonnenberg Riesling trocken

This comes from a southeast-facing, 5.8ha (14.3-acre) monopole, where the 40- to 60-year-old vines send their roots through a 1.5-3m (5-10ft) layer of loess-loam, deep into the phyllite soil. The Riesling from the 2ha (5-acre) heart of this top site comes from the oldest vines and is quite opulent and powerful, pairing its tropical fruit flavours with a racy yet appetizing acidity. Due to the higher acidity level, it always contains more residual sugar (7-9g/l) than the other crus. The best Nonnenberg wines are produced in warm and dry years, when the Rüdesheim crus struggle to cope with the drought. The **2007★**, which may be the best ever Nonnenberg, shows brilliant and piquant Riesling aromas paired with scents of slate. On the palate, it is elegant, intense, and balanced by a refined acidity. The finish is long, complex, and succulent.

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Area under vine: 33ha (81.5 acres);
 80% Riesling, 12% Pinot Noir, 7% Pinot Gris,
 1% Gelber Orleans and Weisser Heunisch
 Average production: 240,000 bottles
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