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Top 50 Germans, plus a few more



Over the last few years, echoing trends across the Atlantic, there has been a crescendo of noise about German wine in the UK. Tastings have been more frequent and more dynamic. There are increasing numbers of modern, well-designed brands. Riesling has become a tattoo. And Spätburgunder has found a new champion in the shape of Master of Wine Anne Krebiehl, whose MW dissertation examined the potential of premium-quality examples of that variety.

In April, she hosted a tasting of several favourite Spätburgunders as part of an event called G Major, designed to celebrate everything exciting about German wine. She summed up Pinot Noir from Germany as 'something new from the old world', though she added that the variety was known in Germany as early as 1318 AD, and possibly even before then. Stylistically, there is no single and consistent identifier for Spätburgunder, as the appellations in which it is grown vary greatly in terroir. For instance, they cover four degrees of latitude, resulting in sunshine hours that range from 1,265 to 1,800, and soil types include slate, basalt, loam, limestone, schist,

loess and sandstone.



She also mentioned that the increase in quality over the past 20 years is only partly attributable to climate change. Improved clonal selection and a growing stock of old vines have also played their part.

Anne was also involved in another part of the event, selecting the top 50 German wines on sale in the UK alongside fellow wine writer Matt Walls, restaurateur Roger Jones and our very own Alex Hunt MW. The objective of the [campaign](#) is to 'place the best wines of Germany in front of UK consumers and members of the trade and press inspiring the nation to discover what Germany has to offer today'. There were several categories in the winning line up - including wines under £8, which is how it has come to pass that we now have our very first review of Blue Nun in the [tasting notes database](#).



And very commendable it was too, now made from 100% Riesling and branded very differently from its 1970s look. In fact, labelling has undergone significant improvement in German wine, with brands such as Fritz Willi and White Rabbit presenting Riesling in an accessible, attractive way - though the jury is out on some of Emil Bauer's labels (see below).

There are also tasting notes on four wines from a new Rheingau producer called Bibo Runge. Walter Bibo was for ten years the winemaker at Schloss Rheinhartshausen while Kai Runge was once a furniture restorer. There are eight cuvées, of which I tasted the four driest, and they give a very accurate depiction of Rheingau Riesling with its angular structure and focused citrus fruit.

Notes are grouped by grape variety, then listed in descending score order.

RIESLING

- Fritz Ekkehard-Huff, Rabenturm Riesling trocken 2013 Rheinhessen Fragrant, pithy, juicy with the big range of flavour that comes at this sort of price. Loads of concentration - must be aged to reach full potential. (RH)13% Drink 2018-2028
£30 RRP 17+
- Rebholz, Birkweiler Kastanienbusch Riesling Grosses Gewächs 2012 Pfalz Pure, vibrant and fragrant - has all the clarity of Grosses Gewächs, though not its usual density. It seems to lack a bit of flesh. (RH)12.5% Drink 2016-2026
£56.50 RRP 17
- Josef Leitz, Rudesheimer Berg Schlossberg Ehrenfels Riesling trocken 2013 Rheingau Lots of rose petal and lime on the nose. Dense and concentrated, as if the fruit has been compressed into the bottle. Deserves some years in bottle. (RH)12.5% Drink 2016-2026
£35 RRP 17
- Max Ferd Richter, Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Kabinett 2007 Mosel Gorgeous fruitiness, some petrol notes, green apple, sweet spice - an absolute classic. Plenty of sugar, which is completely justified by the acidic balance. Top class Mosel. (RH)9% Drink 2010-2020
£20 RRP 17
- Hans Lang, Hattenheimer Wisselbrunnen Riesling Grosses Gewächs 2012 Rheingau Flinty and slaty with charming cinnamon, greengage and green lime. Long, expressive finish with a dry, chewy length. (RH)13% Drink 2016-2026
£22.40 RRP 17
- Reichsrat von Buhl, Nr 1 Riesling 2014 Pfalz Youthful, herby, full-on ripe lime fruit with a leafy edge. Modern, dry, lipsmacking. (RH)12.5% Drink 2015-2020
£9.89 RRP 16.5
- Bamberger, Monzinger Frühlingsplätzchen Riesling trocken 2013 Nahe Ripe, baked apple scent. Quite an oxidative edge too - orange peel. Dry, layered, pithy, lengthy. (RH)12.5% Drink 2015-2022
£13.95 RRP 16.5
- Bischel, Binger Scharlachberg Riesling trocken 2013 Rheinhessen Acrid, sulphurous nose. Uncompromising but full of complexity - aniseed, green bean, citrus, basil. (RH)13% Drink 2017-2027
£26.99 RRP 16.5
- Studert-Prüm, Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese 2006 Mosel Super sweet with ripe lime juice and ginger. Lots of satisfying primary flavour but limited secondary complexity, which is a little disappointing considering its age. (RH)9% Drink 2010-2020
£17.99 RRP 16.5
- Schumann-Nägler, Reserve Riesling halbtrocken 2014 Rheingau Lightly pétillant. Honey, greengage and lime. Loads of primary fruit and impressive depth. Acid hides the sweetness - the kind of wine that Germany excels in. Truly authentic. (RH)11.5% Drink 2016-2026
16.5
- Bibo Runge, Hargardun Riesling halbtrocken 2014 Rheingau Creamy, soft nose. Bitter lime and grapefruit character on the finish. Plenty of concentration. Effectively dry finish, with better acid integration than the trocken version. (RH)11.5% Drink 2015-2018
16.5
- Devil's Rock Riesling 2014 Pfalz Better concentration than most of its peers at this price - pithy, fresh and layered. Convincing, serious, balanced - even moderately ageworthy, though the pleasure is best in its youth. (RH)12% Drink 2015-2018
£7.99 RRP 16
- Joachim Flick, Wickerer Nonnberg Riesling trocken 2013 Rheingau Feels riper than trocken on the palate, with a generous, juicy, flavoursome fruit. Young and tight. (RH)13% Drink 2015-2020

