

## Germany 2003: Extreme Riesling – Part 2

### Josef Leitz, Rudesheim



**2003 Josef Leitz Rudesheimer Berg Schlossberg Riesling Spatlese Trocken A. P. #6:** High-toned lemon, distilled pit fruits and pungent herbs in the nose. Intense distilled fruit flavors with deep nutty undertones on the palate. Sleek and polished, with a decidedly leesy richness that helps buffer the 13+% alcohol. Long, piquant, toasted grain and nut finish. Rudesheim's "sister town" Meursault seems not to have been forgotten here. (A Berg Schlossberg Spatlese Trocken A. P. #21 from older vines was more concentrated but less refined and sleek.) **1 star.**

**2003 Josef Leitz Rudesheimer Berg Rottland Riesling Spatlese Trocken A. P. #20:** Yellow plums and cherries on the nose. Rich and brothy on the palate, and creamy in texture. Marked by real tiny-berry concentration, with the pit fruits strongly seasoned by faintly bitter pits. Long and piquant on the back, with a faintly astringent combination of fruit skin and stony minerality. (An A. P. #22 Berg Roseneck Spatlese Trocken, identical to this one in starting point but matured in stainless steel rather than fuder, displayed a lot of primary yeastiness and suffered a bit from its upbringing and inability to blow off some of its 14.5% alcohol. **1 star.**

**2003 Josef Leitz Rudesheimer Berg Kaisersteinfels Riesling Spatlese Trocken:** Pungent aromas of lime zest, apricot pit, herbs and black pepper. Creamy, rich and enveloping, with melon and tropical fruits emerging on the palate. Yet this retains an invigorating brightness and is not weighed down by its high alcohol. Gushing with fruit on the finish, with persistently salty and citric high tones as well as a marrowy, meaty depth. (Incidentally, a dry wine blended from Rottland, Schlossberg and a bit of Kaisersteinfels-due to be labeled " Magic Mountain"-struck me as still in search of defining characteristics.) Potential **2 stars.**

**2003 Josef Leitz Riesling Dragonstone:** A new acquisition in the Drachenstein site has enabled Leitz to grow this brand, but the quality has not suffered. Enormously concentrated and bright, with dominant cherry liqueur and fresh lemon flavors. Lime, peach and tangerine zest lend aromatic and gustatory support. Positively deep and rich as well as blazingly bright and salty in the finish. The quartzite soil and high elevation here (as in the Kaisersteinfels terraces to the immediate west) seem to have been favored this year, and the picking was later than in Klosterlay or Magdalenenkreuz, giving flavors more time to develop, and extending into a period of cooler nights that helped fix the acid levels. This is so keyed up I suspect it simply needs to calm down a bit. Potential **2 stars.**

**2003 Josef Leitz Riesling Kabinett Rudesheimer Klosterlay:** Pungent citrus and herbal aromas. Like a lime and pineapple sorbet on the palate, with hints of bitter citrus rind, herbs and resin. Very clear and bright in cast, with a recognizably slatey quality, but somewhat overburdened at present by its high residual sugar, which I suspect simply requires some time to integrate. **1 star.**

**2003 Josef Leitz Riesling Spatlese Rudesheimer Berg Roseneck:** Spectacularly floral nose which, with its subsidiary apple and slate elements, almost suggests a great Mosel Riesling. In the mouth, a complex melange of tropical and pit fruits, honeyed melon, flowers and stone wafts back and forth in an elegant display. Not only does all of the sweetness on exhibit here seem to fit the wine's drippingly ripe fruit and heady florality, but there is more than enough wet stone and saline minerality to achieve counterpoint and balance. Long, soothing, sweet yet mineral-saturated finish. **2 stars.**



**2003 Josef Leitz Riesling Spatlese Rudesheimer Berg Schlossberg:** Here is where botrytis first appears in this year's Leitz collection. Pungently smoky aroma seems part mineral, part fruit skin and part botrytis in nature. Candied yellow plum, quince and coconut flavors on the palate, tinged with brown spices and woodsmoke. A faintly bitter quinine note helps offset the sweetness in the exotically ripe and persistently spicy finish. **1 star.**



