



Fine Wine profile: Laurenz V

Austrian wine producer Lenz Moser is set on bringing his country's signature grape, Grüner Veltliner, to a wider audience with his new project, Laurenz V.



Although Lufthansa had mislaid his luggage, Moser was remarkably upbeat and enthusiastic when he met *the drinks business* for breakfast at the St Pancras Grand.

Five years ago he created a range of Grüner Veltliners under the title of Laurenz V, with the intention of broadening not only Grüner's but Austria's appeal to wine drinkers around the world.

With his business partners, he wanted to create a range that "captures the modern spirit of Austrian winemaking". Moser is, in his own words, "a man on a mission".

He works with growers he knows and trusts from vineyards in Kremstal, Kamptal and Niederösterreich to produce the five wines in the range, among them Charming, Friendly, Singing and Sunny.

The most striking is the single vineyard offering from the Kamptal town of Langenlois, presented in a 50-centilitre bottle and dubbed the "Silver Bullet" – so named apparently because Moser had always wanted to call a wine that.

It was designed with the on-trade in mind and received an enthusiastic reception from sommeliers in London, Hong Kong and Switzerland, according to Moser.

Despite the temptation to view the names as mere gimmicks, Moser shrewdly observed that "names send signals to the consumer" and recent research showed that 70% of the wines in the range were bought by women.

Lack of identifiable brands and stuffy labelling has long been the curse of winemaking in the Old World and there is no denying Moser is breaking out of the usual mould with his packaging.

He is also a keen exponent of his friend Robert Mondavi's maxim that wine should be "friendly" (hence one of the names).

"We are too complicated, it's a very fragmented market," Moser explained. "The consumer is scared, they're looking for product security, something they can hang on to.

"But don't let them down because you'll lose them and they won't come back."

The decision to produce only Grüner came down to his belief that "the world doesn't need another Chardonnay and you cannot overload the consumer with lots of messages from such a small country.

"We said 'Let's keep it simple. Let's focus on something that is unique to Austria.' We felt that Grüner is Austria's ambassador."

This is a very true statement as 30% of Austria's vineyards are now planted with the grape – 13,500 hectares from a 45,000ha total – and Moser predicts that percentage will rise to around 40-45% in five years time.

On top of this, Moser's grandfather, Laurenz III (he is the titular V), was known as "Grandpa Grüner" and the family has a long history of Grüner production, with a wine heritage that stretches back to 1124.

"It's good to have a reason for doing things," he said. "It's in my DNA."

Moser started the Laurenz V range with two associates, Franz Schweiger, who handles the accounts, and Dieter Hübler who works on distribution and marketing, leaving Moser free to return to the vineyard and vinification with winemaker Fred Loimer.

He explained the pleasure he was getting again from making wine rather than simply marketing it as he did during his tenure as managing director of Robert Mondavi Europe from 1997-2005.

The minutiae and attention to detail required in getting the right blends from the various parcels for his wines were particular sources of delight.

"I'm one of the last dinosaurs," he announced. "I have both business and wine training."

Alongside the names and presentation of the wines it is clear Moser is having fun experimenting with different techniques. The Charming line is allowed to rest on the lees for up to eight months before bottling and the Silver Bullet has 40% of its wine fermented on its skins.

He has steadily been scoring successes getting the wines onto numerous portfolios and wine lists.

The 2005 Charming Grüner was chosen by Jancis Robinson MW for British Airway's first class wine list, while the current vintage is now served in business class on Lufthansa flights.

Furthermore, he claimed it is one of Bibendum's most popular on-trade wines and the range as a whole is sold in 40 countries worldwide.

The on-trade and selected off-trade outlets (such as Harrods in London, KaDeWe in Berlin and Watson's Wine Cellar in Hong Kong) are the key focus for the range

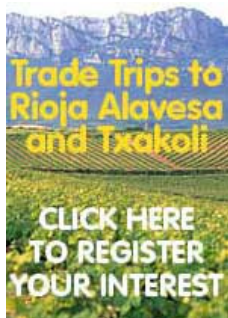
In a country where a producer's export is usually 5-15% Laurenz V stands out with a 95% export ratio, with special attention being paid to markets such as the UK, US, Hong Kong, Japan and Germany.

A marketing campaign is planned for September with the arrival of the 2009 vintage, involving restaurants and stores where the range is listed and tastings conducted by Moser in all of the major markets.

As Moser said, after five years of effort things are finally starting to "take off".

Rupert Millar, 26.08.2010

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