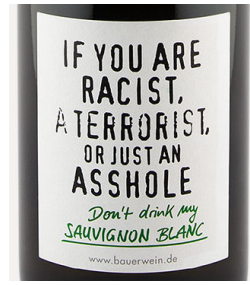
£14.99 RRP 16

- Louis Guntrum, Dry Riesling 2014 RheinhessenBright, herby, loads of flavour for the price - great to get such typical varietal intensity. (RH)12.5% Drink 2015-2018
£9 RRP 16
- Emil Bauer und Söhne, Sex, Drugs and Rock n Roll Riesling 2014 PfalzBlackcurrant leaf, pithy lime and a nice honeyed finish. Funky label, generous flavour and soft structure - a great Riesling proposition for the uninitiated. (RH)12% Drink 2015-2019
£13.99 RRP 16
- Fred Prinz, Riesling trocken 2013 RheingauJuicy, fragrant and ripe with a saline character. Lovely fragrance and breadth. (RH)12.5% Drink 2015-2020
£13.99 RRP 16
- Domdechant Werner'sches, Hochheim Classic Riesling 2013 RheingauClassic indeed - all the Riesling flavours, and it's nice to have a lick of sugar on the finish. I am increasingly of Hugh Johnson's opinion that sweetness in Riesling is an essential factor. (RH)12.5% Drink 2015-2022
£12.99 RRP 16
- Friedrich Wilhelm Gymnasium, Fritz Willi Riesling 2013 MoselFragrant, juicy and vibrant - Riesling reborn in a youthful, accessible mode. Proper fruit concentration. Very well done. (RH)10.5% Drink 2015-2018
£12.95 RRP 16
- Theo Minges, Gleisweiler Hölle Riesling Grosses Gewächs 2012 PfalzLime, spice, dry and vibrant on the palate - yet with a certain snappy austerity on the finish. (RH)13.5% Drink 2014-2020
16
- Flick, Westhofener Riesling trocken 2013 RheinhessenJuicy and nutty palate with fragrance and tang. Long and reasonably concentrated on the finish - modern, sleek, fresh. (RH)12.5% Drink 2015-2025
16
- Hansel, Dürkheimer Rittergarten Riesling 2014 PfalzWhite currant, leafy and zippy. Lots of floral notes that almost take the profile beyond Riesling. Is that due to the yeast used, perhaps? Juicy and expressive to an exaggerated degree. (RH)13% Drink 2015-2020
16
- Vereinigte Hospitien, Wiltinger Hölle Riesling 2014 MoselBlackcurrant leaf, lime cordial, honey and caramel. Pure and flavoursome. (RH)11% Drink 2016-2024
16
- Bibo Runge, Riesling trocken 2014 RheingauHoney and lime with a green streak on the nose. Intense fruit power on the palate, and plenty of acid. Finishes with a flinty zing. (RH)11.5% Drink 2015-2018
16
- Bibo Runge, Hargardun Riesling trocken 2014 RheingauThere's a spiciness here that suggests oak or malolactic character. Pineapple and tropical fruit. Spritzy nose. Sharp acid, full and intense with a creamy finish. The creamy texture and the very tart acid clash somewhat. (RH)11.5% Drink 2015-2018
16
- Bibo Runge, Riesling halbtrocken 2014 RheingauFloral and flinty nose. Slightest sweetness on the mid palate, but with such strident acid, the finish is effectively dry. Lots of floral fragrance. Very tart. (RH)11% Drink 2015-2018
16
- Kendermanns, Special Edition Riesling 2014 PfalzLight but perfectly accurate Riesling scent and a genuine flinty edge - you can't fault it for under £10. (RH)12% Drink 2015-2016
£7.49 RRP 15.5

