

An association for wines coming from the Wachau

Vinea Wachau Nobilis Districtus, short Vinea Wachau, is an association of Wachau winemakers sustaining the support of quality and the world-wide reputation of their wines.

Vinea Wachau Nobilis Districtus has a historical background, dating back to Leuthold I von Kuenring (1243 -1313), who called the heart of his estates Vinea Wachau Nobilis Districtus.



Vinea Wachau members pledge to continuously serve the culture of Wachau wines and to only trade wines from the Wachau area.

Currently, the association includes up to two hundred members and controls 85% of the Wachau vintage area. The quality brand of Vinea Wachau, and an illustration of Leuthold I, guarantee to all lovers of Wachau wines the enjoyment of wines which have ripened, been harvested and traditionally vinified between Melk and Krems. These wines are always dry.

Three categories of wine - an expression of Wachau individuality

In order to emphasise the individuality of wines from the area between Melk and Krems, as well as to assure the best growing conditions possible and the highest quality, the association Vinea Wachau classifies their wines into three categories: Steinfeder Federspiel and Smaragd.

Following not only the example of major wine-growing countries such as France and Italy, the vintners have also developed a constitution for unique and incomparable wines of the highest quality, based on the particular conditions existing in the Wachau. .

Vinea Wachau demands of its members that they produce wines according to Austrian wine law, one of the strictest wine laws in the world. Only white grapes such as Grüner Veltliner, Riesling,

Neuburger, Muscat and Burgundy grapes, imported into the Wachau many years ago, are vented conforming to one of these categories. By introducing the trademarks Steinfeder, Federspiel and Smaragd, the Wachau vintners have created and designed an "Appellation Wachau", based on the region's particular conditions

These measures guarantee the highest possible safety to wine-lovers all over the world. Samples of each wine are archived at Erlahof in Spitz, so that additional quality controls can be effected at any time. None of the categories Steinfeder, Federspiel or Smaragd may be capitalised or produced from sweetened must. These unique wine-growing conditions offered by the Wachau oblige this valley's vintners to be particularly conscious about the treatment and quality of their wines, but also about the choice of bottles used. Steinfeder as well as Federspiel and Smaragd wine is only offered in 0.75-liter bottles, half-bottles of 0.375 liters and 1.5-liter magnums.

The Wachau is the oldest wine-growing area in Austria and today it is mentioned along with the most renowned wine regions in the world. The Vinea Wachau association controls the wines of this outstanding valley and guarantees their quality.

Steinfeder

is the German expression for *Stipa pinnata*, a soft and delicate type of grass, growing on the steep hills of the Wachau valley and giving its name to light and fragrant wines from the Wachau region. Wines of the Steinfeder category have to reach at least 15° KMW at harvest and ferment classically in stainless steel tanks to very dry wines. Their alcohol content is 11% by volume at the most and therefore very low.

The climate and soil in the Wachau enables this wine-growing area to produce wines with such low alcohol content, but with all the charm and richness for coping with the highest demands.



is the name for wines of the Kabinett category (German, Swiss and Austrian quality trademark)

with a ripeness of at least 17° KMW, and the alcohol content lies between 11.5% and 12.5% by volume. All wines of the Federspiel category ferment classically in stainless steel tanks to dry wines. They are marked by their fruity charm and powerful delicacy.

The name Federspiel goes back on the tradition of hunting with falcons, which was enormously popular among the bourgeoisie in early times in the Wachau. The Federspiel wines are a level above the Steinfeder wines and represent the bourgeois wine among the Wachau categories.

These wines must not only live up to Austrian wine law, but also to the controls effected by the Vinea Wachau association.



In 1986, Smaragd was used for the first time qualifying the richest and most precious category of Wachau wines. These wines have a minimum ripeness of 18.2° KMW and grow only in the sunniest vineyards, where lizards feel especially comfortable. On bright and sunny days you'll find them next to the vines indulging in a sun-bath. They thus became the symbol for Wachau wines with a fully accomplished physiological maturity. These especially precious wines, with an alcohol content starting at 12.5% by volume, ferment in stainless steel tanks to their natural end and are always dry wines. The bottles have to be closed with at least 49mm- long natural corks, marked by the brand of the year of harvest.

