

# TERRAIR

THE REAL DIRT FROM THE ESTATES OF ERNST LOOSEN

## The spice of life

SPRING/SUMMER 2001



Ürziger  
Würzgarten

PHOTO © Robin Head

**Ürzig** is the picturesque wine village on the Mosel where Ernst Loosen's father grew up, so it's long been a special place for the family. It's a sleepy little town at the foot of one of the most dramatic vineyards in all the world, and is home to some of the most vibrant, un-sleepy wines you'll ever taste.

We consider ourselves very lucky to have such ancient vines in our estate.

Ürzig is just a few kilometers downstream from the Loosen estate house in Bernkastel, but the terroir is amazingly different. Instead of the blue Devonian slate found in Bernkastel, Graach and Wehlen, the sharp bend in the river at Ürzig has exposed a stunning band of red volcanic soil. This iron-rich earth gives the wines an exotic fruitiness and a lively mineral spice. This spicy character is why the vineyard is

called Würzgarten, which means "spice garden."

The Mosel makes such a sharp turn here because it could find no other way through the mountain of rock behind Ürzig. That is nothing but good news for winemakers, because the steep slopes here face due south, giving the vines maximum exposure to the warm, grape-ripening rays of the sun. In addition, large rock outcroppings hold the heat of the day to give the fruit that extra little bit of ripening time that can make all the difference.

Another important component of the Ürzig terroir is the age of the vines. Estate-wide, the vines of Dr. Loosen average about 60 years in age (only about three percent are replaced each year), but in Ürzig there are vines that are well over 100 years old.

It is the exceptionally deep

(continues inside)

## The spice of life (continued from page 1)



The unique red soil of Ürzig starts out as soft, volcanic rock like this and weathers down to the crumbly, sandy dirt found in the vineyards.

roots and naturally low yields of these old, ungrafted vines that bring such concentration of terroir to the Dr. Loosen wines. We consider ourselves very lucky to have such ancient vines in our estate when so many other estates ripped theirs out in the misguided replanting frenzy that happened in the '60s and '70s.

Ürziger Würzgarten is one of four vineyards in the Dr. Loosen estate that is considered to be of the highest quality and distinction. If there were a true vineyard classification in Germany, it would definitely be a "grand cru" site. Ürzig itself has long been known as an exceptional wine village. It is one of the earliest documented wine communities on the Mosel, first mentioned in the year 690 AD.

Still, while you certainly can't make great wine without a great vineyard, a top site doesn't necessarily ensure top-quality wine. We think this incredible place where Ernie's father lived as a child is just too special to waste, so we do everything we can to capture the singular quality of Ürziger Würzgarten in the wines. It's our way of bringing you an authentic slice of Mosel spice in every bottle.

### About Weingut Dr. Loosen

**TOTAL VINEYARD AREA**  
30 acres

**ANNUAL PRODUCTION**  
70,000 bottles

**VARIETIES**  
Riesling 98%

**BEST VINEYARDS**  
Wehlener Sonnenuhr  
Ürziger Würzgarten  
Erddener Treppchen  
Erddener Prälat

**GOOD VINEYARDS**  
Bernkasteler Lay  
Graacher Himmelreich

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### Ernst Loosen named Winemaker of the Year

We are thrilled to announce that Gault Millau, the highly regarded publisher of travel and lifestyle books in Europe, has named our very own Ernie Loosen as Winemaker of the Year in the 2001 edition of their "Weinguide Deutschland."

"No other winemaker of the Middle Mosel has thrust himself so strongly to the top as Ernst

Loosen in the '90s," says the Weinguide.

Since its first edition in 1994, the Gault Millau guide has become one of the most comprehensive and influential annual wine publications in Germany. Past winemakers of the year have included Wilhelm Haag, Carl von Schubert, Manfred Prüm, Egon Müller and Helmut Dönnhoff.