- Braunewell, Essenheimer Kalkstein Riesling trocken 2013 Rheinhessen Honeyed, pure apple fruit, but quite one dimensional. Seems to stop short. (RH)12.5% Drink 2015-2017
£15 RRP 15.5
- Bamberger, Plaisir Riesling 2013 Nahe Some floral character and honeyed, leafy fruit. Dry, lengthy, broad - a great example of modern, smart German Riesling. (RH)11.5% Drink 2015-2018
£11.95 RRP 15.5
- Daniel Schmitt, Bechtheimer Riesling 2013 Rheinhessen Lime juice, ripe and off-dry. Slightly lacking in definition. A decent buy assuming it's no more than £10. (RH)12.5% Drink 2014-2017
15.5
- Blue Nun Riesling 2013 Rheinhessen Controlled sweetness - not cloying but not very engaging either - short, light and simplistic. Better than its reputation, I dare say, and offers a good way to introduce drinkers to Riesling. (RH)10.5% Drink 2014-2016
£8.50 RRP 15
- Balthasar Röss, White Rabbit Riesling 2014 Rheingau A bit of honey on the nose, plus a light citric fruit. Very gluggable, and gets the balance of low alcohol, subtle sweetness and thirst-slaking acidity just right. (RH)9.5% Drink 2015-2016
£10.49 RRP 15
- Bischöfliche Weingüter Trier, Riesling Kabinett 2013 Mosel Quite sulphurous and acrid on the nose - very much the old school of Riesling. Loads of acid to balance the sweetness but the fruit is unfocused, leaving the wine incomplete. (RH)7.5% Drink 2015-2020
£13.49 RRP 15
- Kendermanns Riesling 2014 Mosel Carried by sugar. Not exactly unbalanced but very short on flavour. Short finish. If you must have cheap Riesling, this will serve. (RH)8.5% Drink 2015-2016
£5.99 RRP 14.5

OTHER WHITES

- Bergdolt-Rief & Nett, Elf Weissburgunder 2013 Pfalz Lovely gold colour. Flavoursome, ripe and creamy - gets the most from the variety. Well done - an Alsace doppelgänger. (RH)13% Drink 2015-2018
17
- Oberhofer, Gewurztraminer Spätlese 2013 Pfalz Very Gewurzy - lychee, roses, sweet and a bit cloying. Lingering but one dimensional finish. (RH)10.5% Drink 2014-2015
16
- Friederike Schätzle, RS Grauburgunder 2013 Baden Pear, apple, sweet spice, some citrus peel. Nice primary fruit but it doesn't go any further. (RH)13.5% Drink 2015-2017
15.5
- Juliuspital Würzburg, Silvaner trocken 2014 Franken Young, neutral white fruit. Some sherbet. Refreshing and clean but indistinct. (RH)13% Drink 2014
15.5



- Emil Bauer und Söhne, Asshole Sauvignon Blanc 2014 Pfalz and grassy with overripe citrus fruit. The flavour profile is as antagonistic as the label. Whether either are tasteful is a different question. (RH)12.5% Drink 2015-2016
£13.99 RRP 15
- Rebholz, Weissburgunder trocken 2014 Pfalz Dry, sour and vegetal. Glossy texture, neutral fruit. At this price, Alsace is a way better bet. (RH) Drink 2015-2017
£15 RRP 15
- Divino, Thüngersheimer Silvaner 2013 Franken Not much of anything here - inoffensive but bland. An option for thoughtless quaffing. (RH)12% Drink 2014-2015
14.5
- Espenhof, Flonheimer Weissburgunder trocken 2013 Rheinhessen Vegetal notes. Underripe? Far too much lactic character on the palate. Clumsy. (RH)12.5% Drink 2014
14

SPÄTBURGUNDER (and one Frühburgunder)

