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VDP. DIE PRÄDIKATSWEINGÜTER

ROOTED IN QUALITY

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO



VDP. GROSSE LAGE®

VDP. ERSTE LAGE®

VDP. ORTSWEIN

VDP. GUTSWEIN

VDP. GROSSE LAGE®

VDP. ERSTE LAGE®

VDP. ORTSWEIN

VDP. GUTSWEIN

19



10

VDP. DIE PRÄDIKATSWEINGÜTER

What is **VDP**?

200 *the*

WINE GROWERS 13 WINE REGIONS

VDP.GROSSE LAGE® AUTHENTIC
INNOVATIVE WINES



Germany's elite estates

HANDMADE IN GERMANY

VDP.GROSSES GEWÄCHS® 13 WINE
HIGH QUALITY STANDARDS REGIONS

PASSION VDP.ERSTE LAGE®

WINE SITE CLASSIFICATION
GROWERS VDP.ORTSWEIN

INDIVIDUALISTS **ORIGIN**
TRADITION ASSOCIATION FOUNDED 1910

EAGLE AND GRAPES BOTTLE CAPSULE

VDP.GUTSWEIN Artisanal

VDP.DIE PRÄDIKATSWEINGÜTER

The Verband Deutscher Prädikatsweingüter e.V. (VDP) is the oldest national association of fine winegrowing estates anywhere in the world. In 1910 four regional associations joined forces to form the Verband Deutscher Naturweinversteigerer (VDNV). Those regional associations from the Rheingau, Rheinhessen, Rheinpfalz (today known as Pfalz) and the Mosel, Saar and Ruwer region were primarily concerned with promoting quality and preserving the focus on natural (i.e. unchaptalized) wine. Today, over a hundred years later, the VDP brings together approx. 200 elite winegrowing estates from each of Germany's winegrowing regions. VDP.members adhere to strict self-imposed quality standards – from the berries to the bottle.



The VDP.Traubenadler logo (a stylized eagle bearing a cluster of grapes) on the bottle capsule is the seal of approval for VDP wines.

It stands for artisanal wine production from excellent vineyards.

i PREREQUISITES FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE VDP

- Only estate owners are eligible to become members. They must possess appropriate winegrowing and cellar facilities
- Viticulture, viniculture and marketing are all managed and executed in-house by qualified professional personnel
- Cultivation of the finest vineyards, as determined by soil topography and microclimate
- Reduced harvest yields to boost quality (max. 75 hl/ha* for the estate average)
- Production of traditional varieties typical for the region, especially Riesling, Silvaner and the Pinot family
- Focus on natural techniques to promote greater distinctiveness in the wines
- Mandatory manual harvest for VDP.ERSTE LAGE® and VDP.GROSSE LAGE® classifications as well as for wines at Prädikat levels from Auslese to Eiswein.

ROUTINE AUDIT OF OPERATIONS...

...to ensure compliance with VDP.statutes. Operations at each member estate are audited beginning when they are first admitted into the VDP and at 5 year intervals thereafter.

* We work in and with nature and are often left captive to the whims of the weather. For this reason, we do upon occasion allow vintage-specific regional exceptions to our statutes if the conditions demand it. Among the factors taken into account are the steepness of the vineyards and the number of planted vines.

i Read more at: www.vdp.de/en/vdp

DATES – FACTS – FIGURES

YEAR OF FOUNDING

1910

MEMBERS

197 winegrowing estates from each of Germany's winegrowing regions

POSITIONING

- Harvest yields: approx. 3% of the German wine harvest
- Vineyard holdings: approx. 5% of Germany's land under vine (5,260 ha)
- Revenue: approx. 7.5% of total German wine sales

STATISTICAL AVERAGES FOR VDP.ESTATES

- Land under vine: 26.5 hectares
- Bottles / year: 171,000
- Revenues / year: approx. €1.63 mn

RIESLING EXPERTISE

- 23 % of Germany's hectares under vine are planted with Riesling
- Within the VDP, 55 % of all vineyards are planted with Riesling
- These 2,893 ha correspond to 5 % of the global Riesling production and 12 % of Germany's Riesling vineyards

ABOVE-AVERAGE SHARE OF ORGANIC VINICULTURE

- Germany boasts 8,100 ha of organic agriculture: 22 % of that area belong to VDP.estates
- Within the VDP, approx. 1,116 ha of organically tended vineyards are spread across 50 estates (some currently still transitioning).
- One quarter of VDP.estates follow organic guidelines, and the trend is increasing.