**2003 Josef Leitz Riesling Auslese Rudesheimer Kirchenpfad (500 ml):** Like a number of vintners, Leitz experienced something of a "hole" in Oechsle, with only this one 2003 Auslese, harvested at the end of October-which he describes as "really a byproduct of the corresponding TBA. " Nippy radish, high-toned citrus oil and black tea over pear nectar in the nose. Pear and lemon drops on the palate, enlivened by fresh citricity. Lots of glycerin and fat here even though the palate is as yet at least more glassy than creamy in texture. Surprisingly open and airy in the finish considering that this Auslese is the product of shriveling and botrytis. **1 star.**

**2003 Josef Leitz Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese Rudesheimer Kirchenpfad (half bottle):** Tremendously confectionery nose features marzipan, caramelized apricot, banana, molasses and butter cream. This was just assembled (from three glass demijohns) and bottled the week before I tasted. A glass balloon of "Super Kirchenpfad TBA" was left behind in the tasting room to continue fermenting, and was as yet a heavy, musky, spicy, viscous mass-which pretty much describes the state of three other embryonic TBAs from Magdalenenkreuz, Berg Schlossberg and Berg Rottland as well. **1 star.**

**2003 Josef Leitz Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese Rudesheimer Berg Kaisersteinfels (half bottle):** Even though this is still slowly fermenting, it displays refinement and lift alongside the viscosity of texture and honey, caramel and spice character it shares with Leitz's other '03 TBAs. The long, penetrating finish combines juicy fresh fruit and salty mineral layers. This year's entire TBA collection really demands delayed assessment but there can be no doubt that this particular wine is headed for the stars. **2 stars.**

## Weingut Spreitzer, Oestrich

**2003 Weingut Spreitzer Hattenheimer Wisselbrunnen Riesling Erstes Gewachs:** Aromas of lemon zest, toasted nuts and ripe pear. Piquant and stony on the palate, with a firmness of texture and clarity of fruit and mineral interplay that are rare this year. (I found this wine, which was bottled the day before I tasted it, to be marginally brighter and more expressive than a lot picked and bottled earlier as Wisselbrunnen Spatlese Trocken. Two dry wines I tasted from sites in Oestrich were significantly less successful.) **1 star.**

**2003 Weingut Spreitzer Oestricher Lenchen Riesling Kabinett Halbtrocken:** Ripe orange citrus aroma. Youthfully yeasty and subtly woody overtones reflect this wine's having been fermented in barrel with indigenous yeasts. Even with its relatively low residual sugar, this preserves sufficient delicacy, not to mention infectious juicy drinkability, to truly merit the designation Kabinett. Smoky, pungent mineral notes and a hint of citric tartness enliven the finish. **1 star.**

**2003 Weingut Spreitzer Winkeler Jesuitengarten Riesling Spatlese:** From a well-ventilated and exposed portion of Jesuitengarten right along the river, this displays a lovely nose of ripe apple, pink grapefruit and plum. In the mouth, it seems almost palpably pulpy in its combination of juiciness and sheer substance. Quite sweet, yet it preserves a certain elegance, restraint and sense of minerality in the finish. **1 star.**



**2003 Weingut Spreitzer Oestricher Lenchen Riesling Spatlese 303:** Spreitzer's attempts to label this and other of their Lenchen wines with the parcel name Eiserberg continue to be legally thwarted. The "303," though, is permitted as a "fantasy name. " At 103 Oechsle and 100 grams of residual sugar, it almost goes without saying that this is Auslese-like. Flavors of peach and pear preserves drenched in honey, lemon curd and vanilla. For all of its gaudy display of ripeness, the wine preserves a refreshing core of citrus fruit and underlying stony, smoky minerality. Finishes in waves. Potential **2 stars.**

**2003 Weingut Spreitzer Oestricher Lenchen Riesling Auslese (half bottle):** Here we enter the realm of shriveled berries and botrytis, yet the wine is more buoyant and elegant, as well as less obviously substantial and crammed with fruit than this year's Spatlese 303. Honey, pear nectar and subtly caramelized yellow plum accented by brown spices and a refreshing, invigorating saltiness. Ravishing in its length and refinement. **2 stars.**

**2003 Weingut Spreitzer Oestricher Lenchen Riesling Auslese Gold Capsule:** Quince jelly, honey, pear nectar and a hint of radish in the nose. A superconcentrate of Riesling gathered from several different parcels. Pungently smoky, caramelized fruit suggestions enter into the finish, which gets support from higher acids than the Spreitzer's achieved this year in their Eiswein. Should be a long keeper and may well unpack en route to reveal more complexity. **1 star.**



