



## **VINTAGE 2004**

The harvest has been completed on November 26 – as late as never before. Let us look back on the course of this year.

## **VEGETATION PERIOD**

For once there were no frost damages during last winter. However, February and March were rather cool and we could assume a “late harvest” already at this early time of the year. As late as mid of April the first buds showed on vines situated in warm and shielded sites and began to fully sprout in last week of April.

Cool weather continued, overcast and sunny spells alternating. Heavy precipitation caused another delay in vegetation. Vines blossomed from mid of June to early July, but many buds did not completely finish flowering hence bearing no fruit. This is ideal for the wine grower, that is to say less green harvest. But it also means a late harvest.

July and August turned out to be extremely dry and sunny. The vineyards developed beautifully. Two rainy days end of August gave the first glance of autumn. September was dry but cool.

## **HARVEST**

Harvest started on September 19 that is, as always, with grapes for the base wine of our sparkling “BRUT”. The berries produced a natural ripeness of 11% - just right for a clear structure and ideal blend of Pinot Noir, Gruener Veltliner, and Riesling which are the components of the Gobelsburg Brut. The grapes were harvested and pressed within a few days of ideal condition.

After 10 days of intermission the harvest of red varieties began. Firstly Zweigelt, then St. Laurent, and later Pinot Noir. The hot days of July and August produced well coloured skins of the berries whereas the cool September strengthened subtle fruit notes. Most of the red wines are in the process of malolactic fermentation right now, but I am looking forward to the first tastings and how they have developed.

When the red varieties had been safely brought into the cellar the main harvest started on October 19. On lower vineyard sites white frost that occurred on October 12 changed colours of the foliage. Partially leaves fell off and grapes hung freely on the vines. Mist and fog delayed the harvest again. Long intervals were needed to let the grapes dry off. Foehn (a warm southerly wind) warmed up days and nights considerably which gradually caused Botrytis.

Now grapes had to be selectively picked and laid down in differently coloured boxes that were immediately brought to the press house. On a conveyor belt experienced



staff did perform the fine selection of berries by hand thus insuring that only healthy berries went into the press. At this point of the harvest we all did get very nervous indeed.

Fortunately on November 11 the weather changed to the better. It turned out to be very cool, dry, and windy. Grapes dried off quickly and one could taste the difference day by day. Now it was an excellent time to harvest the single site varieties. Firstly the Rieslings Gaisberg, then Heiligensstein, followed by the Gruener Veltliners Renner, Grub, Lamm, and Steinsetz. The last two days of a difficult but successful harvest period were reserved for the noble rot wines. We are delighted having achieved an AUSLESE (24° KMW), a BEERENAUSLESE (28° KMW), and a TROCKENBEERENAUSLESE (32° KMW). Patience pays off!

The whole cellar is still bubbling like heaven now. Only the lighter wines are nearly finished. At present we can only slightly sense the character of the new vintage: fruity, compact, strictly structured – perhaps an antithesis to the vintage 2003. But this is maybe the great thing about wine making in this area – every year there are many new experiences to tell ....