(Source: Statistisches Bundesamt March 2014)

GROWTH

- 1990: VDP counts 161 estate members
- Since then: 128 new members and 92 departures
- 2017: 197 estates are members of the VDP

SALES FIGURES

- Revenue volumes for all VDP.estates totalled roughly €323 mn, on sales of approx. 34 mn bottles
- 42 % of VDP wines are marketed directly to consumers
- Another 35 % are sold via specialized retailers
- Restaurants represent the remaining 17 %
- 77 % of VDP wines are sold domestically, with the remaining 23 % exported
- Half of those exports are dry wines

VDP.GROSSES GEWÄCHS® / 2015 VINTAGE (RED: 2014):

- Approx. 5 % of VDP production, approx. 1,700,000 bottles
- Average price € 32.00 per bottle

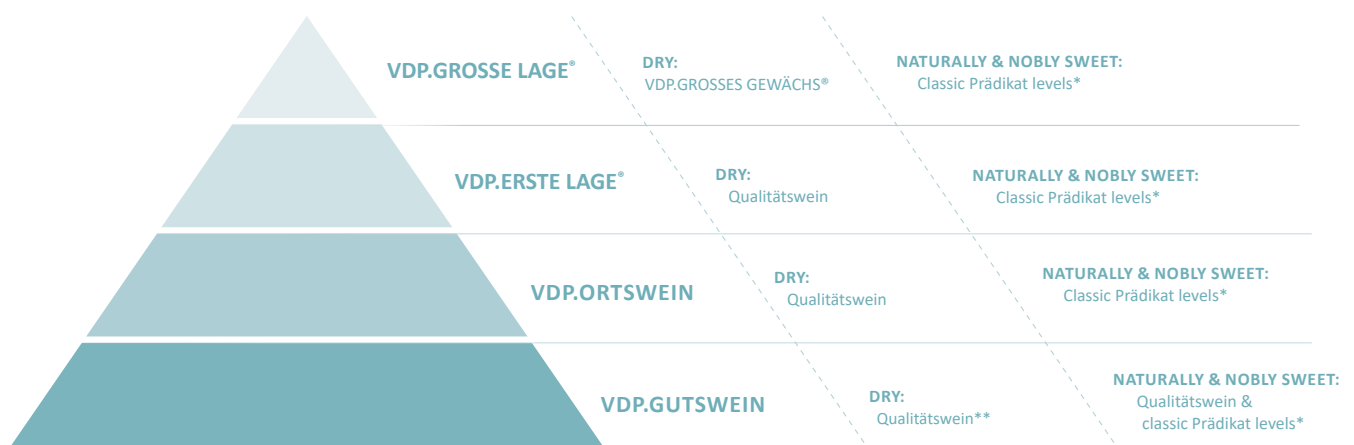
THE FOUR TIERS OF VDP.CLASSIFICATION

The VDP.Classification system is based on the association's statutes. A wine's quality is defined based on its terroir, here meant as its specific origins as linked to a tightly defined set of quality criteria.

For the VDP.estates, the vineyard is the definitive quality criterion. Classification is made based on the principle:

"The narrower the origin, the higher the quality."

A SYSTEM FOR WINE CULTURE DEFINED BY ORIGIN



* The classic Prädikat levels are: Kabinett, Spätlese, Auslese, Beerenauslese, Trockenbeerenauslese, Eiswein

** During a transition period, the Gutswein level may also be labelled as Kabinett trocken or Spätlese trocken.

The VDP.philosophy combines the best components of the Bordeaux and Burgundy classification systems. Bordeaux classifies its estates; Burgundy classifies each vineyard's specific sites. The classification process within the VDP is conducted as part of a strict operational audit performed when an estate is accepted as a member and every 5 years thereafter. The classification of origins, namely as VDP.GUTSWEIN, VDP.ORTSWEIN, VDP.ERSTE LAGE® or VDP.GROSSE LAGE®, reflects an assessment of the quality of the terroir following the internationally accepted motto "the narrower the origin, the higher the quality".

MODEL CONSUMER-FRIENDLY DESCRIPTIONS OF THE CLASSIFICATION TIERS

VDP.GUTSWEIN - versatile handcrafted estate wines for everyday enjoyment

Light, refreshing and fruit-forward wines that showcase the winegrower's distinctive style. Uncomplicated and approachable — wines for nearly every gathering and occasion. Comparable with a regional wine in Burgundy.

VDP.ORTSWEIN - wines with regional roots

Accessible wines that highlight a village's singular "taste of place". Food friendly, with the charm to appeal to a wide variety of palates. Comparable with "Village" in Burgundy.