**2003 Weingut Spreitzer Oestricher Lenchen Riesling Beerenauslese (half bottle):** Cantaloupe and mango in the nose. Musky flavors of honey, brown spices and tropical fruits on the palate, yet with lift and elegance, juiciness and refinement. Powered by 13 grams of acidity, this easily manages to cut through the jade curtain of satiation that can build up this year from tasting so many wines of such exalted ripeness. **2 stars.**

**2003 Weingut Spreitzer Oestricher Lenchen Riesling Beerenauslese Gold Capsule (half bottle):** White raisin and pungently spicy aromas. In the mouth this displays a compact fruitcake-like melange of dried dates, white raisins, brown spices and marzipan. This enormously concentrated wine-the first at the estate to have been designated BA gold capsule-was just bottled and is almost inscrutably dense. **1 star.**

**2003 Weingut Spreitzer Mittelheimer St. Nikolaus Riesling Eiswein (half bottle):** This was not harvested until January 4, but from entirely healthy berries. Honeysuckle, gardenia and lychee perfume practically drips from the raised glass. Effusively sweet, spicy and exotic in the mouth. Lacking the level of acidity normally required for a balanced Eiswein, this comes off as rather candied, yet the flavors are so dramatic and the wine so persistent one has to say that it works. **1 star.**

**2003 Weingut Spreitzer Oestricher Lenchen Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese (half bottle):** Notes of honey, lemon oil and radish in the nose. Incredibly dense and unformed on the palate, uniting melon and quince with dark dried fruits and brown spices. Intensely concentrated finish displays bright citricity and a fascinating salinity to go with its honeyed richness. A freshly opened bottle hardly differed from one that had been open for a week! Potential **2 stars.**

### Walter Strub, Nierstein

**2003 J. & H. A. Strub Riesling Spatlese Trocken Niersteiner Hipping:** High-toned peachy, flowery aromas. For all of its ripeness, this is refreshing and restrained on the palate, with underlying fruit pit and nut oil accents. Clear and juicy in the finish, with lip smacking salty, smoky mineral traces, and free of any trace of warmth. This is one of Strub's most successful dry wines ever. **1 star.**

**2003 J. & H. A. Strub Riesling Kabinett Niersteiner Bruckchen:** Peach and sweet corn aromas somewhat reminiscent of Deidesheim. Doughy, chalky (as befits the terroir) and substantial on the palate, with well-judged sweetness and flattering spiciness woven into its dense fruit fabric. Another 2003 that one might fault for lack of Kabinett tipicity, but certainly not for any other failing. This was also one of the few Strub 2003s to have had no Sussreserve [unfermented grape must] added. **1 star.**



**2003 J. & H. A. Strub Riesling Spatlese Niersteiner Oelberg:** Musky and peachy on the nose. Substantial and faintly oily on the palate, with a vanilla-orange creamsicle character and exotic, sweet inner-mouth florality. This wine stopped itself with naturally high residual sugar, which does not, however, cover over the decidedly terroir-true smokiness of its finish. Another as yet unbottled batch of Oelberg was also highly promising. **1 star.**

### Wagner-Stempel, Seifersheim

**2003 Wagner-Stempel Silvaner Trocken:** Herbal and blue fruit suggestions in the nose. In the mouth, a melange of peach and grapefruit flavors and an invigorating juiciness suggest Riesling, but the chalky, meaty finish (with a reprise of blueberry) brings one's thoughts back to Silvaner. Lipsmackingly delicious, unusually bright and genuinely interesting Silvaner Like all of the 2003s here, this had no acid adjustment. I could drink a lot of this as an everyday wine. **1 star.**

**2003 Wagner-Stempel Riesling Trocken A. P. #2 (1 liter bottle):** This is actually a wine made from a neighbor's plot that is cultivated to Wagner's standards and picked partly by hand and partly by machine. But it is one classy glass of Riesling, not to mention an absurdly good value. Apple, peach and toasted nut aromas. Creamy, almost fat in a vintage-typical way, but with engaging juiciness and a serious streak of chalky minerality down the middle of the palate. **1 star.**

**2003 Wagner-Stempel Riesling Trocken A. P. #5:** Subtle chalk and pit fruit aromas. Pithy, piquant palate impression with smoky, chalky and peach kernel notes. Seriously salty, chalky, savory finish. Another excellent value. **1 star.**



