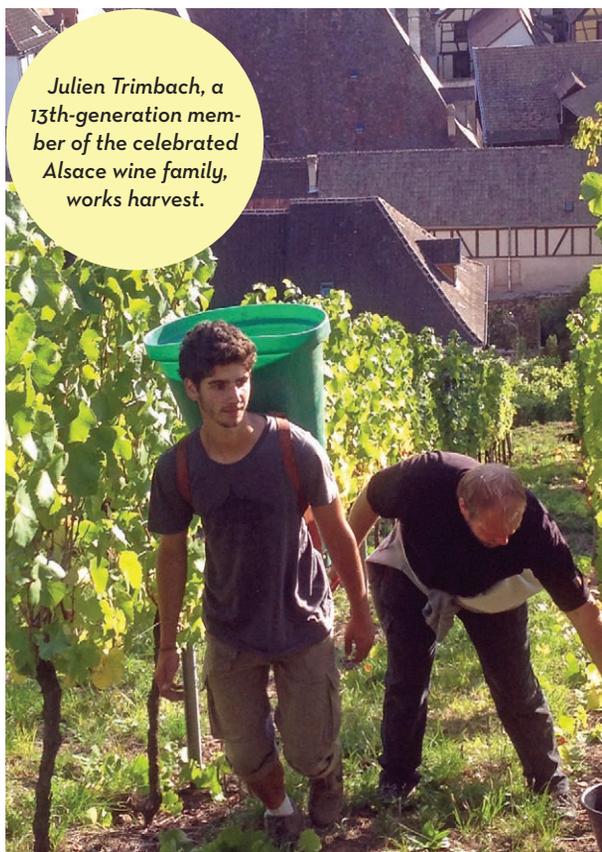


Dry & Balanced

TRIMBACH'S GRAND CRU RIESLINGS BENCHMARK THE STUNNING TERROIRS OF ALSACE

by Meredith May



Julien Trimbach, a 13th-generation member of the celebrated Alsace wine family, works harvest.

I FIRST SAW JULIEN TRIMBACH IN THE DOCUMENTARY *SOMM: Into the Bottle*, in a segment filmed at the family winery in Alsace. Then, at age 21, he appeared young and shy; but when I was lucky enough to meet the (now) 23-year-old, 13th-generation family member of the number one producer of Alsace wines in the U.S. market, he came across as eloquent, informed and impossibly mature. We had a wonderful time tasting together when he visited *The Somm Journal* offices in Los Angeles in April with Joe Urban from importer Esprit du Vin.

"It's all about Riesling," he confesses. "It's the most beautiful grape variety to reflect our terroir." And that translates as a mosaic of terroir from their Ribeauvillé estate, situated between the Vosges Mountain Range and the Black Forest and composed of calcareous limestone, granite, schist, volcanic rock sediment, pink-hued sandstone and seashell fossils called *Muschelkalk*.

Forty percent of Trimbach's production is Riesling (while the grape represents only 22% of Alsace's total) and the winery's Grands Crus represent 30% of their production. In stark comparison to Trimbach's level of Grand Cru production, only four percent of the total production of Alsace wines are Grands Crus.

"We're fortunate to have enjoyed nine very good to exceptional vintages in the last ten years," Trimbach offers. As France's northernmost wine region, the weather is warm, dry and sunny, not cool as expected—thanks to the protective mantle of the Vosges and the moderation of temperature off the Rhine and Ill (pronounced *eel*) Rivers. The wines we tasted reflected that sunshine and soil with their pure tones, and dry, full-bodied, elegant nature.

Here were some highlights:

Trimbach 2009 Riesling Cuvée Frédéric Emile, Alsace (\$75) The 2009 (!) is the current vintage for this Grand Cru cuvée—actually a blend of two Grands Crus from the same plot. (Because it is a blend of two Grand Cru sites, Geisberg and Osterberg, it is not permitted on the label to promote its Grand Cru status.) Petrol is honeyed on the nose and palate, with sharp, crisp tropical fruit, acacia flowers and back notes of peach nectar. Limestone soil and sandstone bring in a powerful minerality.

Trimbach 2009 Riesling Grand Cru Geisberg, Alsace (\$100) Geisberg is home to a Ribeauvillé convent, and the owners of this steep, 50-year old, 16½-acre plot, with its clay, limestone and sandstone, sell the grapes exclusively to the Trimbach family. Only 3,000 bottles are produced per vintage. The mouthfeel is fleshy, almost creamy on top of its layer of minerality, with notes of pear, mango, hazelnut and a distinct hint of pine needles.

Trimbach 2007 Riesling Grand Cru Clos Ste. Hune, Alsace (\$250) Grown on 100% limestone soil, Clos Ste. Hune is Trimbach's monopole parcel of just over four acres walled within the *Rosacker vineyard*, an Alsace Grand Cru in the commune of *Hunawihr*, and one of the most respected of Alsace's 51 Grand Cru sites. High citrus tones mark this as distinct from the character of other Trimbach Rieslings. A grapefruit-lemon rush occurs on the palate, touched by a chalkiness and white pepper. **SJ**