VDP.ERSTE LAGE® - premium German wine

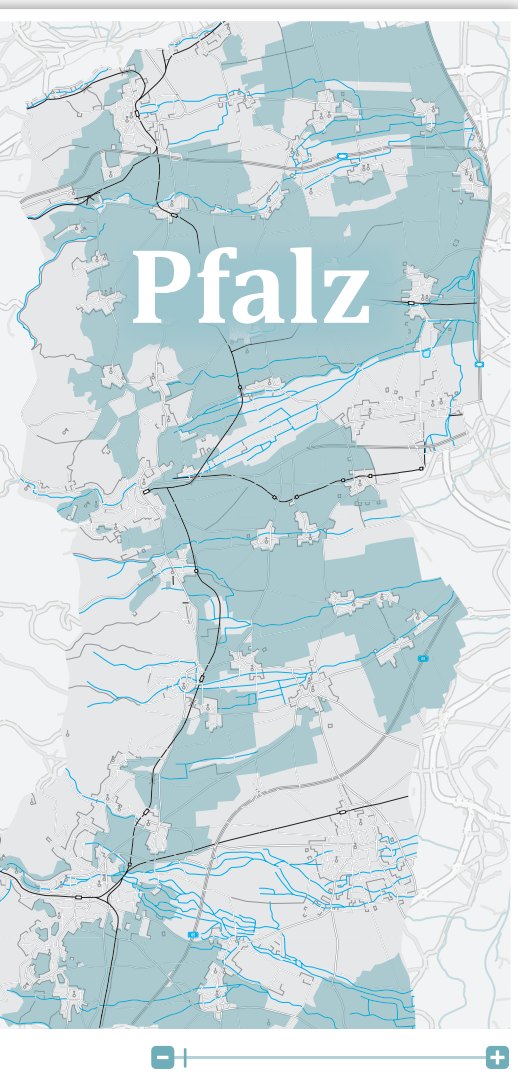
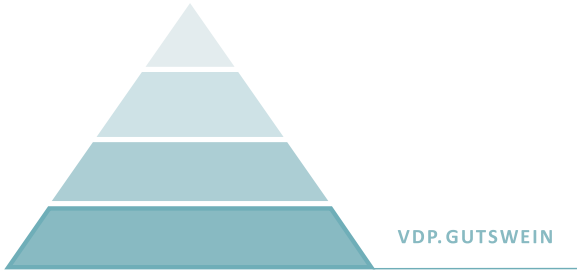
Sophisticated, terroir-influenced wines with significant ageing potential. Their finesse and complexity turn any occasion into a celebration for casual drinker and connoisseur alike. Comparable to Premier Cru in Burgundy.

VDP. GROSSE LAGE® - grand wines from great vineyards

These wines are the flagships of the VDP collection. Each bottle contains the quintessential expression of a singular site. Nuanced, complex wines with enormous ageing potential. Comparable to a Grand Cru in Burgundy.

 Read more at: www.vdp.de/en/vdp/klassifikation

VDP.GUTSWEIN - GOOD FROM THE GROUND UP



VDP.GUTSWEIN - GOOD FROM THE GROUND UP

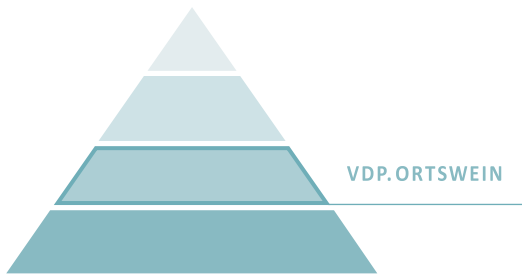
VDP. GUTSWEIN (comparable with regional wines in Burgundy) represents the first tier and foundation of the VDP's quality pyramid.

These wines are in many ways the winegrower's calling cards. Each wine originates from the estate's own vineyards and corresponds to the VDP's strict criteria standards.

The estate name and region are the only indicators on the label of the wine's origin. The term VDP.GUTSWEIN can be implemented as a circumferential band on the capsule below the *VDP.Traubenadler* logo.

Classic Prädikat classifications may be used in dry, naturally and nobly sweet wines.

VDP.ORTSWEIN - SOURCED FROM SUPERIOR SOILS



VDP.ORTSWEIN - SOURCED FROM SUPERIOR SOILS

VDP.ORTSWEIN originate from the finest vineyards within a village. They are the ambassadors for that terroir. Only varieties typical for a region are eligible for this classification and yields must be restricted.

The *VDP.Traubenadler* insignia on the bottle capsule in connection with the village name promises a distinctive wine shaped by its origin.

REGIONAL CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA

VDP.ORTSWEINE come from high-quality parcels of distinctive character and located within a village's traditional vineyards. In many cases, Ortswein are created from grapes gathered during the selection process for the VDP. ERSTE LAGEN® and VDP.GROSSE LAGEN® or from berries from young blocks within the very best vineyards.

MAXIMUM YIELDS

Yield volumes are restricted to a maximum of 75 hl/ha (*see page 3).

TASTE PROFILES

The dry VDP.ORTSWEIN is labelled as "Qualitätswein trocken". Prädikat classifications are no longer assigned to dry wines. Naturally sweet VDP.ORTSWEINE are labelled according to the classic Prädikat levels (Kabinett, Spätlese, Auslese, Beerenauslese, Trockenbeerenauslese and Eiswein).