**2003 Wagner-Stempel Hollberg Riesling Grosses Gewachs:** Traminer-like rose petal and brown spice aromas, overlaid by yeasty fermentative aromas. Quite full-bodied. Rich, low-toned flavors of coffee, toasted nuts, and pink grapefruit zest. Sweet, resinous and pungently spicy suggestions in a serious, long finish. Like most of Wagner's 2003s, this underwent pre-fermentative skin contact and is entirely free of any negative phenolic effects. **1 star.**

**2003 Wagner-Stempel Heerkretz Riesling Grosses Gewachs:** The Heerkretz is an iron-rich porphyric site benefiting (particularly in the context of vintage 2003) from high elevation and subterranean water, and characteristically harvested very late: even this year that meant early November. Lemon oil and buddleia aromas. Refined and sleek, with an invigorating fruit-skin chewiness, salty minerality, and plenty of drive despite analytically rather low acidity. Smoky, salty, faintly warm finish. **1 star.**

**2003 Wagner-Stempel Siefersheimer Heerkretz Riesling Spatlese:** This comes from a relatively clay-rich, well-watered parcel that managed 8.5 grams of acid at its mid-October harvest, unusually high for the vintage. Honeydew melon and candied lemon aromas. Luscious and dripping with glycerin and fructose on the palate; the acids give it liveliness and drive, taming its 100 degrees Oechsle and high residual sugar. Long, polished, intensely fruity and alluringly spicy finish. **1 star.**

**2003 Wagner-Stempel Siefersheimer Heerkretz Riesling Spatlese S:** This "S" is from old vines harvested well into November and includes shriveled fruit that was culled out to prevent the Grosse Gewachse from becoming overly alcoholic. A yeasty aromatic note from the spontaneous fermentation gives way to blackcurrant, ripe peach and pungent smokiness. Creamy and satiny in the mouth, with its sweetness well buffered. Clear, bright fruit and pungent minerality and spice in the finish. **1 star.**

**2003 Wagner-Stempel Siefersheimer Hollberg Riesling Auslese (500 ml):** The character here is really BA-like, with a very smoky aromatic note and honeyed palate also featuring vanilla, candied lemon and licorice. Creamy, honeyed, malty and rich, yet with fresh fruit acidity and salty, subtly pungent minerality emerging in the long, intriguing finish. "Nobly sweet wine is just a hobby for me," says Wagner, "and there is little demand in Germany." Here's hoping the American market can keep his hobby alive! **2 stars.**



**2003 Wagner-Stempel Siefersheimer Heerkretz Riesling Beerenauslese (half bottle):** The nose is muted by recent sulfuring and bottling, but on the palate this displays richness and refinement, polish and lift. Peach preserve, candied lemon, malt and brown spices all figure prominently in a wine that may well, when rested, approach the complexity and length of Wagner's 2003 Auslese. **1 star.**

## Josef Biffar, Deidesheim

**2003 Josef Biffar Riesling Kabinett Trocken Deidesheimer Maushohle:** Smoky, resinous, saline aroma. Rich and juicy on the palate, with a slight impression of sweetness that enhances the inner-mouth florality, and a deep streak of iodine minerality. "There wasn't another vineyard this year with foliage that stayed as green as in Maushohle," volunteers Maleton, and it seems to show in the vivacity and intensity of this wine, although a Maushohle Spatlese Trocken was marginally less successful. **1 star.**



**2003 Josef Biffar Riesling Spatlese Trocken Wachenheimer Altenburg:** Plum and black walnut aromas. Brothy, chalky and rich in a Chablis-like fashion, yet persistently juicy and sappy, with nut oil and pit fruit flavors in abundance. Over 13% alcohol but free of heat. Almost sure to evolve positively, too. **1 star.**

**2003 Josef Biffar Riesling Spatlese Deidesheimer Kalkofen:** White chocolate, vanilla and overripe peach aromas. Soft and opulent on the palate, with a positively gaudy display of peach, Golden Delicious apple, lychee, lily and vanilla. Drippingly, almost oozingly ripe, but a great example of a style only possible in such a hot vintage, and a wine you cannot fault on its own extroverted terms. It shows a certain lift and elegance in the finish. **1 star.**

**2003 Josef Biffar Riesling Auslese Gold Capsule Deidesheimer Maushohle (half bottle):** Quite an intense nose: pungent smoke, spice, pure honeyed botrytis and grapefruit zest over a base of ripe peach. Amazingly soft, sweet and almost syrupy in the mouth, yet somehow elegant and light in feel, with an attractive saltiness. Smooth and polished. Fine, long finish of honey, apple jelly and herbal elixir. **1 star.**

