



JAN MATTHIAS KLEIN

Mosel, Germany

Staffelter Hof first appears in texts from in 862 AD. At almost 1,200 years old, it is one of the oldest companies of any kind in the world. The vineyard holdings span 11.5ha (10.2ha planted) of diverse vineyards such as Paradies, Kirchlay, Letterlay, Steffensberg, and as far south as the Dhroner Hofberg. The winery itself is located in Kröv, a village in the heart of the middle Mosel on a sweeping 180° curve of the river between the old, quiet winemaking villages of Wolf and Kinheim. This is not a hotbed of avant-garde creativity. Yet Jan Matthias Klein, a 7th generation winemaker at this estate, is doing something extraordinary here, crafting naturweine the likes of which have rarely been seen in the history of the Mosel.

After stages in France, New Zealand, and Australia, Jan came home and steered his family's winery into quixotic efforts of viticulture being explored by the younger generation in the Mosel. As if to prove the point, in 2018 he hired Yamile Abad, a millennial born and raised in Peru with a winemaking degree from the Universidad Juan Agustín Maza in Argentina, to be his cellar master and assistant winemaker. The presence of this young Latina woman making wine in one of the most homogeneous and male-dominated wine cultures in Europe is a powerful statement. Equally remarkable is how such progressivism stands comfortably side-by-side with a profound philosophy of land conservation. Jan is a vital member of the Klitzekleine Ring, a group of about a dozen winemakers around Traben-Trarbach dedicated to saving steep slope Mosel vineyards that would otherwise be abandoned.

Jan's farming on the steep slate hills of the area is strictly organic—a very hard commitment to make. It is far easier to spray pesticides from a helicopter, for instance, than to scramble up and down 60-70° gradient slopes placing natural insect repellants on each and every vine. The hard work is an intrinsic part of the winery's founding legend, however. Centuries ago, a donkey was originally the laborer of the steep slopes in Kröv until a wolf killed it. Legend has it that the monks caught the wolf and made it do the vineyard work after it killed the donkey. Wolf "Magnus" is still the mascot of the winery today (hence the labels and names).

It cannot be emphasized enough: these are not normal Mosel wines. They would be exceptional in ANY of the world's winemaking regions, actually. Klein makes classic Rieslings under the Staffelter Hof label, but works with ZERO SULPHUR on this line of wines. They are unfiltered, unfiltered, hand-bottled, and contain varying levels of palate-tingly residual CO₂. The variety of grapes is kaleidoscopic, featuring cuvees from Frühburgunder, Germany's ruddy, blue/black-skinned "early Burgundy," a.k.a. Pinot Noir Précoce, Sauvignon Blanc, Müller-Thurgau, Muscat, and a bewildering assortment of Portuguese grapes. So... the wines are "out there." But are they good?

Yes, they are rivetingly good; fresh in character, light on their feet (under 11%), joyful to drink if you don't want to ponder too much about them and fascinating if you do. For those who think the pleasures of "glou-glou" and farm-to-bottle wines do not exist in Germany, these wines are a wake-up call and invitation.



White Blend "Little Bastard" 12/750ml

11.5% alc, 0.6g/l RS. A crazy quilt blend of 60% Riesling, 25% Sauvignon Blanc, 12% Müller-Thurgau and 3% skin-fermented Muscat. The Riesling grapes come from the Kröv Letterlay, a sunny, dry, grey slate site. The Sauvignon comes from the nearby Kinheimer Hubertuslay, also slate. Each grape variety is fermented separately in steel, with indigenous yeasts and light skin contact, then switched to 1900 old oak fuder. All grapes see a mix of 1/2 oak and 1/2 steel. Bottled by hand right after malo, unfiltered, unfiltered, with a bit of lees and residual CO₂. Zero added sulfur. Certified organic and vegan.

Perfumey and pretty with the Muscat making itself noticed. Light on its feet, fruity, delicious, and compellingly gulpable.

Technical Specifications

Product Type: White Wine

Varietal: Riesling

Farming Type: Organic