LABELLING

The label indicates the wine's origin in the form of the village name. The term VDP.ORTSWEIN can be applied as a circumferential band on the capsule below the *VDP.Traubenadler* insignia (or as a banderole on the label).

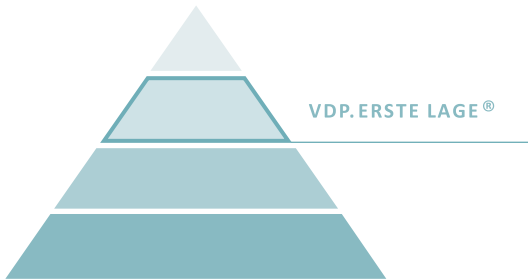
RELEASE DATES

It is recommended that the wines not be released prior to 1 March of the year following the harvest.



Some regions have placed a special priority on the VDP.ORTSWEIN classification, and as a result do not use the VDP.ERSTE LAGE® at all (as of 2016: Rheinhessen and Mosel).

VDP.ERSTE LAGE® - FIRST CLASS!



VDP.ERSTE LAGE® - FIRST CLASS!

The VDP.ERSTE LAGE® classification designates a first-class vineyard site with a distinct profile and optimal growing conditions. These vineyards are reserved solely for varieties ideally suited to them. Yield volumes are heavily restricted to promote quality. History has shown that VDP.ERSTE LAGEN® produce wines of extraordinary quality.

SITE CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA

Eligibility for the VDP.ERSTE LAGE® classification is limited to previously classified sites as well as the very good parcels close to but separated from world-class VDP.GROSSE LAGE® sites.

GRAPE VARIETIES

Restricted to varieties defined by the regional association as suitable for the specific vineyard. A chart with details for each region can be found elsewhere in this document

MAXIMUM YIELDS

Yield volumes are restricted to a maximum of 60 hl/ha (*see page 3).

HARVEST

Grapes are harvested selectively by hand. The harvest fruit must be physiologically fully ripe.

VINIFICATION

The wines are produced exclusively using traditional methods and techniques.

CERTIFICATION

Beyond the routine operations audit of all VDP.members, extra monitoring of vineyard maintenance is conducted for VDP.ERSTE LAGE® sites to ensure strict quality standards. Beyond this, a testing commission following regional statutes must also officially certify each wine.

TASTE PROFILES

Dry VDP.ERSTE LAGE® wines are labelled as "Qualitätswein trocken." Labelling as dry (trocken) is mandatory. Prädikat classifications are not assigned to dry wines. Wines falling under the legal classification of *halbtrocken* (semi-dry) do not receive additional labelling. Wines with higher levels of residual sugar are classified based on the Prädikats ranging from Kabinett to Trockenbeerenauslese. Spätlese wines must have at least 18 g/L of residual sugar. The precise definition of taste corridors for Prädikat wines is handled at the regional level.

LABELLING

The site and village name must be written on the label. The term VDP.ERSTE LAGE® must be applied as a circumferential band on the capsule below the *VDP.Traubenadler* insignia (or alternatively as a banderole on the label).

RELEASE DATES

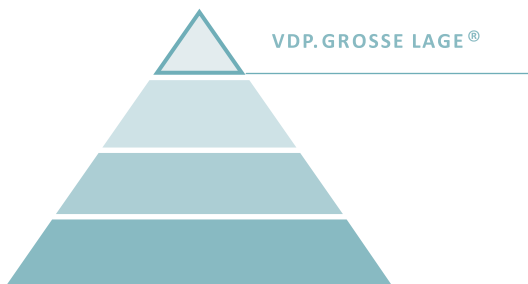
VDP.ERSTE LAGE® wines are released onto the market following the annual VDP.Weinbörse in late April.

USE OF THE SITE NAME


All wines from a VDP.ERSTE LAGE® to be marketed with site names must fulfil the criteria for this quality tier. No estate may produce more than one dry Qualitätswein per site and variety.

i Some regions have placed a special priority on the VDP.ORTSWEIN classification, and as a result do not use the VDP.ERSTE LAGE® at all (as of 2017: Rheinhessen and Mosel).

VDP.GROSSE LAGE® - THE PEAK OF THE PYRAMID



The VDP.GROSSE LAGE® designation is reserved for top parcels in the very best German vineyards. The first-class wines grown here present a singular sense of place, complex taste profile and remarkable ageing potential. They are planted solely with varieties tightly linked with the region and suitable for that specific vineyard. Strict production criteria ensure that these bottles stand at the peak of the VDP.classification pyramid.

 Dry wines from a VDP.GROSSE LAGE® are labeled as VDP.GROSSES GEWÄCHS®.