## Dr. Loosen & J.L. Wolf

### *Year of the Kabinett*

The 2000 harvest at Dr. Loosen was one of the most difficult, labor-intensive and expensive that we can remember. Quantities are very low this year and we only made one Spätlese (from Ürziger Würzgarten).

The year had a promising start, with an early flowering and advanced development in April and May. But then it started raining and never really stopped. Botrytis set in before the grapes were ripe, which is always a bad thing. We had to cut like crazy to keep the grapes healthy.

Unfortunately, the remaining healthy fruit never got very ripe, so we made mostly Kabinett. We could have beefed them up by adding the botrytis fruit, but that wouldn't have given us the clean character we like in our Kabinett and Spätlese.

The bright side of the story is that the wet weather seems to have dramatically enhanced the extract levels of the wines. Thus,

while the wines are light and nimble of body, they are highly aromatic and minerally. They really amplify the vineyard differences, which is exactly what we're after here at Dr. Loosen.

**We had a slightly better** time of it at J.L. Wolf, our estate in the Pfalz region. The Middle Haardt got hit pretty hard by rot, both good and bad, but through very strict selection and a lot of vineyard work throughout the year, we were able to get good quality.

Our average yield was only 40 hectoliters per hectare, which is down 20 percent from normal, but our top sites gave us dry wines with good concentration and excellent acidity. As on the Mosel, extract levels here were quite high, making the wines exceptionally flavorful.

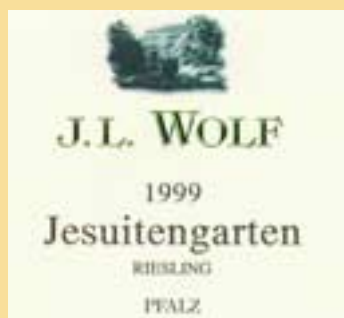
At this time, most of the top wines are still fermenting. We'll tell you more in the fall issue of our "Terroir" newsletter.

## Best dry Riesling of the year

### *1999 Jesuitengarten from J.L. Wolf*

In addition to naming Ernie Germany's Winemaker of the Year for 2001, Gault Millau also singled out one of his wines from the Pfalz as the best dry Riesling of the year – the 1999 J.L. Wolf Jesuitengarten.

Jesuitengarten, a great vineyard in the village of Forst, is one of our four top sites in the Pfalz. With our unofficial Burgundy-style classification, wines from these vineyards are treated as "grands crus," with only the vineyard name on the label. The focus at J.L. Wolf is on dry wines, with alcohol levels for the top wines in the 12 to 13.5 percent range.



Grand awards aside, we're quite pleased with the 1999 Jesuitengarten. It is full-bodied, with a deep citrus intensity that really shows the style of the vineyard. As in all of our top sites, yields were quite low, so only a few hundred cases were made. We hope you get to try it.

## TERROIR

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## Winemaker of the Year

### Affirmation

I won't play it coy and try to tell you that awards like Gault Millau's Winemaker of the Year don't mean a lot to me. Winning awards is not our goal – we just want to make great wines – but there's no denying that this kind of recognition is rewarding and very satisfying.

Since 1988, when the estate passed to my generation, we have been entirely focused on one goal: to bring back the concept of terroir in our wines. I rant and rave a lot about all of the dumb things in the 1971 German Wine Law, but the worst has got to be how it destroyed the whole idea that different vineyards produce strikingly different wines. The law sacrificed individuality for uniformity and supposed equality.

Using an old Prussian vineyard map as our guide, we've worked hard these past 12 years to find the true character of our best sites. An award like this is nice because it shows some

welcome recognition and assurance that we are succeeding in what we set out to do. It is also a much-appreciated affirmation of the terroir concept.

We have been entirely focused on one goal: to bring back terroir.

Of course, the real test for our approach is in the marketplace – with folks like you who actually drink the stuff. All of the awards in the world don't measure up to one wine lover taking a sip and saying, "Ah, now that's Ürziger Würzgarten!"

— Ernst Loosen

