

# GRÜNER VELTLINER SPÄTLESE, SCHLOSS GOBELSBURG 1969

93 POINTS

LAST TASTED 5/2003

DRINK NOW

[ D 1h/G 2h ]

Schloss Gobelsburg's history of settlement dates back beyond 4.000 years, which is documented by Celtic ceramics shown in a vitrine in the Gobelsburg cellars. The castle was first mentioned in a contract dated 1074 in relation to Azzo de Gobatsburich, Earl of Kuenring. The Monastery of Zwettl - also a Kuenringer foundation of 1138 - in the northern parts of lower Austria is today the owner of the property. Until the 12th century the fortress remained in the ownership of the Kuenringer family and then changed hands until 1740 to as many as 19 different families on the estate and castle Gobelsburg. The last aristocratic owner - Freiherr Achaz Ehrenreich von Hohenfeld - ruined himself financially restoring the Renaissance manor house of the 16th century into a handsome Baroque château in the first half of the 18th century.

In the beginning of the 19th century the cellar capacity is reported to be of 1410 Eimer, which is about 85.000 liters of wine, partly brought to the monastery and sold there, partly sold from the castle. The wines were named either after their origin (Nussberger, Zöbinger, Gobelsburger) or for their use (Messwein, Conventwein). Since the middle of the 19th century estate bottling is reported, but the biggest share is sold in small casks. Due to the difficult economical situation in the late twenties the property was then sold to the monastery Schotten in Vienna. The Manor, which is very similar in form and appearance to Schloss Gobelsburg, still exists. Between World Wars the castle was also used as a summer camp for apprenticeships. During the Second World War French soldiers were imprisoned and left the castle in 1945 in a devastated state, and emptied the vinothek with the reserves dating back to previous century.

Father Bertrand Baumann - a monk of the monastery and the winemaker since 1958 - was extraordinary in his skills. He not only managed to establish the 'altar wine' as an Austrian Classic, he also made the winery the leading one of the area. The wines of the old cellar still show the great skill of this period of the winery. Since February 1996 the estate is managed by Eva & Michael Moosbrugger.

Their primary goal is to preserve, develop and bring the cultural heritage of Schloss Gobelsburg with its prime vineyards on the oldest documented sites of the area into a new generation. With this gracious approach, in just a few vintages they have successfully improved the winemaking process and with the careful restructuring of the vineyards the change in quality has been prompt and dramatic. I have met this lovely and unpretentious couple a few times and they have made a profound impression on me. I have no doubt that they will have a successful future ahead.



*Michael Moosbrugger and Author*

The 1969 was a great vintage with sufficient quantities. In the 'Wachau' (in that time including Krems and Langenlois) this was the second best vintage after 1947. There was an early spring and dry vegetation between March and mid July, which is very rare in this area. After enough rain and cool climate in August, a wonderfully dry and warm October came with early fog and sunshine during the day, and a sizeable crop of exceptionally ripe grapes was gathered. The result was huge Riesling Spät- and Auslesen wines with aromatic finesse and smooth elegance.

The 1969 vintage stands much in a very traditional way of winemaking. No sedimentation, fermentation in wood casks of local oak or acacia wood, racking of the wine several times (oxidative winemaking). Much in the way they are doing today with their Grüner Veltliner and Riesling Tradition wines.

*I opened these two bottles, which were in excellent condition with only three centimeters ullage, a few years ago at Easter dinner with my wife's family. I also brought as reserve two bottles of Bouchard's Montrachet 1989, which I thought would be superior to Schloss Gobelsburg, but it was totally the opposite. This light, a bit green-yellow colored wine had more character and complexity than upper-class Montrachet. It was also better balanced and had a much longer and deeper aftertaste, only the bouquet was less open and seductive than Montrachet's. A surprisingly youthful and imposing wine.*

## CABERNET SAUVIGNON NAPA VALLEY RESERVE, ROBERT MONDAVI

89 POINTS

LAST TASTED 5/2003

DRINK UP

1969

[ D 1h/G 2h ]

Robert Mondavi is one of the most influential persons in the long history of the Californian wine industry. In 1943 he started as wine maker's apprentice at Charles Krug's estate. During the next two decades Robert together with his brother Peter and his father Cesare Mondavi turned Krug into the prominent wine producer in Napa Valley.

In 1962 Robert Mondavi traveled to his much-admired France and the Bordeaux area for a year. After this journey he still continued at Krug for a few years, but a dream of his own estate, originated in France, and increasing disputes with his brother finally lead to a break between him and Krug.

In 1966 Robert Mondavi founded his own estate in Oakville, California. After trying wine production with almost all the accessible grapes he decided from 1970 on to concentrate only on the cultivation of Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay. Robert Mondavi's endless desire to look for new methods to improve the quality of his wines has at the same time led the whole Californian wine industry forward. For several years he traveled around the world marketing proudly his estate and Napa Valley, and he became the most important representative of Napa Valley worldwide.

Opus One experienced its first vintage in 1979. It was born as Robert and Baron Philippe de Rothschild joined their powers and possessions. The Opus One estate was built from scratch and cost over 20 million dollars. Opus One became one of the most desired and most expensive wines of California.

Robert Mondavi was constantly working on new projects. One of the less famous was an effort to cultivate traditional Italian grape species in Napa Valley, another was a project in collaboration with NASA where satellite cameras were used in trying to localize the swarms of phylloxera. Neither one of these projects was prosperous. Successful projects on the other hand are numerous, some of the latest being The American Center of Food as well as the Wine and Arts -center. Robert Mondavi Winery, now a public corporation, has grown into America's biggest producer of premium wines. It exports wine into more than ninety countries.

*These bottles came from the Chicago Wine Company a few years ago. They were all in excellent condition. Very dark, almost black color. Lovely spicy, minty and cedary nose - typical California Cabernet Sauvignon. Elegant, good flavors but not as big a wine as the Latour heralded. Good balance and quite a long aftertaste. Tasted five times with similar notes.*