VDP.GROSSE LAGE® - THE PEAK OF THE PYRAMID

SITE CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA

In 2012, a procedure was ratified for determining eligibility for potential VDP.GROSSE LAGE® sites. It called for an in-depth review of all existing Erste Lage sites. The new VDP.GROSSE LAGEN® sites can be carved out of larger vineyards that had been drawn overly broad or which were topographically heterogeneous. They can now also be registered by their geographical designations of origin (*geographische Ursprungsbezeichnung* or g.U.) or, thanks to a modification to wine law, by their lieu-dit. This process remains a work in progress, as the list of sites can be expected to change periodically through new members and changes in ownership.

GRAPE VARIETIES

Restricted to varieties defined by the regional association as suitable for the specific vineyard.

MAXIMUM YIELDS

Yield volumes are restricted to a maximum of 50 hl/ha (*see page 3).

HARVEST

Grapes are harvested selectively, by hand. The harvest fruit must be physiologically fully ripe.

VINIFICATION

The wines are produced exclusively using traditional methods and techniques.

CERTIFICATION

Beyond the standard operations audits for VDP.members, wines from VDP.GROSSE LAGEN® are also subject to additional inspections and monitoring: quality-oriented work in the vineyard and, in particular, yield volumes are monitored for each vineyard throughout the entire growing season and in the weeks prior to harvest. The wines are audited and certified by a testing commission before and after bottling.

TASTE PROFILES

Wines meeting the legal criteria for dry are designated as VDP.GROSSES GEWÄCHS®. Labelling as "trocken" (dry) is mandatory. Wines that are legally classified as *halbtrocken* (semi-dry) and *feinherb* (off-dry) do not receive additional labelling. Wines with higher levels of residual sugar are classified based on the classic Prädikat categories: Kabinett, Spätlese, Auslese, Beerenauslese, Trockenbeerenauslese and Eiswein. The regional associations bear responsibility for establishing appropriate taste profiles, although Spätlese wines must have at least 18 g/L of residual sugar.

LABELLING

The site — without the name of the village — is indicated on the front and decorative label in capital letters. The term VDP.GROSSE LAGE® must be implemented as a circumferential band on the capsule below the *VDP.Traubenadler* logo. VDP.GROSSE GEWÄCHSE® wines are filled in special bottles with the "GG Grape Cluster" logo embossed on the glass. In exceptional cases, the "GG Grape Cluster" logo and the term VDP.GROSSE LAGE® can be placed on the label.

RELEASE DATES

Naturally and nobly sweet wines from VDP.GROSSE LAGEN® are released onto the market on 1 May. VDP.GROSSES GEWÄCHS® wines are not to be marketed before 1 September of the year following the harvest. Red wines mature for at least 12 months in wood casks and are released one year later on 1 September.

USE OF THE SITE NAME

All wines from a VDP.GROSSE LAGE® to be marketed with site names must fulfil the criteria for this quality tier. No estate may produce more than one VDP.GROSSES GEWÄCHS® per site and variety.

PERMISSIBLE VARIETIES FOR VDP.GROSSE LAGE® AND VDP.ERSTE LAGE®

WINEGROWING	VDP.GROSSE LAGE® VARIETIES	VDP.ERSTE LAGE® VARIETIES (PLUS THOSE IN VDP.GROSSE LAGE®)
AHR	Spätburgunder, Frühburgunder; Nobly sweet only: Riesling	No definition of VDP.ERSTE LAGE® for this region
BADEN	Weißburgunder, Grauburgunder, Spätburgunder, Riesling, Chardonnay, Lemberger (Kraichgau and Badische Bergstraße only) Nobly sweet only: Muskateller	Silvaner, Scheurebe, Gewürztraminer, Muskateller, Sauvignon Blanc, Auxerrois, Schwarzriesling; Nobly sweet only: Rieslaner
FRANKEN	Riesling, Silvaner, Weißburgunder, Spätburgunder	Grauburgunder, Scheurebe, Rieslaner, Traminer, Frühburgunder Other permissible varieties (require approval): Müller-Thurgau, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Muskateller, Lemberger
HESSISCHE BERGSTRASSE	Riesling, Weißburgunder, Grauburgunder, Spätburgunder	Same as VDP.GROSSE LAGE®
MITTELRHEIN	Riesling, Spätburgunder	Same as VDP.GROSSE LAGE®
MOSEL-SAAR- RUWER	Riesling	No definition of VDP.ERSTE LAGE® for this region
NAHE	Riesling	Same as VDP.GROSSE LAGE®
PFALZ	Riesling, Weißburgunder, Spätburgunder	Grauburgunder, Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer; Nobly sweet only: Scheurebe, Muskateller, Rieslaner
RHEINGAU	Riesling, Spätburgunder	Same as VDP.GROSSE LAGE®
RHEINHESSEN	Riesling, Spätburgunder	No definition of VDP.ERSTE LAGE® for this region
SAALE-UNSTRUT	Riesling, Weißburgunder, Grauburgunder, Spätburgunder, Frühburgunder, Traminer, Silvaner	Blauer Zweigelt
SACHSEN	Riesling, Weißburgunder, Grauburgunder, Spätburgunder, Frühburgunder, Traminer	Same as VDP.GROSSE LAGE®
WÜRTTEMBERG	Riesling, Weißburgunder, Grauburgunder, Spätburgunder, Lemberger	Silvaner, Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer, Muskateller, Sauvignon Blanc, Samtrot, Trollinger, Zweigelt, Merlot

