

Pichler-Krutzler & Hervé Murat

16 Aug 2012 by Jancis Robinson

FX Pichler has long been an international star of the Wachau, Austria's most famous dry white wine region. He was a particular star when ripeness was all on these baked terraces on the north bank of the Danube and his Unendlich (unending) bottling is legendary. But since the 2007 vintage, his daughter Elisabeth Pichler and her husband Erich of the Südburgenland winemaking family Krutzler have been beginning to make waves of their own.

This is by no means to decry FXP's output, but there seems to me to be an extra freshness and drive to the PK wines, very much in keeping with the direction the dynamic younger producers in Austria are taking. There is a new generation now in many of the Wachau's most famous cellars - the likes of Emmerich Knoll Jr, Lucas Pichler and Leo Alzinger Jr. Emmerich Knoll Jr took over as head of the official wine growers' association Vinea Wachau in March this year after the 24-year(!) rule of Franz Hirtzberger. He shows no signs of doing anything radical but it is interesting that Pichler-Krutzler, like several other notable newish Wachau producers, operate outside Vinea Wachau. Instead of sticking to the sacred three levels of ripeness, Steinfeder, then Federspiel, then Smaragd for the ripest wines, Erich's aim is to make a single wine from each vineyard whose ripeness level perfectly expresses the vintage. Pichler-Krutzler are based in Oberloiben with their own winery and equipment but often use FX Pichler's picking team as they tend to pick earlier than he does.

A&B Vintners have been importing Pichler-Krutzler wines into the UK since the beginning and sent me the current offerings below to try. I was most impressed by the integrity of all the wines, but especially by the stunning quality of the 2011 vintage. If anything, the 2010s seemed a little tart and the 2009s maybe a bit ripe and diffuse, but the 2011s are great by any standards. As A&B, importers of many a great white burgundy including those of Pierre-Yves Colin-Morey, point out, 'they have produced world-class Riesling and Grüner Veltliner of breathtaking purity and personality, which, quite frankly, rival any other whites in our portfolio'.



Pichler Krutzler managed to buy a small parcel in the celebrated granite and gneiss Pfaffenberg vineyard on the border between Wachau and Kremstal in time for the coming vintage. (The picture above was taken in their monopole In der Wand vineyard that rises straight up from the Danube.) I look forward very much to tasting the results.

Included with these wines was a range from a Burgundian négociant new to A&B and to me. The wines were decent but not nearly as thrilling as the Austrians.
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PICHLER-KRUTZLER, Wachau, Austria

Pichler-Krutzler, Frauengarten Grüner Veltliner 2011 Wachau 16.5 Drink 2012-2016

Screwcap. Direct nose with great honest intensity on the palate and a suggestion of honey and flowers. Seems very natural - no cookie cutter aromatics. Delightfully heartfelt wine. 12.5%
£55 for 6 bottles ib AB Vintners

Pichler-Krutzler, In der Wand Riesling 2011 Wachau 17 Drink 2013-2019

High toned and lively. Very juicy and sprightly. Just off dry. A little sweeter than the average Alsace Riesling and a little fuller than the average German. Perhaps. Lacy texture. Great delicacy and transparency. Good persistence. Obvious integrity. 13%
£110 for 6 bottles ib AB Vintners

Pichler-Krutzler, Loibenberg Riesling 2010 Wachau 16.5+ Drink 2014-2020

Intriguingly nutty tang on the nose. Lots of acidity and minerality. Lime-like acidity. Still very youthful. The palate seems less evolved than the nose. Wait. 13.5%

Pichler-Krutzler, Wunderberg Riesling 2010 Wachau 17 Drink 2013-2020

Pale honey colour. Well knit flowers and honey aromas. Racy with a fine streak of acidity. But a bit more weight than the Loibenberg Riesling 2010 at this stage. Still very racy. But good energy. 13.5%

Pichler-Krutzler, Wunderberg Riesling 2010 Wachau 17 Drink 2012-2017

Very much richer and more aromatically evolved than the 2010. For sybarites. Honey and great richness - even a hint of botrytis on the nose. And perhaps very, very slightly oily. Accelerated Riesling! But despite the high alcohol, there is a reasonably light touch here. Especially on the finish, which is delicate despite... a little chew on the finish. This was clearly a most unusual vintage. 14.5%

Pichler-Krutzler, Wunderberg Grüner Veltliner 2010 Wachau 17 Drink 2012-2017

White pepper and cornichon nose. Pure ripe GV! Exciting breadth of fruit even if there is the merest suggestion of paint on the palate (still - fermentation aromas). This is big enough to counter the high acidity of 2010. Already a very satisfying lip-smacking drink. Very positive finish. 13.5%

Pichler-Krutzler, Wunderberg Grüner Veltliner 2009 Wachau 17 Drink 2012-2017

Smoky, reductive nose. Much tauter than the Wunderberg Riesling 2009. Big and bold and quite rich with a strong suggestion of sweetness. Pickles and sausage are the overriding flavours. Fun! But this would need careful food matching. Serve with big, German-speaking foods. It could easily handle sauerkraut, for instance. Very powerful. But it seems to have almost more obvious acidity than the Riesling. 14%

HERVÉ MURAT, Gevrey-Chambertin, Burgundy

Hervé Murat, Les Herbues 2010 Hautes-Côtes de Nuits 15.5 Drink 2014-2017

Pale ruby. Some slight fustiness on the nose and massive acidity on the palate. Pretty hard work. Pure fruit flavours on the palate but no pleasure for the moment. 12.5%
£125 per 6 bottles ib AB Vintners

Hervé Murat, Le Village 2010 Morey-St-Denis 16 Drink 2013-2016

Particularly pale cherry red. Very pure fruit with a silky texture and really rather ready already! Friendly lunchtime burgundy. Perhaps just a little sweet for perfection. 12.5%
£265 a doz ib AB Vintners

Hervé Murat, Les Herbues 2009 Hautes-Côtes de Nuits 15.5 Drink 2013-2016

Pale, rather sludgy ruby. Muddy, upholstery webbing nose. Some roundness - presumably thanks to the vintage - but a slight lack of freshness. Firm finish. Not quite pure enough. 12.5%

£135 per 6 bottles ib AB Vintners

Hervé Murat, Le Clos Duc 2009 Hautes-Côtes de Nuits 15.5+ Drink 2012-2015

Light ruby. Trying very hard with some lively vibrancy as well as riper fruit than usual in this appellation. Some tension but certainly no lusciousness. Fresh enough. But not much concentration. 12.5%

£155 per 6 bottles ib AB Vintners

Hervé Murat, Les Tuvilains Premier Cru 2009 Beaune 16 Drink 2012-2016

Pale ruby with a very slightly greyish tinge. Some real substance and appeal here. Perhaps AB Vintners bought all the other wines so they could get hold of this? Quite charming if a little heavy on the end. Not the most appetising red burgundy and just a little sweet and candied but it would offer short-term pleasure. 12.5%

£295 per 6 bottles ib AB Vintners