

Vintage 2024

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Hardly any other winery on the Mosel has made such strides in recent years as Christian Hermann from the Dr. Hermann winery in Erden. While he has been making a name for himself for more than a decade with his residual to noble sweet Prädikat Rieslings, especially with his consistently breathtakingly precise Trockenbeerenauslesen, he has recently also achieved success in the area of dry Rieslings. Last September, for the first time, he even pre-presented two Grosses Gewächs Rieslings (GG), 2024 Försterlay and 2024 Treppchen. The family winery has been a member of the renowned Association of Prädikatsweingüter Mosel (VDP) since 2023.

Next fall, Hermann will also bottle his 2024 Rosenberg Pinot Noir as a "grand cru" (GG), which has caused a sensation as far away as Paris. It is remarkable how stylish and refined Christian Hermann's Pinot Noir is, the more so since he only started producing red wine in 2020. Hermann cultivates 16 hectares of vines between Wehlen, Ürzig, Erden and Lösnich in the Middle Mosel, all of them on renowned steep slopes, including world-famous "grands crus" such as Sonnenuhr, Würzgarten, Prälat, Treppchen, Rosenberg and Försterlay. Only the Piesporter Goldtröpfchen is located a little further away from the winery. With the exception of a small amount of Pinot Noir (on 1.2 hectares), he exclusively cultivates Riesling, on steep to very steep slopes. Some of the vines are well over 100 years old and still ungrafted. The wines from these Methuselah vines can be recognized by the additional designation Alte Reben (old vines). Christian Hermann only started growing Pinot Noir in 2020, and that was more out of necessity than choice. He had to take on a plot in Rosenberg that had been planted with Pinot in 1991, even though he had only wanted to buy the Riesling surrounding it from a winegrower who was retiring. It was only when he also acquired the Kinheim Pinot plot that he began to explore the variety for the first time. "It was COVID; we had the lockdown and a lot of time," says Hermann. He spent it tasting the finest Pinots from around the world, reading a lot about Pinot Noir, asking questions and talking. He produced his first vintage in 2020, but the wine didn't hit the market until two years later. It was an instant hit. "We went for top quality right away," says the winemaker, who currently produces two Pinots: the Rosenberg R and a generic Mosel Pinot Noir. Both wines are so good that we already consider Dr. Hermann to be one of the outstanding Pinot producers in the Mosel region. Hardly any Pinot Noir from the Mosel has as much soul as a Pinot from Christian Hermann. Both Pinots are dark in color, intensely fruity (sweet cherry), without any distracting wood or toast notes, silky to velvety on the palate and incredibly sensual. Their finish is irresistible. The Rosenberg is a true "grand cru," while the Mosel Pinot will be an excellent Village. You immediately want to drink more of both. In any case, a bottle is quickly emptied, especially at the current low price! The problem is that there are only 2,500 bottles available so far. And according to Hermann, demand is "five times higher." At least the number will more than double in 2025, as Hermann was also able to acquire a 30-year-old Pinot vineyard in the Erdener Herrenberg. Hermann is reluctant to talk about his Pinot "recipe," but he hasn't exactly reinvented Pinot Noir. Without the new Herrenberg, Hermann has two parcels of Pinot Noir. The plot in the steep heart of the Rosenberg is a Mariafelder clone from 1991 and stands on slate. He has also recently planted a massal Burgundy selection from Nik Weis. The second vineyard is located in the Zeltlinger Himmelreich and is about 25 years old. It is rooted in slate soils interspersed with clay, loess and a little quartz. Both vineyards are sparse, so the vines can root deeply and become "robust." Not only can the weather on the Moselle be demanding for the vines but so can the cherry vinegar fly (*Drosophila suzukii*). Because of them, Hermann had to cut about 50% of the grapes on the ground in 2023 to prevent vinegar rot. Despite the problematic autumn, his wines do not have elevated levels of volatile acidity. The rows between the vines are covered with clover and a colorful mixture of flowers, which creates competition and inhibits the vigor of the Pinot. The green cover also provides shade, cools the soil and keeps it moist. Over the years, this also enriches the humus layer and soil life. Hermann has been avoiding fertilizers for years, even for his Riesling. He doesn't want thick grapes but flavorful ones.