HISTORICAL VINEYARD MAPS

The oldest known vineyard classification maps (circa 1867) offer detailed insights into the official 19th century assessment of viticulture along the Rhine and Moselle rivers. These maps addressed not only wine quality, but also which vineyards could be expected to produce wines that achieve the highest prices on the market and thus accordingly taxed at a higher rate. These maps represent a Bonitierungs-Kataster, a process that was undertaken with the first cadastral surveys and classified vineyards according to taxable income from estimated yield values. The vineyards were grouped according to comprehensive tax assessments and displayed on the maps in graded colour zones. The maps of the Prussian vineyard classification continue to be a unique model to this day. Next to documentation of better and superior vineyards for purpose of land tax, they are also historic documentation of these vineyards as a cultural good.



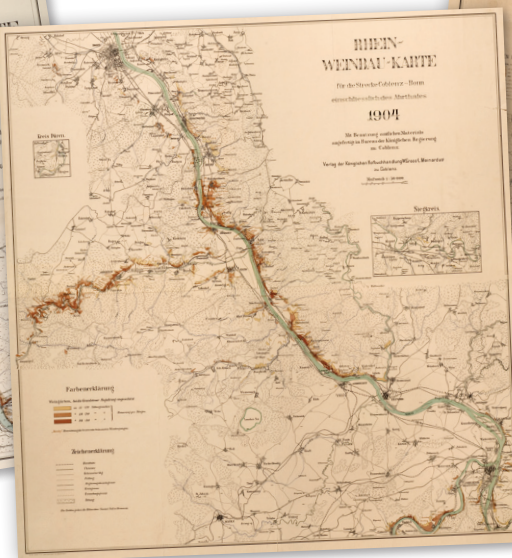
Viticultural Map of the Nassau Rheingau in 1867



Mosel Viticultural Map of 1897



Rhein Viticultural Map covering Rudesheim – Coblenz from 1902



Rhein Viticultural Map covering Coblenz – Bonn from 1904



Nahe Viticultural Map of 1900

CHRONOLOGY

1910 | Founding: Verband Deutscher Naturweinversteigerer e.V.

(**Naturweine**, or natural wines, at that time reflected an absolute ban on chaptalization, i.e. the addition of sugar to fermenting must to increase its natural alcohol content. Today's unchaptalized wines made to that standard are *Prädikat* wines.) Founding associations : Rheingau (est. 1897), Rheinhessen (est. probably 1910), Mosel, Saar, Ruwer (est. 1910) and Rheinpfalz (est. 1908).

1926 | Entry into the Registry of Associations; VDP.Traubenadler insignia registered as protected logo

1935 | New Statutes

After being incorporated into the *Reichsnährstand*, the association was tasked with preserving and promoting the interests of auctioneers of German *Naturwein* in coordination with the *Reichsnährstand*, an umbrella association that was responsible for the interests and activities of all agricultural producers. Its main responsibilities involved:

- Organization of auction conditions and appointments
- Joint marketing | exhibitions within Germany and abroad
- All other questions relevant to wine sales
- Dissemination of advancements in viticulture and oenology

1938 | Last routine association committee session before outbreak of war

1949 | Resumption of association's work

New statutes (changes necessitated by new democratic conditions)

Member associations: Rheinpfalz, Mosel-Saar-Ruwer, Rheingau, Baden, Rheinhessen

1955 | Change to Statute §3:

Membership in the association limited to those organizations whose members exclusively produce "naturally pure"* wines using their own estate-grown fruit and which are auctioned or otherwise sold in this "naturally pure" state. (*This refers to a strict ban on chaptalization, i.e. the addition of sugar to fermenting must to increase its natural alcohol content of wines produced by members.)

1958 | New Statutes

Ratified: monitoring of wines from all members. New conditions for the association:

- Primary production of *Naturwein*.
- Establishment of vineyards, selection of varieties and setup of cellar should be oriented toward long-term production of fault-free *Naturwein*.
- Members are obligated to select varieties, vineyard management techniques, and harvest and vinification processes so as to create fine, high-quality *Naturwein*.