**2003 Josef Biffar Riesling Beerenauslese Deidesheimer Kieselberg (half bottle):** Dusty botrytis notes, white raisin and high-toned citrus oil aromas. Quince preserve on the palate, studded with white raisins and shot through with fresh lemon. Long salt and quince finish. Very pure, long and impressive, if seemingly not the last word in complexity. But this might well be hiding more than it's yet showing. **1 star.**

## Lingenfelder, Grosskarlbach

**2003 Lingenfelder Riesling Spatlese Trocken Freinsheimer Goldberg:** Citrus oil, ginger and milled grain aromas. Soft on entry but flatteringly smooth in texture. Picks up personality by way of florality and brightness by way of citrus oil and distilled fruit notes as it builds to a very satisfying finish. **1 star.**



**2003 Lingenfelder Riesling Kabinett Halbtrocken Freinsheimer Musikantenbuckel:** Aromas of plum, redcurrant and apple are lovely if not terribly typical of this terroir. Slightly more familiar suggestions of ginger spice, lemon oil, milled grain and tropical fruits emerge with air. Creamy, silky texture allied to juicy fresh fruit and delicacy of touch. Not a wine of huge concentration or grip, but instead laid-back and dreamy, washing over the palate in a subtle range of hues. **1 star.**

**2003 Lingenfelder Riesling Spatlese Grosskarlbacher Osterberg:** Orange blossom, rose, persimmon and tangerine zest aromas. Silky palate impression. Quite sweet but with enough vivacity and drive to support it. Highly perfumed and spicy in the finish, with a smoky, sweaty hint of Pfalz earthiness. **1 star.**

**2003 Lingenfelder Riesling Spatlese Freinsheimer Goldberg:** A bit less obviously ripe and more restrained than its counterpart from the Osterberg, this displays cool melony fruit, apple, vanilla cream and a hint of saltwater taffy. Like most of the wines here today it has a particularly caressing and flattering mouth feel. The finish is quite rarefied in its subtlety of fruit and saline mineral expression. **1 star.**

## Herbert Messmer, Burrweiler

**2003 Herbert Messmer Riesling Halbtrocken (1 liter bottle):** Yellow plum and citrus aromas. Juicy and mineral-salty in the mouth. Finishes with real grip and lovely fruit and salt residues that stick to your lips as well as your gums. Terrific value. **1 star.**

**2003 Herbert Messmer Burrweiler Schawer Riesling Spatlese Trocken:** White peach, lemon and kumquat aromas. Incredibly luscious, intensely flavored yet billowing and elegant on the palate. Lipsmackingly juicy; the slate- and salt-tinged back end seems almost Halbtrocken on account of its sheer ripeness. **2 stars.**

**2003 Herbert Messmer Burrweiler Schlossgarten Riesling Kabinett Halbtrocken:** White peach, lemon and yellow plum aromas. Juicy and peachy on the palate, with hints of clove and nutmeg. Clear, pure and quite refined on the finish. **1 star.**

**2003 Herbert Messmer Weissburgunder Kabinett Trocken:** Sweet herbs, hazelnut and redcurrant on the nose. Juicy, bright and elegant, even delicate on the palate, completely belying its 13% alcohol. For all the fresh fruit and faintly, pleasantly tart suggestions, there is also a suggestion of creaminess. Smoky, resinous redcurrant and lightly toasted hazelnut flavors cling on the finish. **1 star.**



**2003 Herbert Messmer Burrweiler Schlossgarten Muskateller Kabinett:** Ordinarily, Messmer's Muskateller is Trocken, but in this instance he let the sugar climb just a tad to ameliorate the alcohol. Mint, peach and a hint of orange zest in the nose. Juicy, clear, buoyant and refined on the palate in a way this variety seldom is. The hint of finishing sweetness is entirely unobtrusive-indeed complements the plum, orange zest and brown spice flavors. **1 star.**

**2003 Herbert Messmer Burrweiler Schawer Riesling Spatlese:** Peach, plum and vanilla scents. Wafts onto the palate with amazing delicacy yet creamy richness and formidable flavor concentration of pit fruits, sweet flowers, vanilla, malt and underlying wet stone. Pure, refined and extremely long on the finish. Imagine a botrytis-free Mosel Auslese Gold Capsule from, say, Fritz Haag, but with less sweetness, and you begin to get the idea. **2 stars.**