Only plant protection and the large number of small plots prevent him from working according to strict ecological criteria. The Pinot grapes, which are loose-berried thanks to being halved by hand, have small berries that are not only healthy at harvest time but also physiologically ripe and highly aromatic. They are also so sturdy that they can withstand rain. They come out of the destemmer like caviar berries. When it comes to winemaking, in addition to the knowledge Hermann has acquired, it is above all practical experience that is crucial, as well as the intuition to do the right thing at the right moment. And, as a matter of principle, to be meticulous in everything you do, even if the working day sometimes feels like it lasts "40 hours," as Hermann says. He is a perfectionist, no less so than Markus Molitor. Hermann's cellar and all the equipment in it are so clean that you could easily perform medical operations here. Hermann harvests his Pinots by hand at the best time in small, stackable crates, which he can also cool in the cellar if necessary. He ferments the mash with a proportion of ripe stems and otherwise destemmed berries in closed 20-hectoliter stainless steel tanks for hygiene reasons. A little sulfur protects against strange odors and also serves to stabilize the color. When fermentation begins thanks to natural yeasts, the temperature in the tank may rise to 30 degrees Celsius, but then the mash is cooled down again. The cap of pomace is submerged only once in the morning and then again in the evening. Once fermentation is complete, the young wine is left on the mash for up to two or even three weeks, depending on the vintage, before being gently pressed in a pneumatic press. From the settling tank, the wine is then transferred to the best, only lightly toasted Burgundy barrels, both new and old, from French cooperages, which Hermann sources directly from renowned estates through a middleman. His Rosenberg matures for over two years in half-new barrels; the Mosel Pinot, only half of which comes from Himmelreich, is stored for one year in 30% new barrels and in one- to three-year-old pièces. Both wines also undergo malolactic fermentation in the barrel. They are bottled in November without fining or filtration, with a total sulfur content of 40 to 60 milligrams. However, the Rosenberg is not delivered until the third year after the harvest, at the end of January/beginning of February, while the Mosel Pinot is delivered a year earlier. Nevertheless, Hermann's main focus is and remains Riesling. It forms the heart of the current collection, which includes the 2024 vintage. This vintage is characterized by the severe late frost at the end of April, especially on the Mosel but even more so on the Saar and Ruwer. In Kinheim, Christian Hermann lost four hectares due to the frost. The second budding still yielded 500 or 600 liters, but normally it would have been around 20,000 bottles. However, the rest of the year was also rainy and cool, which led to slower ripening and moderate must weights. The Pinots were harvested on September 20 and 21, which is relatively late. The Riesling harvest did not even begin until October 1. At least there was little botrytis. The Auslese Goldkapsel and the Beerenauslese, both from the Prälat vineyard, are the only two botrytis wines of the vintage at Hermann, who was at least able to harvest an ice wine. Hermann describes the wines of the vintage as "delicate but complex." "The 2024s are less extract-rich than the 2023s and 2025s but have more extract than the 2022s." With their clear fruit and good acidity, they are lean, extremely drinkable wines that will also age well. Anyone who wants to assess the quality of the 2024 vintage should definitely try the H-Riesling. The 2024 contains many grapes from top sites such as Ürziger Würzgarten and Erdener Treppchen. The Rotschiefer Riesling is also based on 80% Riesling grapes harvested in Treppchen in 2024. In addition to the supposedly "simple" wines mentioned above, among the highlights of the 2024 Rieslings are all selections from the Prälat, from the Erdener Treppchen (including a ravishing Kabinett) and both wines from the Ürziger Würzgarten. And, of course, don't forget the Pinot Noirs!