1971 | Change of Name to Verband Deutscher Prädikatswein-Versteigerer e. V. (VDPV)

1972 | New Statute | Change of Name

- Switchover from association of wine selling clubs into an association of winegrowing estates
- Promotion of higher quality standards and rules for sales conditions
- Name change to Verband Deutscher Prädikatsweingüter (VDP)

1982 | Expansion of Statutes and Change of Name

- Implementation of higher must weights
- Required inclusion of the association's insignia
- Strict separation between estate bottled wines and those from large scale winemaking and bottling companies
- Change of name to Verband Deutscher Prädikats- und Qualitätsweingüter e.V.

1990 | New Statute | New Objectives

- Recomposition of the goals of the VDP, including an increased focus on natural methods
- Introduction of strict production rules (yield restriction, increased must weights) and marketing rules
- Obligation to display the association's logo on the capsule
- Routine operational inspections (certification)
- Establishment of minimum standards for each classification

1994 | Change to Statutes

- Elimination of *Großlage* (large consolidated vineyard) regulation
- Guarantee of manual harvest for all Prädikat grades Auslese and above

 Read more at: www.vdp.de/en/vdp/geschichte

HISTORY OF THE VDP.CLASSIFICATION

GERMAN WINE ACT OF 1971

The revised German Wine Act of 1971 brought many radical changes to German wine sector, not least a substantial reorganization of the country's vineyards. Roughly 34,000 individual vineyard sites were consolidated down to just 3,400 individual vineyard sites, ostensibly to allow winegrowers with numerous micro-parcels to henceforth produce at realistic commercial volumes. The newly created blocks subsumed all sites within their borders, regardless of their respective quality or terroir, under the name of the most prominent single vineyard contained within.

Also the newly designed "Grosslagen" (collective vineyard sites) were a new iteration of what had previously been called "Gattungslagen," or generic vineyards, and bore the same name as single sites (a combination of Village name and random site name)— despite potentially stretching across several towns and encompassing scores of vineyards. Some of these Grosslagen covered over 600 hectares, such as "Niersteiner Gutes Domtal" (Rheinhessen) and "Gimmeldinger Meerspinne" (Pfalz). There was no longer any effective way for a consumer to identify from the label whether the wine reflected the terroir character of a single site or not.

Around the same time, the term *naturrein* (naturally pure) was forbidden for all foods and could no longer be used as a quality descriptor. The category Qualitätswein was newly defined with the option for chaptalization (must enrichment with sugar to increase alcohol content). Terms like Kabinett and Spätlese within the Prädikat category were also redefined. In this new system of quality categories, the only legal gauge for quality was the natural must weight of the grapes (potential alcohol) accompanied by a governmental quality control.

As a consequence, the traditional quality categories (Kabinett, feine Spätlese, etc.) lost their original qualitative and taste profile meaning. The Prädikat category now included wines with highly variable levels of sweetness because this was no longer defined for the Prädikat sub-categories. In addition to this, the number of wines marketed under a Prädikat label exploded.

THE VDP JOURNEY

In 1984, the VDP estates began an internal classification movement in response to the aforementioned failed reforms.

To goal of the VDP.classification system is

- to establish the value of Germany's top vineyard sites
- to secure the preservation of a unique cultural landscape
- to reclaim the prestige of grand dry wines from Germany
- to emphasize the importance of traditional naturally sweet Prädikat wines.

CLASSIFICATION STAGES

Starting in 1996, the VDP.Prädikatsweingüter worked step-by-step to re-develop the association's classification model, drawing on feedback from professionals, connoisseurs and the larger market. There is no one single step that could resolve three decades of unsuccessful reforms. Beyond this, a variety of legal regulations had to be taken into account.

1996 | The VDP.manifesto is announced: "A classification of vineyards, the benefits of which have long been understood in other winegrowing countries, will secure our shared cultural heritage for the future."

1997 | VDP.Nahe approves Riesling statue. Only Riesling wines from clearly demarcated top vineyards are eligible for the site appellation.

1998 | Founding of the ERSTES GEWÄCHS committee. Estates from the regions Rheingau, Rheinhessen and Pfalz join together to further develop the ERSTES GEWÄCHS philosophy.

1998 | The VDP General Assembly approves uniform classification policies for classified growths of German origin: a clear and top class reputation should be achieved through origin, grape variety and taste profile.

1999 | The quality classification map for Rheingau's sites is presented and Hesse approves regulations for "ERSTES GEWÄCHS" as a quality label. Starting with the 1999 vintages, eligible wines may use the term "ERSTES GEWÄCHS" on their label.

2000 | Name change to: VDP. Die Prädikatsweingüter

2001 | Castell Accord

The VDP General Assembly approves its first internal origin-based classification system, organized in a three-tier model. The focus is placed on the uppermost classification tier, to be called Grosses Gewächs.

