

# Sektmanufaktur Schloss Vaux

Unique Sparkling Wine Production



Schloss VAUX forms a strong family

Anyone who counts on the fingers of one hand the German producers who focus on the production of top quality sparkling wine will surely have fingers to spare. Schloss Vaux, however, has earned the right to be called an outstanding producer.

Schloss Vaux stands out in the German sparkling wine industry through its history alone. Its headquarters was founded in 1868 in Berlin, a city not exactly known for its wine production. A German sparkling wine house was established during the founding years at Château Vaux, not far from Metz, in Lorraine. The company was re-established in 1919 after the

war and moved to Eltville in Rheingau. Today, Schloss Vaux is the last privately-owned company of vintage provenance producing only sparkling wine and is well-established on the wine scene.

This worked in the company's favour when a group of friends took over Schloss Vaux in 1982, founding probably the only wine company where family members are able to choose their family. Their enthusiasm for this sparkling wine enterprise with a picturesque villa for its home helped Schloss Vaux through some difficult times, when other sparkling wine houses had to give up and bow to competition from the high-volume producers.

Since Nikolaus, Count of Plettenberg became Chief Executive in 1998, much has changed. Plettenberg, who himself comes from a vintner family, is well attuned to how the industry works. He recognised that Schloss Vaux had to reposition in order to distinguish itself from the big sparkling wine producers. Plettenberg made sure that the terms Secco, Lohnversektung (contract winemaking for other brands) and retail brands were not part of the vocabulary at Schloss Vaux. Instead, he put all his efforts into strengthening the Schloss Vaux brand. This included dispensing with tank fermentation and transvasement (the process of removing lees by filtration),



which was tantamount to revolution in the highly technical German sparkling wine industry. Each individual bottle of sparkling wine is developed using the traditional bottle fermentation process. The flavour also caused a stir because brut sparkling wine was and still is more the exception than the rule in Germany, whereas with Schloss Vaux, every sparkling wine is produced brut. Some of the investors doubted such drastic measures would meet with success, but the large majority believed in their chosen family head and in the Schloss Vaux brand.

Initially, some of the sceptics felt vindicated, as not every retailer complied with the consistent application of quality standards. Some customers at the time even left Schloss Vaux. However, this also offered the opportunity to gain new customers. From a brand in the Rhine-Main area of Germany, Schloss Vaux has progressed to become a sparkling wine sold throughout the country. From Sylt to Garmisch, you can find Schloss Vaux on the wine lists of popular and haute cuisine establishments. The return to the classic bottle fermentation process fitted in perfectly with the Schloss Vaux tradition.

Since then, the wine has been allowed to age on the lees for 20 months, resulting in very fine perlage. Each bottle is handled up to nine times in the process. Despite the focus on top quality sparkling wine, Schloss Vaux offers a wide range of 10 different sparkling wines. Not to be missed are the Cuvée VAUX white, the Rosé and a Blanc de Noirs. The regional Rheingau sparkling

wine is an illustration of the winery's commitment to its origins; the sparkling wine consists of 100 per cent Rheingau Riesling. With this vintage sparkling wine, the bottle design of the range changes significantly. Whilst the colour of the bottleneck has always been important - thus, on account of Cuvée Vaux, many consumers associate the colour orange with Schloss Vaux - the absence of a front label begins with the Rheingau Riesling. In its place, a vineyard plaque on a cord attached with a deep red Schloss Vaux seal adorns the sparkling wine.

Innovative products in the portfolio are a very aromatic sparkling wine made from Sauvignon Blanc and a sparkling wine made from organically grown Weissburgunder grapes. Completely new is a Grüner Veltliner, the product of a successful sparkling wine experiment in the Rheingau vineyards. A very particular base wine is required for special products like these, which is why it is necessary to work very closely with the vintners. The Weissburgunder grape used for the organic sparkling wine, for example, comes exclusively from the Neumer Ecovin vineyard in Rheinhessen. Good relations with the large VDP vintners are also critical for the limited regional sparkling wines from the renowned Rheingau locations of Erbacher Marcobrunn, Rüdesheimer Berg Schlossberg and Steinberg. Schloss Vaux's suppliers are often amongst the crème de la crème of Rheingau viticulture. Whenever possible, Schloss Vaux works with one partner for each of its sparkling wines.

Since January 2014, Schloss Vaux has become even more involved with its grape production. The long-term lease of 7 hectares of vineyard in Geisenheim means that the sparkling wine producer has become its own base wine supplier. Now, the entire produc-



tion chain from pruning through to harvest, and initial fermentation through to liqueur de tirage, can be accompanied and monitored. Many of the discerning customers are curious to see how this brings further quality improvements. In the medium term, the plan is to extend the vine growing area to 10 hectares with a view to providing one-third of the required base wine themselves. Schloss Vaux is thus underlining its claim to a special position in the German sparkling wine market and once again breaking new ground.

"It is not easy to sell high quality sparkling wine at a reasonable price in Germany," says Count Plettenberg of the many obstacles encountered on the company's journey. However, he and his team have succeeded in increasing turnover from 190,000 to 350,000 bottles per year since the beginning of the century. This is also down to selective distribution which concentrates on specialist retailers and catering, thus reflecting the value of the product through its outlets as well. Christoph Graf (Sales director) and Clementine Perlitt (Marketing) are optimistic for the future. The strategy has not only paid off in terms of sales - for ten years, liquidity has been so good that investors no longer receive their family dividends in liquid form.

## INFO



Sektmanufaktur  
Schloss Vaux AG  
Kiedricher Straße 18a  
65343 Eltville im Rheingau  
Germany  
Tel. +49 6123 620 60  
kontor@schloss-vaux.de  
www.schloss-vaux.de