EACH year at the end of August, the genteel spa town of Wiesbaden welcomes journalists and wine merchants from around the globe for an event that has become a fixture for German wine lovers: the annual Vereinigterheimer and pré-vu tasting, followed by the later 10-year vertical vintages, held by Germany’s Verband Deutscher Prädikats- und Qualitätsweinbauerschaft (VDP) or VDP. These are the three major classified single sites, produced to stringent standards. Naturally, this is an opportunity to graze a portion of this Riesling-loving vintage, here are three from the youthful exuberance of these new releases—often still either painfully shy or held back by adolescent awkwardness—and present the most settled, expressive, and revealing charms of maturing wines. This is not a step taken lightly: more than 500 newly released GGs were on show at this year’s Vorpremiere, and there were just three days to taste them. Taking people away from the main event leaves them much less time to get to grips with this vast offering. Nonetheless, about 30 people allowed themselves to be whisked off to Weingut Christians in Gimmeldingen for the Pfalz; from the Mittelhaardt and the Steffelshof, respectively. All of them have farmed biodynamically for years. Time was of the essence, the three winemakers left few words. They welcomed their international guests with a glass of (exquisitely dry, long-aged Pinot Noir Rebholz Sekt) with a most business-like tasting.

The wines

**REBHOLZ BIRKWEILER** KASTENNAHN RIESLING GROSSES GESCHW 2008-18 (Here 2008 was supplemented for the missing 2013 vintage in which no Kastenhausen GG was made) The 3.4ha (8.4 acres) of parcels within the 29.2ha (72 acres) Kastenhausen vineyard belonging to Rebholz are on the convex, south-facing core part of the site, enjoying full protection from westerly winds. This is the principle site as it moves from 525 to 500/500 (160-300m), and most of the Rebholz parcels are in the upper reaches.

Opalescent gold with a green, silvery, cooling notions of bright freshness. Utter concentration. There is nothing intense and powerful here, but the wine has a linear, taut shaft of citrus right through the heart of the wine. Bone-dry, and a promise of something solid, lasting, substantial. The palate offers more freshness in a sea of lemon-scented purity, freshness,akins, skinnies, and a distinctly more silvery, cooling notions of bright freshness. Utter shyness and delicious depth seduce completely.

Three Grosse Lagen over ten vintages: The intrinsic truth of the vineyard

**Anne Krebiehl MW reports on a special vertical tasting featuring a grand cru crop from top estates Ökonomier Rebholz, Wittmann, and A Christmann**

They themselves did not comment on the individual wines. All ten vintages were poured, and we tasters could move at our own—hasty—pace. The winemakers, very wisely, allowed the wines to speak entirely for themselves. It was at the end that they spoke briefly, and then only to pay tribute to their families, all as deeply engaged as themselves, and their teams. This was a smart move; tasted in silence, without the disruption of changing glasses or re-pouring, without commentary, these expressions of a singular site revealed so much of the intrinsic truth of the vineyard, the handwriting of each estate, both constant and varying, the trajectory of age—all through the prism of different vintages. For me, it was the Kastenhausen that stood out, it was the most clear-cut, most precise, most stringent, most vindictive, most stylistically effortless wine. Its personality fairly shimmered through the vintages, as the face of a mimic moves through moods: one year as a brisk, bright greeting, from flashing eyes; the next a shy glance from a downcast gaze; another a warm, benevolent, and generous smile. This was: soil, weather, care, and devotion made manifest. It was the most moving flight. The Morstein showed a very different personality: where the Kastenhausen raw, rugged, and unrefined, the Morstein refined, elegant, and always evident, its evolution framed with increasing precision year by year. The Edig was the least wavering, the most steady, the most moving; its beauty of serious wines were just as clear and soaring.

**2014**

Primary fruit still plays a role here as the ethereal freshness of crushed citrus foliage beguiles with its inherent headiness. Lemon zest does the rest. The palate offers more freshness in a sea of lemon-scented purity, freshness, akins, and a distinctly more silvery, cooling notions of bright freshness. Utter shyness and delicious depth seduce completely.

**2015**

This wine is more reticent on the nose, but offers a sense of something solid, lasting, substantial. It was at the end that they spoke briefly, and then only to pay tribute to their families, all as deeply engaged as themselves, and their teams. This was a smart move; tasted in silence, without the disruption of changing glasses or re-pouring, without commentary, these expressions of a singular site revealed so much of the intrinsic truth of the vineyard, the handwriting of each estate, both constant and varying, the trajectory of age—all through the prism of different vintages. For me, it was the Kastenhausen that stood out, it was the most clear-cut, most precise, most stringent, most vindictive, most stylistically effortless wine. Its personality fairly shimmered through the vintages, as the face of a mimic moves through moods: one year as a brisk, bright greeting, from flashing eyes; the next a shy glance from a downcast gaze; another a warm, benevolent, and generous smile. This was: soil, weather, care, and devotion made manifest. It was the most moving flight. The Morstein showed a very different personality: where the Kastenhausen raw, rugged, and unrefined, the Morstein refined, elegant, and always evident, its evolution framed with increasing precision year by year. The Edig was the least wavering, the most steady, the most moving; its beauty of serious wines were just as clear and soaring.