2002 | The VDP General Assembly agrees upon a concrete definition for Grosses Gewächs: a wine of a dry taste profile. Naturally and nobly sweet wines are however to be accepted as on an equal tier with the Grosses Gewächs. A "1 with grape cluster" logo is adopted for these wines.

2003 | With the passage of the classification statute for Mosel-Saar-Ruwer, clear taste profile definitions are established as an uppermost classification tier, to be known as ERSTE LAGE®. (Background: the 'Großlage' specified at that time in the applicable wine legislation still played a major role in how bottles were marketed. The GROSSE LAGE name would have been too easily confused with it.)

2006 | Marienthal Accord

The VDP General Assembly clears the way for the current classification system:

- "VDP.ERSTE LAGE" is a uniform upper level term for all wines of the superior category in all winegrowing regions. The "1 with grape cluster" on the label or directly embossed on the bottle identifies this status.
- Dry wines from Erste Lage sites are to be labelled as GROSSES GEWÄCHS®. From the 2006 vintage onward these wines were legally mandated as dry, meaning a maximum of 9 g/l of residual sugar.
- Naturally sweet VDP.ERSTE LAGE wines are to be labelled using the traditional Prädikat levels, running from Spätlese and Auslese up through Trockenbeerenauslese.
- Conventions for sites: after a transitional period, each named site may only produce one dry Grosses Gewächs® per year.

2012 | At an extraordinary general meeting of the VDP.members at Neustadt an der Weinstraße, a four-tiered classification system is unanimously approved. The new system is built around the following levels: VDP. GUTSWEIN | VDP.ORTSWEIN | VDP.ERSTE LAGE® | VDP.GROSSE LAGE®, akin to the Burgundian Premier Crus and Grands Crus. Starting with the 2012 vintage, this facilitates differentiation of the quality of the sites. As a result, all sites previously qualified as ERSTE LAGE are to be inspected for their suitability, either in part or as a whole, as a VDP.GROSSE LAGE®. Going forward, only wines presenting the specific characteristics of their site are allowed to bear that site's name.

VDP.CLASSIFICATION 2012-PRESENT

THE FOUR-TIER CLASSIFICATION PYRAMID IN DETAIL

Redesignation of former "Erste Lage" as VDP.GROSSE LAGE®

The redesignation of the "Erste Lage" as VDP.GROSSE LAGE® was intended to eliminate an inconsistency in the nomenclature, namely that the "GROSSES GEWÄCHS®" wines came from "Erste Lagen". It was not seen as an attempt to establish an even higher quality category. A VDP.GROSSES GEWÄCHS® is a dry wine from a VDP.GROSSE LAGE®. It is considered of equal quality to naturally sweet Prädikat wines.

Review of previous classifications for all vineyard sites

All VDP.member regions and estates review the roster of classified sites to exclude the least promising and better promote wines that express singular site-specific characteristics. This ensures that when a site is named on a label, it is truly referring to one unique vineyard.

Introduction of a new second tier in site classification: VDP.ERSTE LAGE®

The regions retain the option to introduce hierarchical usage of site names. Independent of the estates themselves, only the very best German vineyard sites are classified as VDP.GROSSE LAGE®, while very good sites are classified one tier below as VDP.ERSTE LAGE®.

Definition of Prädikat levels for naturally sweet wines

Across all classification tiers (excepting the VDP.GUTSWEIN category), the use of Prädikat designations is reserved for use with naturally sweet wines as determined by regionally established taste corridors. This widespread elimination of dry and semi-sweet Prädikats in the fine wine sector restores the Prädikats to their traditional intention.

Regional differences

The VDP.regional associations are granted a degree of latitude to account for their own regional peculiarities — as long as they can still work within a shared Germany-wide framework.

→ SUMMARY

The VDP.estates view themselves as pioneers in establishing origin-based wine labelling for high-end wines that are comprehensible to consumers. Productive discussions and successful agreements on this topic achieved by the VDP have made it a role model for numerous imitators (the more the merrier), thus confirming the direction being taken. The VDP.estates are aware that course corrections are sometimes necessary to reach the final goal, especially when wine law and regional differences necessitate certain compromises.

The goal for the VDP.estate's all-round efforts, and the key to the future of high-end winegrowing in Germany, are hand-crafted, terroir-shaped wines that express the long viticultural history and diversity of German wine styles.

The combination of outstanding soils, individual microclimates, traditional varieties and the dedication of VDP.winemakers represents a unique foundation. Guided properly, it will secure the existence of quality-minded estates and the well-deserved stature of German wine within the larger international wine universe. And last but not least, it serves the aspiration for unique, comprehensible authenticity.



VDP. DIE PRÄDIKATSWEINGÜTER

IN COOPERATION
WITH:



GAGGENAU





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