**2003 Herbert Messmer Rieslaner Spatlese:** Apricot, pineapple and gooseberry jam aromas. Enormously ripe and rich on the palate, with pungent spiciness, yet it sticks with Messmer's 2003 scenario of elegance, refinement and lift. Lusciously juicy and enticingly spicy finish. This is grown in the Altenforst vineyard. **1 star.**

**2003 Herbert Messmer Burrweiler Altenforst Gewurztraminer Spatlese:** Clove, rose petal, bacon fat and honey aromas. Enormously sweet and creamy in the mouth yet with brightness and clarity rare for this grape. Finishes spicy, honeyed and long. I note that Messmer has three vintages of this wine in inventory, all offered by his U.S. importer. Evidently it is up to the Americans to support the notion of ravishingly delicious sweet gewürztraminer! **2 stars.**

## Theo Minges, Flemlingen

**2003 Theo Minges Riesling Trocken (1 liter bottle):** Despite this year's low acids, the highest in residual sugar of Minges's three Riesling liter bottlings was the most expressive. Apple, lime, and flowers in the nose almost suggest a Mosel wine, as does to some extent the purity of fruit and its exchange with mineral sensations on the palate. Juicy, soft, honeyed and yet interestingly marked by minerals in the finish. A steal. **1 star.**

**2003 Theo Minges Riesling Spatlese Trocken Gleisweiler Hölle:** A bouquet of flowers on wet stone. Floral in the mouth, with the skins and pits of pit fruits lending a touch of tartness and bitterness that are well integrated into a juicy and not at all austere dry matrix. Wet stone and salty mineral expressions amid strong finishing fruit flavors. **1 star.**

**2003 Theo Minges Riesling Spatlese Gleisweiler Hölle Bundsandstein Trocken:** Bundsandstein refers to the red sandstone on which his older Riesling vines are planted, and of which the oldest portions of Minges's house were crafted in the early Middle Ages. Purple plum and crushed stone on the nose. Juicy, concentrated and rich in the mouth, its finish expansive and leesy (from very long, slow fermentation), this displays fascinating notes of pepper and spice along with fruit pit and stones. Potential **2 stars.**



**2003 Theo Minges Riesling Kabinett Gleisweiler Hölle:** Honeyed white peach and orchid-like sweet floral aromas eloquently evoke the ripeness of the vintage. Quince jelly and nut oil flavors saturate the palate. The high ripeness is backed by concomitantly generous residual sugar and creaminess of texture, yet the overall effect is vivacious and delicate enough to merit the designation Kabinett. There is transparency here to many nuances of flavor. A spectacular balance of fruit and mineral has been achieved. **2 stars.**

**2003 Theo Minges Riesling Spatlese Gleisweiler Hölle:** Fig, apple jelly, and sweet floral perfume dominate the nose and palate. This is creamy and soft but refined, elegant and clear in flavors as well. Quince, apple jelly and purest honey in the finish. **1 star.**



**2003 Theo Minges Riesling Spatlese Gleisweiler Hölle Gold Capsule:** This comes from a lower, better-watered (by a brook) portion of the Hölle, and was groomed for success from the beginning with residual sugar. The loosely hanging berries were irregular in size, brown and translucent, and lightly botrytized in a few places, relates Minges. Intense aroma of mandarin orange, guava, white peach and honey. Nobly peachy, honeyed, citric palate impression. Creamy in texture yet buoyant and elegant, with engagingly bright citricity. Pure and refined in the finish, with red raspberry and floral notes adding allure. Handles its high residual sugar effortlessly. **2 stars.**

**2003 Theo Minges Scheurebe Spatlese Gleisweiler Hölle:** Being a Riesling purist, Minges dared to pour this wine after Riesling BA and Eiswein, but I changed the order of presentation lest you think me daft. Classic nose of pink grapefruit, blackcurrant and mint. Quite luscious and sweet but bracing. Lime and pink grapefruit sorbet with mint, cassis, peach and floral adjuncts in the finish. This follows what is becoming Minges's tradition of extroverted, gaudy, unabashedly varietal Scheurebe. Potential **2 stars.**