Even after 25 and more years of correct storage, these wines will still be a pleasure to drink. Wines of the Smaragd category cannot be sold before May 1 following the harvest. Smaragd wines represent the region's speciality and are thus subject to severe control measures

Wine-growing for one and a half thousand years

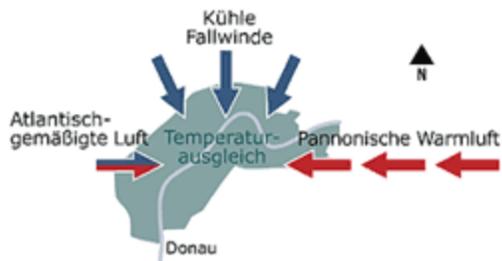
The history of the Wachau is basically also the history of wine-growing in this region. The Wachau was first mentioned in 830 AD in a document of the Karolinger; at the time the Wachau belonged to the Bavarian monastery Niederalteich and wine-growing was already established in the surroundings of Spitz. In 511 AC, when Eugippus wrote the biography of his mentor Saint Severin, he reported that the saint found a hideout called "an den Weingärten" (at the vineyards), where he lived in 470 AD next to the Roman fort Favianis, which today is the small town of Mautern.

In 791, after the battle of Pressburg, where the Hungarians halted the threat of the Bavarian armies, the Wachau belonged to the Magyars for several centuries. In 955, when Otto I won the battle of "Lerchfeld" a counter-movement began which proved to be the basis for a continuous development. The former Karolinger boundaries were re-introduced. In 962 Otto I was crowned Holy Roman Emperor, and in 976 the first representative of the Babenberger dynasty took charge of the eastern border area of the Roman Empire. In 1156 the Bavarian border area was transformed into the principality of Austria and in 1285 Leuthold II von Kuenring became "Oberster Schenk in Österreich", which today would be the highest sommelier of the country.

This century was the first major wine-growing period. Monasteries such as the Bavarian Niederalteich and Herrieden, as well as Freising, Passau and Regensburg, and also the Archbishop of Salzburg obtained vineyards in the Wachau. During this time the nowadays characteristic terraces were carved into the slopes. From 1250, the name "Thal Wachau" was used for over 6 centuries, designating the area around the villages of Weißenkirchen, Wösendorf, Joching and St. Michael, until 1850, when Austrian wine law approved the boundaries naturally grown over the course of several centuries, which includes the villages Dürnstein, Mautern, Bergern, Rossatz, Weißenkirchen and Spitz, into one single region, the Wachau.

Two secrets mark the character of Wachau wines

Very few European regions have such well defined boundaries as the Wachau. Situated in the heart of lower Austria, between Melk and Krems, the Wachau presents its outstanding beauty over 33 kilometres along the banks of the Danube river. Between the majestic monasteries Melk and Göttweig, you will find an impressive mixture of wine and culture. The Wachau forms a unity, like an ex-territorial area, not only by its history; even its appearance differs from the surrounding areas. Evolution has transformed the hills and dales into a harmonious and picturesque countryside, whose particular terrace formation can be seen from long distances. This romantic valley turns into the Gföhler gneiss, a severe soil, responsible for bizarre rock formations at Dürnstein and the right bank of the Danube. This central gneiss is surrounded by softer slate gneiss (at Spitz and Seiber), accompanied by crystallised lime. Lime-marble reaches in from the region situated north of the Wachau, the Weinviertel, touching the Danube at the village Spitz. Mica, slate and amphybolite can be found between the tongues of gneiss and granite rock. The latest ice age finally formed the relief as we know it today; the maritime sediments of the tertiary era have been covered by gravel. Certain fragments are topped by spread loess over weathered and crystallite primary rock. A multitude of soils on a very small territory has formed a breathtaking landscape, which differs from all other growing areas in Europe.



The pannonian climate reaches in to the Wachau from the east. From the heights of the Dunkelstein forest situated south of the Danube as well as from Weinviertel, bordering the Wachau in the north; a colder, moister and well-aired climate passes on to the small dale of the Wachau. This ensures almost constant air circulation, thereby influencing the development of the bouquet. The climate along with the mainly primary rock soils marks the characteristic notes of wines made from grapes grown in this area.

The soil is the second secret of the Wachau. Weathered primary rock (especially ranker on silicate and felsbraun soil) at the terraces, further down the slopes you find small isles of loess and light, sandy soils. The cultivation of vines goes up to 450m above sea level, which means 250m above the Danube river. Aside from rigorous thinning out, the vines on the terraces are mainly responsible for the good reputation of Wachau wines, by giving them their charm, their taste consistency and the clear bouquet of the grapes.

[> Detailed information on local topography](#)

