

**13 STAR RATING**

These ratings are not global, but apply to wines that stand out within their own class, style or origin.

- ★ Wines that are well above average quality.
- ★★ Extraordinarily exceptional.
- ★★★ Near perfect vintage to vintage.
- ☆ Half-stars indicate intermediate ratings.

PRODUCER PROFILES**1 GLOBAL RANKING**

A personalised percentile-based ranking that applies globally, thus a producer scoring 80 points anywhere in the world is the equivalent in quality (though different stylistically) to a Champagne producer scoring 80 points.

N/A Where no ranking has been given, (a) because ownership or the winemaker of the property has recently changed, (b) where the author has insufficient experience of the wines or (c) where the producer is new to the market and, therefore, has no existing track record in terms of overall quality over a number of years.

40 If they are clean, the character of the wines must be dire.

50 Clean, but boring.

60 Probably some potential, but usually cool fermentation has produced an amylc style in which individual character is lost. Frankly, this is as good as it gets in some areas.

70 The point at which any sparkling wine other than Champagne starts to become interesting.

75 Any sparkling wine other than Champagne that receives this score is not just interesting, but one that is good enough to grace the table of a self-confessed Champagne addict.

80 Because Champagne has such intrinsic advantages over sparkling wines produced in less favourable *terroirs*, this is the level at which an inexpensive BOB or secondary brand becomes interesting.

85 The sort of quality that Champagne has to be to warrant inclusion in my cellar. If a non-Champagne sparkling wine producer scores this high, it is of exceptional quality indeed.

90 Serious-quality Champagne or top-quality sparkling wine producer whose products have every right to demand a significant premium over the rest of the market. Be prepared to give these wines additional cellarage to reveal their true potential.

95 The greatest Champagne producers of all; their wines will often require at least ten years' cellarage.

98 The highest producer rating in this book is given to only one house, Krug, whose attention to detail, quality throughout the range, as well as depth and ageing capacity of the wines, was unmatched by anybody else.

100 Perfection – impossible!

80 VALUE**FRITZ MÜLLER**

JÜRGEN HOFMANN

APPENHEIM, RHEINHESSEN

www.fritzmueller.fm

Fritz Müller has what German sparkling wine has been missing: sex appeal and character. Even if the wine is attractively priced, it is pristinely made and, even more important, it has soul. It is flamboyantly packaged in eye-catching, funky, graphic labels.

Even though Fritz Müller sounds like a person, 'he' is the creative product of two young German wine professionals, Guido Walter and Jürgen Hofmann. Guido is the man behind the idea and concept, while Jürgen makes the wine. And very capably so. Jürgen used to be a Reh Kendermann winemaker, but today he runs his own family property. For Fritz Müller fizz the grapes are bought from friends in the Rheinhessen. At least for the time being they have had the luxury of grapes from old vines. But, as Fritz has really been such a massive success story from 2010 onwards, the volumes must be skyrocketing too.

So who is Fritz Müller? 'He' is Germany's response to the Prosecco boom. It is made from the vastly planted, but inexpensive Müller-Thurgau, which produces fresh, neutral wines suitable for fizz. Fritz Müller's first name of course derives from Frizzante and his last name from Müller-Thurgau.

WINEMAKER Jürgen Hofmann**HOUSE STYLE & RANGE**

With Fritz, inexpensive does not mean boring. The wines are so well made you would think they were much more expensive. The regular Fritz Müller Perlwein is carbonated to 2.5 bar pressure. Perfectly clean

and polished, mild, friendly and appetising. They unashamedly encourage consumers to use the Perlwein as a basis for a fizzy cocktail, which it probably suits perfectly due to its freshness and neutrality. Its rosé version is more of a candy wine, fruit-forward and pleasurable, yet simpler. The newest version is Fritz's big brother Der Dicke Fritz, which is a tank-method *cuvée* where Müller-Thurgau is complemented by one-fifth Riesling. The finest version is Royal, a traditional-method fizz made with equal proportions of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. A lovely wine actually, smooth, rich and stylish, albeit quite straightforward. Only 900 litres were made in the first vintage, 2008.

★ Perlwein

Not vintage, carbonated: 100% Müller-Thurgau

★ Perlwein Rosa

Not vintage, carbonated: Pinot Noir, Portugieser

★★ Der Dicke Fritz

Not vintage, tank method: 80% Müller-Thurgau, 20% Riesling

★★ Royal

Not vintage, traditional method: 50% Chardonnay, 50% Pinot Noir