**2003 Theo Minges Riesling Beerenauslese Gleisweiler Hölle:** This represents 180 liters of the most botrytized material of the vintage picked out during the harvest of the Spatlese gold capsule. It was not even finished fermenting when I tasted, but is too interesting to omit noting. Yeasty, fermentative aromas over pure quince jelly which, along with the sheer thickness and density of the wine, suggests Coteaux du Layon. Caramelized pineapple entering in the finish. Highly promising. **1 star.**

**2003 Theo Minges Riesling Eiswein Bochinger Rosenkranz:** Honey, strawberry and nectarine aromas. Elegant, clear and ultra-refined. Fascinating layering of jellied, fresh, caramelized and frozen fruit concentrates, all served up with sides of salt and wet stone. These 300 liters totally beat the odds: it was harvested January 2nd, even though so many other 2003 Eiswein were already disappointingly soft and diffuse when harvested in mid-December. The starting point was already hugely ripe material, the frost was not especially deep, and the fruit had been through the hell of summer plus an additional 120 days. All indications were that this would fail. Wrong! The wine has the last word, and the finish here will talk you to death. **2 stars.**

## Muller-Catoir, Haardt

**2003 Muller-Catoir Riesling Spatlese Trocken Hambacher Romerbrunnen:** The fruit from this site has traditionally gone into liter wine, but this year's liter wine came from young vines in the particularly drought-stressed Eselshaut. Persimmon and brown spice aromas. Dried pit fruits, toasted nuts and citrus zest on the palate. Concentrated and chewy. Finishes with real grip and wet stone minerality. This manages to virtually hide its 13% alcohol, but nevertheless it's not for the faint of heart. **1 star.**



**2003 Muller-Catoir Riesling Spatlese Trocken Haardter Herrenletten:** Lemon and orange aromas. Lemon custard palate impression, nicely laced with juicy fresh citrus and a strongly meaty, mineral substrate. This is refined and elegant, walking gently while carrying its large load of extract-in contrast to this year's take-no-prisoners Riesling from the Romerbrunnen. Very fine, clear and long, leaving fascinating woody, smoky, and mineral salt traces, and completely hiding its 13.5% alcohol. **2 stars.**

**2003 Muller-Catoir Riesling Spatlese Trocken Haardter Burgergarten Breumel:** In order to more fully explore and push the potential of this site, the new team here is not just continuing the tradition of segregating the more recently planted and walled-in portion of the Burgergarten but is bottling separate wines from each of their three parcels, labeling them with their pre-1971 names. Breumel is the clos, the highest spot in Burgergarten. Yellow plum, honey, bergamot, grapefruit zest and brown spices in the nose. Pungent and resinous on the palate and mineral-inflected, lightly honeyed and faintly sizzling on the finish. (The other two single-parcel bottlings showed some bitterness and heat, characteristics Franzen thought were exacerbated by bottle shock.) **1 star.**

**2003 Muller-Catoir Muskateller Spatlese Trocken Haardter Burgergarten:** Peppermint and lime aromas. Lemony, zesty and pungent, but with a cooling wash of mint and basil over the palate. Managing to hide its 14% alcohol, but I still wouldn't sip this outdoors without shade. **1 star.**

**2003 Muller-Catoir Riesling Kabinett Gimmeldinger Mandelgarten:** Poached peach, brown spices and pungent florality in the nose. Quite sweet on the palate; honeyed, peachy and spicy. Offers impressive length and purity. **1 star.**

**2003 Muller-Catoir Riesling Spatlese Haardter Burgergarten:** Pineapple, honey, distilled herbs and flowers in the nose. Glossy, faintly oily, and glycerin-rich but buoyant and delicate on the palate. Subtle bitter-sweetness and a hint of caramel to the finishing fruit. **1 star.**



**2003 Muller-Catoir Riesling Spatlese Haardter Herrenletten:** A gaudy, florid aroma leads to a plump palate and a concentrated, intricate set of flavors that are positively baroque in nature. Melon, peach, apple and cassis are tinged with honey and salt. Drippingly rich in the back end. As with the corresponding dry Spatlese, one sees that the Herrenletten's old vines and water-retentive soils had an advantage this year. **2 stars.**

**2003 Muller-Catoir Rieslaner Spatlese Gimmeldinger Schossli:** Tropical and black fruit aromas. Fat and opulent on the palate, with tangerine and mango drenched in honey and brown spices. Yet all the while, in typical Rieslaner fashion, this preserves a core of fresh acidity. Almost candied in its finishing impression but enormously concentrated. I'd like to see this work through a bit of its sugar for optimum effect. Potential **2 stars.**