**2016**

Primary fruit is still very evident; yellow plum, pitched somewhere between Mirabell and greengage, has an edge of lemon balm while lingering in Amalfi lemon scent. The tannins are settled, the lemon freshness abides and flows in fragrant shapes, hanging citrus charm and lemonscentedness. Its playfulness bespoke the serious depth from its nascent citrus purity and awkwardness.

**2017**

A shaft of citrus lifts the nose, but there is more to come. More air reveals the slightest hints of pineapple. The palate is plum with fruit, very fresh, and nothing overwhelming. After the maturing, evolving wines, this has lots of baby fat, but the core already shows that structured, lemon purity that was the hallmark of all these wines.

**2018**

Stone fruit and sourness hit the nose first, speaking of ripeness in this youthful state. The palate almost seems fresh, so fresh it’s overpowering. This still remains heaven—mild but with that story citrus signature. In this context, this really is too young to assess.

**WEINGUT WITTSMANN WESTHOFER MORSTEIN RIESLING GROSSES GESCHW 2008-16**

The Wintmers have 3ha (2 acres) within the 24.0ha (59 acres) Morstein vineyard. 3ha (75 acres) of contiguous parcels at around 590-650m (1810-2130ft) altitude, and another half hectare (1.2 acres) on higher parcels (up to 7380ft (2240m). The 1.7ha (4.2 acres) are of younger vines. Morstein, first mentioned in 1282, is of water-retaining and mail that site the territory’s limestone of the Wiesloch. It faces south and slopes gently from 7380ft to 9040ft at a gradient of up to 25 percent. The site has come into its own with climate change, still opening relatively...
late; even in warm 2017 and hot 2018, the harvest did not start until late September, while in all the previous years the harvest was in October. Philipp Wittmann remarked that 2009 and 2011 were key years in learning to “deal with warm vintages. Today we work with a fundamentally different understanding to steer the wines toward freshness and saltiness,” he said.

2009 (from double magnum)

Lifted, citrus-edged sultana on the nose projects an image of both ripeness and precision. The palate only adds to this with a honeyed touch. Underneath, there is inherent coolness and concentration. But the dual sensory notions of lemon and saltiness, “which I love,” said Steffen Christmann, “are not easy to combine. But the ripeness is just so sublime.” The palate shows utter concentration that seems to be a sublimation of soil, citrus, and sunshine. This is all about earth, soil, depth, and eternity. An essence of Morstein, with a timelessness, almost primal draw deep into a limestone underworld. Incredibly long.

2010 (from double magnum)

Like spilled lemon juice on dry chalk, this evokes something solid and austere, something authentic and earthy. There almost is a hint of lanolin alongside the chalk. The palate shows utter concentration that seems to be a sublimation of soil, citrus, and sunshine. This is all about earth, soil, depth, and eternity. An essence of Morstein, with a timelessness, almost primal draw deep into a limestone underworld. Incredibly long.

2011 (from double magnum)

Dried white currant, dried sultana, dried lemon peel: ripeness is evident, and abundant sunshine is preserved in this golden, concentrated liquid. Then the full force of chalky limestone hits. There is lanolin alongside the juiciness, smoothed along by lemon oil. Dry and elemental, this is soil made manifest in a ripe, luscious vintage. Yet the finish is a dry, austere, concentrated linearity of lemon freshness.

2012 (from double magnum)

A touch of smoke hovers on the intense notions of chalk and lemon. The palate seems to float on a buffered cloud of chalky citrus freshness. This is elastic, springy, billowing with reverberating oiliness and a smooth, gentle fluidity that seems to radiate and lemon purity.

2013 (from double magnum)

Apples, herb, manure, and earth notions make for an unusual nose, pitched between freshness and evolution. The palate presents pristine freshness, cushioned—suspended almost—against dried-fruit richness. Yet a halo, an aura of cool, herbal freshness, seems to spread from an epicenter of limestone. This is ripeness and balance anchored in cool, cool soils.

2014 (from double magnum)

Dried lemon rind is distinct on the nose, but there is also the sense of something clear-cut and straightforward. The palate falls in with this rather strict notion of slender concentration, vivid freshness, driven force. There are edges of dried fruit, layers of citrus, but this is characterized by a clear-cut, taut, almost somber devotion to slender citrus. Its purity echoes long.

2015

Balm-like freshness spreads out from an epicenter of lemon-rind purity. Yet there is an undulating, mellowing touch that transforms the freshness into echoes of cool, compress-like serenity. Underneath slumber notions of dried fruit that add a gilded edge to an uncommon, inherent balance.

2016

Clarity, freshness, and lemony brightness speak clearly on the nose. Lifted purity pushes pleasure buttons with its insistent notions. The palate presents a balanced notion of slenderness, vividity, sinuous freshness that flirts with lemon and grapefruit. Zestiness and lightness rule the finish. Supreme.