

BERNHARD RIEBEL

Our initial arrival at Bernhard Riebel was somewhat inauspicious; the GPS had gotten us a bit lost and we drove around the tiny village of Châtenois in circles before finally pulling into the family driveway. But, once there, we had the pleasure of meeting Pierre Bernhard's mother, who spoke French and German, but little to no English, yet graciously welcomed us to her home.

After a brief wait, during which we freshened up from our journey, Pierre appeared on the scene and gave us the full story and tour. We started first with a visit to the vineyards on the top of the Weingarten slope, a hillside which previously belonged to the Archbishop of Strasbourg.

In total, Pierre owns 23 hectares, most of which are comprised of different types of granite soils (red, white and some red stone and clay) and all of which are Certified Organic. In addition to Weingarten, his other vineyard properties include Hahnenberg, a 45 degree slope, which is mostly planted to Riesling, as well as Meisenberg and Ritterberg in Scherwiller, where the Reibel family originated.

It was, in fact, his mother's family – the Riebels – who had been in the wine industry for many generations. However, when Pierre's grandfather died, his grandmother sold her grapes to the

co-op. In 1982, his parents started to produce their own wine again – in the garage. After college, Pierre initially went off to Paris to pursue a career in the automotive parts business. However, as his parents began to age, it was clear that one of the sons needed to take over the family business and it was equally clear that Pierre and not his brother was the more interested of the two. So, he returned to Châtenois 15 years ago and never looked back.

No longer confined to the garage, Pierre maintains a full-scale winery a short drive from the house. However, the garage is still filled with tractors and other farming equipment.

With a total of 22 wines in Pierre's range, we declined to taste them all, lest we should fall asleep at dinner that night (or miss our reservation altogether). Instead, we primarily focused on terroir, tasting a variety of Rieslings from different vineyard plots. ☞

TASTING NOTES

Pinot Noir 2014

Interestingly, the Pinot Noir grapes for this wine are harvested almost as late as those picked for his late harvest wines. With intense red cherry aromas, this wine is fresh and vibrant with black cherry fruit.

Muscat Hahnenberg 2013

A blend of Muscat d'Alsace and Muscat Ottonel, this wine offers up fresh flowers and pronounced grape aromas. The palate is dry, with mouth-watering acidity that lingers throughout the long length.

Riesling Cuvée Coup de Foudre 2014

Perhaps I was influenced by the name, (*Coup de Foudre* translates as "love at first sight"), but what's not to love? This wine is slightly off-dry with high acidity, lime, ripe peach and citrus, along with a hint of spice in the finish.

Riesling Coteaux du Haut-Keonigsbourg 2013

Produced from 60-year-old vines, this wine displayed mineral, chalk and citrus aromas and flavors, with a weighty mid-palate.

Riesling Weingarten 2012

This grapes for this wine hail from a warmer, less windy lieu dit comprised of red granite soils. The wine was showing some development with a whiff of petrol on the nose. It has extremely high acidity, with citrus, mineral and floral notes on the dry and angular palate.

Riesling Rittersberg 2012

Rittersberg is a cooler site due to its white granite soils. The wine was a bit closed, with some minerality on the nose, which became more pronounced on the palate. It was fresh, but softer in acidity than the Weingarten with just a hint of perceptible residual sugar.

Riesling Rittersberg 2005

At ten year's of age, this wine was beginning to show some development with honey, anise and petrol aromas. On the palate, it was weighty and textural, with citrus, honey, mineral and spice flavors and a clean finish.

Pinot Gris Hahnenberg 2014

This wine was slightly off-dry, with ripe pear fruit, spice and a nice oily texture typical of the variety. It was clean and fresh with very long length.