**2003 Muller-Catoir Rieslaner Spatlese Haardter Herzog:** Intense, sweet citrus aroma, with hints of white raisin and musk. On the palate, grilled pineapple dripping with orange liqueur and covered with brown spices. Liqueur-like intensity and sweetness in a fire hose of a finish, with white raisin, honey and malt against a gaudy backdrop of citrus fruits. **2 stars.**

**2003 Muller-Catoir Rieslaner Auslese Haardter Burgergarten (half bottle):** Woodsmoke, malt, honey and white raisin on the nose. Full and deep, with startling intensity, chewy fruit-skin phenolics and at the same time a flood of sheer juice. Enormously sweet and in need of time. Potential **2 stars.**



**2003 Muller-Catoir Rieslaner Auslese Gimmeldinger Schoss (half bottle):** Variations on citrus with cocoa powder and brown spices in the nose. Chocolate-covered orange rind in the mouth, with an overlay of brown spice. Caramel and pungent citrus rind in the finish along with fascinating spice. Dense rieslaner, but less scrutible and appealingly juicy than its Burgergarten counterpart. **1 star.**

**2003 Muller-Catoir Rieslaner Beerenauslese Haardter Burgergarten (half bottle):** Honey and candied lemon on the nose. Very pure, concentrated and creamy on the palate. Honey, caramelized pit fruits, mineral salts, and citrus flavors of huge intensity and reach are backed by high residual sweetness and more than enough acid to insure a lively if not downright breathtaking performance in 20 years. **2 stars.**

**2003 Muller-Catoir Rieslaner Beerenauslese Gimmeldinger Schoss:** Spectacularly concentrated honeyed citrus aromas with smoky overtones. Grippingly intense on the palate, with meaty depth as well as liqueur-like fruit concentration, suggestions of vanilla and lanolin, and a resin-like cling. Certainly hiding more than it's showing. **2 stars.**

**2003 Muller-Catoir Rieslaner Trockenbeerenauslese Haardter Burgergarten (half bottle):** "You really had to search to find botrytized grapes in 2003, and what there were had completely shriveled," said Franzen. This wine was the result. Ethereally honeyed, pure and juicy in its pit and citrus fruit character despite the desiccation of the berries. A super concentration of peach, apricot, lemon, white raisin, ginger and honey-but with no hint of caramelization-in an amazing rolling block of a finish.

## Weegmuller, Haardt

**2003 Weingut Weegmuller Scheurebe Trocken:** Grapefruit, lemon and yellow plum aromas. Amazingly bright, delicate and refined on the palate for the vintage. Candied lemon, sage, sauvignon-like gooseberry jelly, and a flattering bit of phenolic sizzle along with plenty of sap and juice in the finish. **1 star.**

**2003 Weingut Weegmuller Haardt Herrenletten Riesling Spatlese Trocken Alte Reben:** Salty, smoky, lemony aroma. Dense, compact, even a bit austere. But where a few of the dry wines here today were somewhat severe and a bit bitter in their expression of desiccated fruit, this displays enough pulp as well as an interesting mineral dimension. Finishes with an oily, resinous cling. **1 star.**

**2003 Weingut Weegmuller Haardt Burgergarten Gewurztraminer Trocken Alte Reben:** Smoked meat, caraway, sweet pea and rose petal aromas. Creamy and rich in the mouth; full but with the alcohol hidden, and with satisfying underlying meatiness. The finish is a mighty melange of spices, smoked meat and flowers. **1 star.**



**2003 Weingut Weegmuller Haardt Burgergarten Riesling Kabinett:** In the nose as well as on the palate, this offers a fruit salad full of melons, tropical fruits and citrus. Sappy and juicy, as well as honeyed, with a faintly but not unpleasantly metallic note suggestive of some mineral component. I would have guessed this as a rieslaner Spatlese. **1 star.**

**2003 Weingut Weegmuller Haardt Mandelring Scheurebe Auslese:** Grilled pineapple, cassis and mint aromas. Rather candied black fruit and citrus character on the palate, but the wine's sheer stuffing buffers its sweetness, and the finish of honey, cassis, pineapple, white raisin, malt and citrus is irresistibly luscious. You can taste the layering of fresh, dried and candied fruits here that correspond to the diverse conditions of the raw material. **1 star.**