- Bernhard Huber, Malterdinger Bienenberg Spätburgunder Grosses Gewächs 2012 Baden Smoky, chocolatey - outspoken and particular with a type of varnish note that I like, perhaps from some volatile acidity. Surely peculiar and screwball - and why not? It reminds me of some distinctive Burgundy grand crus - especially Clos des Lambrays. (RH)13.5% Drink 2016-2026
£34.46 RRP 17.5
- Werner Spätburgunder 2011 Mosel Bronzed ruby colour. Herby, stemmy nose - perhaps just a bit unripe. Quite sweaty - but there's plenty of concentration; no dilution here. Very attractive, though it does flirt with underripeness. Light on the body, with great aromatic range. Punchy acidity, very indistinct tannins. Not quite as satisfying as the nose, though very classic. (RH)13.5% Drink 2014-2020
17
- Steitz, Furfelder Eichelberg Spätburgunder 2011 Rheinhessen Very brown hue - and fantastic development on the nose: meat, mint, black cherry, sappy stem character - strongly aromatic, very confident. The stemminess comes through strongly on the palate, and it has quite firm tannins. Clove and spice. Rings with acidity. (RH)13.3% Drink 2014-2018
17
- Oliver Zeter, Reserve Pinot Noir 2012 Pfalz Smouldering smokiness on the nose. Loads of cranberry and red cherry, with a pinch of underripeness on the palate. Long aromatic palate with loads of concentrated persistence. (RH)13.4% Drink 2015-2025
17
- Martin Wassmer, Schlatter Maltesergarten Spätburgunder 2011 Baden Smoky, flinty - full of sparky reductive vibrancy. Delicious beetroot and rhubarb character, and a fair amount of whole bunch stemminess too. Smoke dominates on the palate - in fact, this shares similarities with South African Pinot Noirs from Hemel-en-Aarde. A good pinch of tannins on the finish. (RH)13.5% Drink 2016-2026
17

- Becker Landgraf, Gau-Odernheimer Spätburgunder trocken 2013 Rheinhessen Sophisticated stemmy notes. Menthol, blackcurrant, green leaf and a sort of leather aroma too. Full of charisma. (RH)13.5% Drink 2016-2021
£16.99 RRP 17
- Siegrist, Lössriedel Pinot Noir trocken 2011 Pfalz Purple-ruby and relatively opaque. Lots of toasty oak on the nose – much more like California than Burgundy with its ripeness and flashy oak. Override in style without a huge degree of complexity on the finish – reliant on oak for its upfront flavour, then fades quickly. (RH)13.3% Drink 2014-2018
16.5
- Ben Rothmeier Pinot Noir 2012 Pfalz Fragrant clove and black cherry fruit. Quite firm tannins and a roast coffee aroma on the palate. Firmly constructed. (RH)13.5% Drink 2016-2026
16.5
- Claus Schneider, Weiler Schlipf CS Spätburgunder 2012 Baden Black cherry, dark chocolate, light tannins, moderate body. Good concentration. Black fruit on the palate with a verdant, leafy character on the finish. (RH)13% Drink 2015-2019
16
- Hanewald-Schwerdt, Kalkriff Spätburgunder 2012 Pfalz Blackcurrant fruit, dense and heavy. Vanilla spice, chewy texture and shortish finish. (RH)13.5% Drink 2014-2018
16
- Stadt Klingenberg - Benedikt Baltes, Buntsandstein Spätburgunder trocken 2012 Franken Light concentration, herby notes. Red fruit with a sour edge. A little pinched and tart. (RH)12% Drink 2014-2015
15
- Hanspeter Ziereisen, Tschuppen Spätburgunder 2011 Baden Floral, open, and slightly soapy. Fine tannins, refreshing acidity. Peculiar flavours – certainly showing an alternative side for Pinot Noir, though not its prettiest. (RH) Drink 2014-2020
15
- Winzergenossenschaft Durbacher 2012 Baden Rather pongy nose and the fruit seems dilute. Not sure about this - there's a crudeness to the flavours. Not a great advert for German Pinot. (RH) Drink 2014-2018
£18 RRP 15
- Terra X, Reserve Frühburgunder 2012 Mosel Like diluted Pinot Noir on the nose, with a bit of mocha on the palate. There's a bitter, sour tang to the fruit. (RH)14% Drink 2014-2016
15
- Zimmerman Graeff & Müller, Peter & Peter Pinot Noir 2013 Pfalz Baked fruit of the kind better left to hot climates. Fake spice. Avoidable. (RH)12.5% Drink 2015
£10 RRP 14.5